

EN

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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
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According to Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union¹, Member States are responsible for the definition of their health policy and for the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care, including pharmacies. Challenges in access to healthcare vary significantly and Member States can leverage opportunities provided by EU funds to develop targeted initiatives.

Online sales of prescription medicines can only be performed in line with national rules, and transposing the relevant provisions in the Directive 2001/83/EC². As regards online trade in medicines, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) plays an active role in investigating fraudulent imports of counterfeit medicines via e-commerce.

Member States can invest through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)³ in i) rural businesses, which might be well-suited for businesses such as pharmacies; ii) small-scale basic services and infrastructure. Through ‘multi-service hubs’ medicines or mobile health units can be delivered⁴. Through the Rural Pact⁵, the Commission invites Member States to take an integrated approach to rural areas, including regarding the provision of services.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supports rural areas through innovation, improving infrastructure, urban-rural links and strengthening the role of small and medium towns. The Talent Booster Mechanism⁶ Working Group on Health drafts recommendations on overcoming talent challenges in the healthcare sector. The European Social Funds Plus (ESF+), key EU instrument for investing in people, supported around 1.4 million people from rural areas (18% of ESF+ beneficiaries) by the end of 2024.

¹ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12008E168:EN:HTML>.

² Directive 2001/83/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 November 2001 on the Community code relating to medicinal products for human use (OJ L 311, 28.11.2001, p. 67, ELI:<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2001/83/oj>).

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2115/oj>.

⁴ LEADER/CLLD | EU CAP Network https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/networking/leader_en.

⁵ https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/publications/making-rural-pact-happen-member-states_en.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform/talent-booster-mechanism_en.