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EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF  
E-PHARMACIES

## ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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## Foreword

Welcome to our first annual report as the newly founded European Association of E-Pharmacies. After more than 20 years as the European Association of Mail Service Pharmacies, we are proud of taking this next step to give our association a new name and a more future-oriented mission. We are adapting to changing customer needs and markets and are pursuing digital solutions in order to shape and strengthen the European healthcare system.

2021 was a year of great progress and our report reflects the actions we have taken in professionalising the Association, strengthening our continuous and open dialogue with policy makers and other stakeholders to recognise legislative changes at an early stage and to introduce our own concepts and positions into the political decision-making process and servicing our ever-growing customer base.

Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic is still with us and we assume, in the long run, we will have to learn to live with it. The virus has forced nearly every kind of organisation to reflect on its business. The EAEP is no exception. We believe that e-pharmacies will increasingly form a vital part of European and national healthcare systems to guarantee not only the safe and reliable supply of medicines, but also to advise (chronically ill) Europeans on how to improve their health and well-being. Admittedly, the COVID crisis has given e-pharmacies an additional push, but digitalisation of healthcare was on the rise before the pandemic started. Along with other online practices, taking care of health issues or needs online is a common practice in many households and continues to grow.

We firmly believe that the EAEP is perfectly positioned to sustainably improve peoples' health due to the vast experience our members have garnered over the years and can contribute to the association.

The following pages will give you an overview of what we have achieved so far. We would like to acknowledge the efforts made by all of our members Europe-wide: without their tireless commitment we would not be where we are today. Stay safe and healthy.

Regards,

**Stefan Feltens,  
President EAEP**

**Walter Hess,  
Vice-President EAEP**



## Key facts and figures

### **We represent the interests of e-pharmacies on the European continent.**

The EAEP focusses on voicing its interests with political stakeholders, regional and business actors, with the ultimate aim to improve the health of Europe's citizens and strengthen the European healthcare system. E-Pharmacies have digitalised the classical pharmacy, and therefore act at the crossroads of digitalisation, healthcare, e-commerce and sustainability. As pioneers in providing digital solutions, EAEP members continuously seek for ways to enhance the quality, safety and efficiency of healthcare for Europeans. We have created innovative and secure processes to deal with health data and can offer medicinal products and digital healthcare service while complying with national and EU law. In 2021, we had a total of eight members.



**We supplied more than 20 million patients and customers across Europe.** Our members and their more than 4,000 employees are currently active in 11 European markets, and have managed to increase the active customer base we reach out to in Europe. We serve our customers with a broad product range, from prescription medicine (RX) to over-the-counter (OTC) and from beauty and personal care products (BPC) to nutritional supplements. Needless to say, as e-pharmacies we do not only just deliver medication: it is our goal to help our customers where we can, with information that contributes to a better understanding of how to tackle their health conditions;

**We published six position papers.** In 2021, we put forward our positions on the following topics: European Health Data Space; Digital Services Act; digital targets for 2030; General Pharmaceutical legislation (see more in the 'Speaking up for e-pharmacies' section below);

**We were active in opposing the German RX bonus ban and possible discriminatory measures against online pharmacies with regard to the use of the electronic prescription in Germany.** Some of our members face measures in Germany which are in violation of EU law. As the EAEP, we actively engage on the EU level, but we also believe that in some instances we need to engage on the national level to make our voice heard;

**We had a total of 20 meetings with the European Parliament, European Commission, Council of the EU, and relevant stakeholders.** These meetings took place on various levels, from policy officers to political assistants and from MEPs to Directors.

