

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002413/26
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(11 June 2026)

Subject: Sales of counterfeit medicines online: beefing up checks in the EU to combat organised crime and protect EU citizens

The Italian environmental protection and consumer rights network (Codacons) has revealed that a growing number of websites and e-commerce platforms are illegally selling counterfeit medicines and health products that contravene EU health regulations. This phenomenon is posing serious risks to the health of consumers and generating profits for organised crime ⁽¹⁾.

Figures from the Italian Medicines Agency (AIFA) and the Italian police's dedicated anti-adulteration units (NAS) show that 82 illegal websites were shut down and 41 000 pharmaceutical and health products sold online were seized in 2025 as part of a mass operation to clamp down on pharmaceutical crime and doping (Shield VI) ⁽²⁾.

Seeking to guard against scams, Codacons has published a set of guidelines urging consumers to ensure that the logo of the Italian Health Ministry is always visible and that the seller is listed in an official register.

In the light of the above:

1. Will the Commission strengthen the implementation of Directive 2011/62/EU on falsified medicinal products and the Digital Services Act by making use of joint monitoring and cooperation arrangements between the Member States, Europol, the European Medicines Agency and the competent national authorities?
2. How exactly will the Commission require online marketplaces, social networks and digital messaging services to swiftly take down content and advertising pertaining to the illegal sales of counterfeit medicines and goods?
3. Will the Commission promote EU-wide campaigns in an effort to forestall and raise awareness of this problem among consumers and to tackle the profits realised by organised crime across the EU as a result of the illegal trafficking of pharmaceuticals?

Submitted: 11.6.2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(14 September 2026)

The Commission fully recognises the serious public health threats identified.

Directive 2011/62/EU ⁽¹⁾ harmonises safeguards to prevent falsified medicinal products from entering the legal supply chain and restricts online sale of medicines to suppliers authorised by national law. The common EU logo helps consumers identify legally operating online retailers.

The Commission provided Member States with a toolkit for national campaigns promoting the logo, as the primary enforcers against falsified medicines.

Cooperation between national enforcement authorities is facilitated at EU level, including through the Working Group of Enforcement Officers, the Board of Digital Services Coordinators or Europol.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) ⁽²⁾ requires providers of online platforms to put in place mechanisms to notify suspected illegal content, including illegal advertisements or counterfeit or illegal medicines.

Where providers are notified of illegal content, they must expeditiously remove said content and are able to identify on whose behalf an advertisement is shown and information on the targeting parameters used.

Providers of very large online platforms and very large online search engines must identify, analyse, assess and mitigate systemic risks stemming from their services, including risks to the protection of public health or a person's physical and mental well-being.

¹ <https://capitalist.it/farmaci-online-allarme-codacons-siti-illegali-prodotti-contraffatti/>; https://codacons.it/farmaci-falsificati-sul-web-i-rischi-reali-e-le-azioni-del-codacons-per-tutelare-la-salute/?utm_source=chatgpt.com; https://codacons.it/farmaci-contraffatti-online-codacons-riunisce-istituzioni-e-forze-dellordine/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

² https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2026/03/03/operazione-nas-sequestrati-migliaia-di-farmaci-e-sostanze-dopanti-illegali_31cdabd7-af12-49a4-8fe9-fb573444367d.html.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2011/62/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/digital-services-act.html>.

They must compile and make public ad repositories to ensure supervision into emerging risks stemming from the distribution of advertising online.

In January 2025, Europol, the European Medicines Agency and the European Union Intellectual Property Office launched the #EUvsFakeMedicines campaign to warn against the risks of fake medicines ⁽³⁾.

⁽³⁾ <https://www.euipo.europa.eu/en/news/the-euipo-joins-forces-with-europol-and-ema-to-combat-fake-medicines>.