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Aligning Patient Demand, Digital Infrastructure and Regulation

A Pan-European Analysis of Online Access to Prescription Medicines in the European Union

White Paper Consultation

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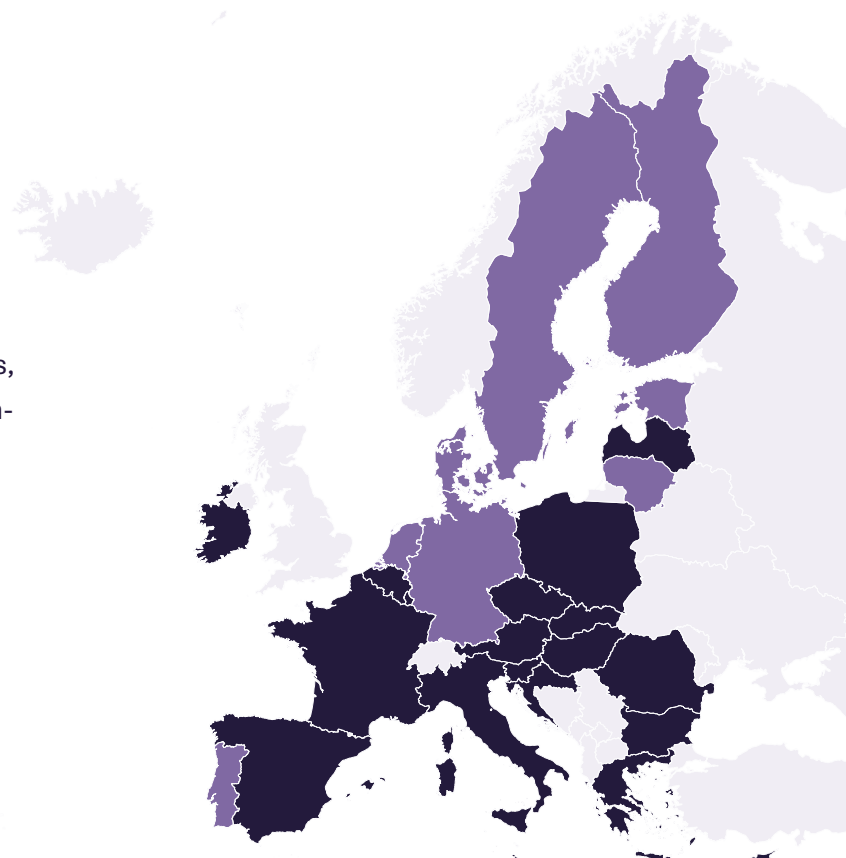


The Issue

Digital Health Policy Landscape: While all EU Member States permit the online sale of non-prescription medicines, only 8 currently permit regulated online access to prescription medicines, while 19 continue to restrict access primarily to in-person dispensing models.

Countries that allow online access to prescription medicines

- Prohibits online access
- Allows online access



Background

The European Union has invested substantially in digital health infrastructure over the past decade, including cross-border ePrescription services, interoperable health data systems, and the European Health Data Space (EHDS). Despite these advances, access to prescription medicines through regulated online pharmacy services remains fragmented across the EU.

While all EU Member States permit the online sale of non-prescription medicines under harmonised conditions, only a minority currently allow regulated online access to prescription medicines.