## Speaking up for e-pharmacies

The EAEP conducted a thorough exercise in 2021 as to how it would like to position itself and in which specific areas. As an association active in the field of digitalisation, e-commerce, healthcare and sustainability, the EAEP decided to focus on the following policy areas:

### **European Health Data Space (EHDS)**

Throughout 2021, the Association and its members contributed to the ongoing debate on what future-proof legislation on the exchange of health data should cover. By responding to stakeholder consultations on the topic and engaging with the European Commission, we worked to bring constructive regulatory, policy and legislative solutions to the attention of the Commission Services working on the proposal for a European Health Data Space. The EHDS, one of the priorities of the Commission 2019-2024, will promote better exchange and access to different types of health data (electronic health records, data from patient registries, etc.). A regulatory framework at the EU level that defines how to deal with personal data related to one's individual health is of crucial importance for online pharmacies.

To that end, the EAEP put forward a list of detailed suggestions calling on the EU Institutions to:

- Ensure that access to health data for healthcare providers can only be granted by the data holder. **The data subject must always be the data owner;**
- Develop a **European Digital Identity** to establish a trusted, secure and efficient means for patients to authenticate;
- Establish an **EU-wide authentication system** as default infrastructure to clarify the rules and responsibilities for a **secure login framework** (which party is allowed to access which data);
- **Accelerate telehealth**, including by facilitating reimbursement of all telehealth services across the EU and investing in ensuring appropriate digital skills;
- Roll out a **voluntary labelling scheme indicating the interoperability level**, to foster the uptake of digital health products and services;
- Empower citizens to **transfer data from m-health and tele-health into their electronic health records.**

While waiting for the publication of the Commission proposal, expected in April 2022, the EAEP will continue to engage in constructive discussions, inform policymakers and make sure that the demands and positions of online pharmacies are reflected in the final text of the legislation.

### **Digital Services Act (DSA)**

The DSA will review the framework regulating online intermediaries and platforms, such as online marketplaces. Following the adoption of the DSA proposal by the European Commission in December 2020, both the European Parliament and the Council of the EU have initiated intensive discussions on the best approach to adopt, whether platform-friendly or user-friendly. Given the potential impact of revamped rules governing the e-commerce domain, the EAEP has advocated for a comprehensive package of measures for the provision of digital services in the EU which pursue two objectives:

(a) protect the fundamental right of digital services users, and (b) foster innovation to create growth and competitiveness for Europe.

Throughout the past year, the EAEP has been particularly vocal on the need to safeguard the core principles of the original 2000 E-Commerce Directive – such as Country of Origin, and to put forward strong provisions to step up the fight against the trade and exchange of illegal goods online (e.g. medicines). Our activities focused on the engagement with policymakers directly involved in the drafting of the new rules, allowing members to discuss bilaterally issues of key importance for the online pharmacies sector. This included targeted advertisement, the sale of illegal medicines, and the need for harmonisation of rules and legal clarity. As the Association representing e-pharmacies on the European continent, we advocated for:

- **Coherency with existing sector-specific legislation;**
- Strong **provisions against illegal content, conducts and practices online;**
- The obligation for providers of intermediary services established in third countries that offer services in the Union to appoint a **legal representative in the EU;**
- **A balanced approach to targeted advertising**, ensuring users' privacy while avoiding overburdening businesses with excessive requirements;
- Lastly, and most importantly, **maintaining the current prohibition of general monitoring obligation** as well as the **Country of Origin principle.**

As the DSA proposal is currently at the inter-institutional negotiations stage, in 2022 we will continue to speak up for online pharmacies, safeguarding key principles for businesses and consumers.

### **Pharmaceuticals Legislation Revision**

In late 2021, the European Commission announced an initiative to review the EU's general legislation on medicines for human use, aiming to promote a future-proof and crisis-resistant medicines regulatory system. Among the objectives of such revision, the Commission listed several areas where online pharmacies play an instrumental role, namely access to affordable medicines, security of supply, and scientific and technological developments.

As directly impacted stakeholders, who continuously seek for ways to enhance the quality, safety and efficiency of healthcare for Europeans, EAEP members have shed light on their contribution to achieving the EU's long-term goals in this domain. It is indeed our aim to provide better access to medicines and pharmaceutical advice for more than 20 million customers and patients in 11 European countries.