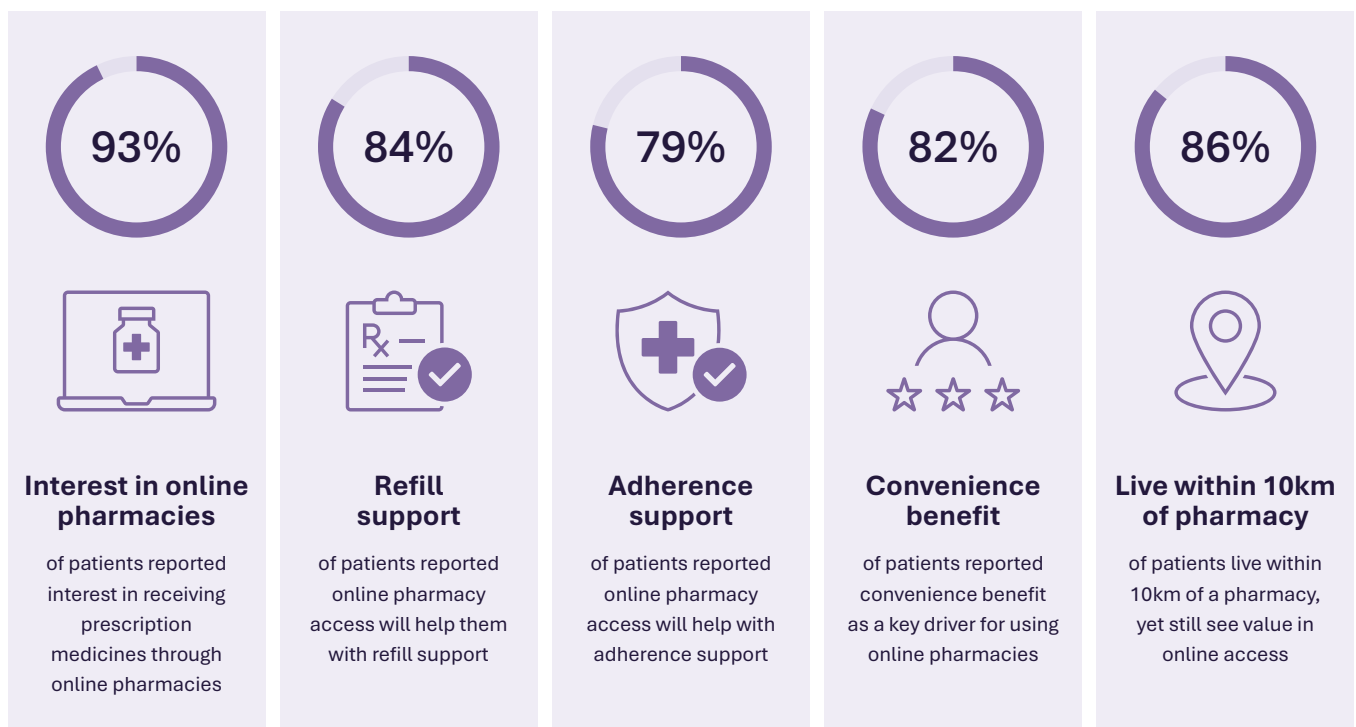
As a result, patient access to digitally enabled medicine supply pathways is determined primarily by national regulatory policy rather than patient need, healthcare system capability, or broader EU digital health objectives.

This white paper presents findings from a pan-European patient survey conducted across 24 European countries to examine patient attitudes towards online access to prescription medicines and perceived impacts on convenience, continuity of care, and medicine management.

EU Patient Perspectives on Digital Health Survey

Key findings at a glance

Strong patient demand. Clear benefits. Proximity to pharmacies.



Patient Perspectives on Medicine Access

“ Assistance is needed when you are unable to shop for yourself due to a flare-up of your condition. For example, in cases of myasthenia gravis, patients may have difficulty standing up or walking when their condition worsens. ”

Bulgaria

“ At present, essential prescription medicines are often out of stock in pharmacies for varying lengths of time, meaning that patients have to ring different pharmacies to check whether they have the medicine in the prescribed strength. It would be easier to search online and order the medicine for home delivery than to have to collect it from a pharmacy, which would involve travelling there. ”

Germany

“ When I’m feeling unwell, I often get very weak and would appreciate having medication delivered to my home. I also use food delivery services when I’m not feeling well. That way, I can focus on resting and following my treatment plan. Traveling is exhausting. I also don’t like being around germs— pharmacies, hospitals, public transportation... ”

Czechia

“ With two chronic conditions (diabetes and thalassaemia major), I often have to take time off work to pick up medical supplies and get my medication from specialty pharmacies. This obstacle is yet another thing that makes my life more difficult, on top of all the health issues I’m already dealing with. ”

Romania

Stakeholder Collaboration and Patient Engagement

The Online Order and Home Delivery of Medicines Alliance (OnHOME) is a multi-stakeholder group comprised of 45 patient organisations and healthcare stakeholders determined to advocate for all Member States to allow their patients the choice to obtain their prescription medicines online and get them delivered at home by registered pharmacies.



Our Partners

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Recommendation 1: Support More Equitable Access to Regulated Online Pharmacy Services Across the EU

The European Commission should initiate a targeted review and clarification of the EU framework governing the distance selling of medicinal products with the aim of enabling

more equitable access to regulated online pharmacy services for prescription medicines across all EU Member States.

Recommendation 2: Support Greater Harmonisation and Digital Health Education Across Member States

The EU should explore mechanisms to reduce unnecessary fragmentation in patient access to regulated online pharmacy services while respecting Member State competencies in healthcare delivery.

Recommendation 3: Maintain and Strengthen Existing Digital Health Safety Safeguards

Any future policy development should maintain the existing safeguards established under the Falsified Medicines Directive and related EU medicines legislation.

Recommendation 4: Integrate Online Pharmacy Pathways into Wider EU Digital Health Strategy

Recommendation 5: Support Further Research and Pilot Programmes