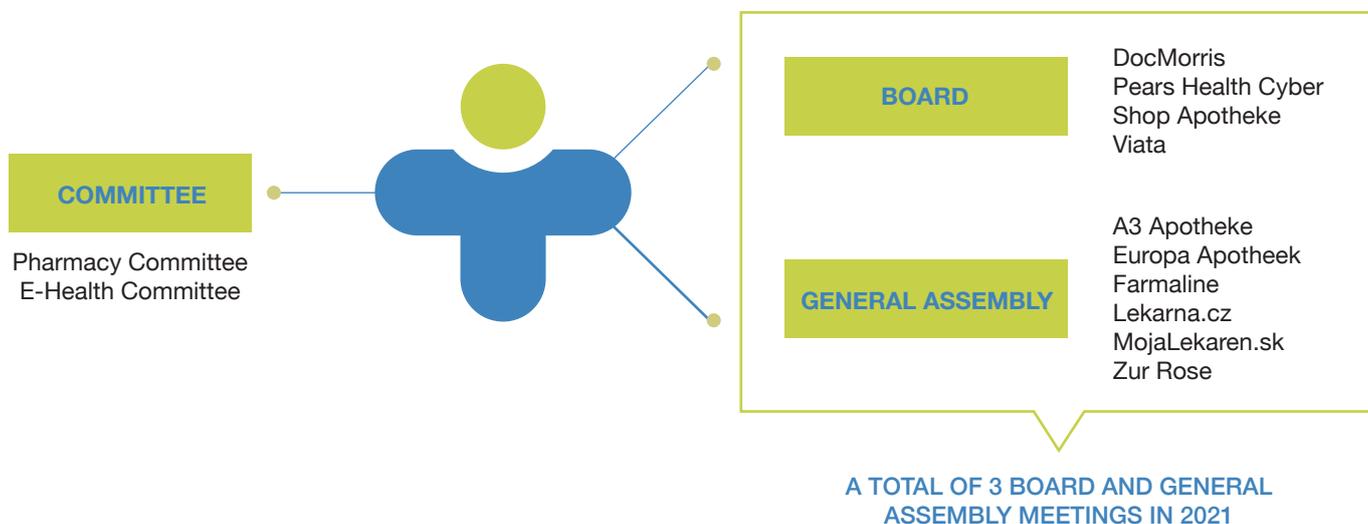
We stand for the highest quality standards to ensure (a) patients receive their medications properly, (b) patients are treated professionally, and (c) data are securely stored. We came up with concrete proposals for the EU to further accelerate the digital transformation of the healthcare system, including:

- **Extend the EU Common Logo to allow platforms** with only EU Common Logo holders as their participants, to be included as reliable medication providers;
- **Enable healthcare providers to forward orders** either from a platform provider to a pharmacy or from one pharmacy to another;
- **Avoid the obligation for companies to have safety stocks**, as this would be in contrast with a sustainable approach towards medicines;
- **Conduct and promote information campaigns** aimed at the general public on both the importance of the EU Common Logo and the dangers of falsified medicinal products;
- **Make both the Patient Information Leaflets (PIL) and summaries of product characteristics (SPC) available digitally in all EU languages.**

The proposed revision of the rules will only come in late 2022. In the next months, we aim to intensify our conversations with key decision-makers, to make sure that, in the coming years, online pharmacies will be encouraged to continue providing systemically relevant answers to changing customer needs and market conditions. Strengthening the European healthcare system is our ultimate goal.

## Structure and governance

The EAEP has a governance structure which is made up of the EAEP Board and the EAEP General Assembly. Within the Association, there are two committees – the E-Health Committee and Pharmacy Committee – which steer the technical activities of the EAEP with the ultimate purpose to produce relevant documents and studies, and promote exchange of views on best practices.



If you would like to know more about what we do, please visit our [website](#).

## CONTACT US

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