

EAEP FEEDBACK TO THE SANT-EMPL COMMITTEES INI REPORT “EU HEALTH WORKFORCE CRISIS PLAN”

Tackling the EU health workforce crisis through telepharmacy

The EU is facing an escalating health workforce crisis, with chronic staff shortages, unequal distribution of healthcare professionals, and rising demand from ageing populations. This situation threatens the resilience and accessibility of healthcare systems across Member States. The European Association of E-Pharmacies (EAEP) supports the European Parliament Public Health (SANT) Committee’s efforts to develop a comprehensive EU health workforce crisis plan and urges EU **policymakers to fully leverage telepharmacy as part of the solution** – in light of the proven benefits and crucial contribution across Europe.

Telepharmacy – the provision of pharmaceutical care through digital means – is a **scalable, safe, and patient-centred innovation** that enhances access, supports overburdened pharmacists, and bridges urban-rural disparities. It is already delivering results in many Member States, and with the right regulatory and policy support, it can play a **transformative role** in tackling Europe’s healthcare staffing crisis.

To fully integrate telepharmacy into the EU health workforce crisis response, the **EAEP calls on policymakers to implement five key policy recommendations**.

EAEP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

 **Recognise telepharmacy as a health workforce multiplier** in the upcoming SANT Committee report on the EU health workforce crisis plan and other concerned legislative and non-legislative initiatives, by **establishing a clear legal definition**:

- Suggested definition of telepharmacy: a service that includes location-independent communication between authorised pharmacy staff and patients as well as interprofessional consultations with other healthcare professionals within the scope of pharmaceutical activities. Communication takes place by means of electronic media, in particular telephony or video, synchronously or asynchronously. The applicable data protection regulations must be complied with.¹

¹ Consultations can also be carried out by appropriately authorised pharmacy staff by means of telepharmacy via a state-of-the-art end-to-end encrypted, synchronous real-time video connection without switching advertisements.

- ✚ **Support the cross-border provision of telepharmacy services**, in line with the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive, the European Health Data Space, and the Single Market principles, as well as patient mobility goals.
- ✚ **Strengthen digital prescriptions and eID solutions (EU Digital Identity Wallet) across all Member States** to facilitate safe, secure, and interoperable pharmaceutical care.
- ✚ **Invest in the upskilling of pharmacists and pharmaceutical experts** to work in digitally enabled environments.
- ✚ **Ensure harmonised quality and safety standards** for telepharmacy across the EU to build trust and scale up adoption.

TELEPHARMACY: AN UNTAPPED STRATEGIC ASSET

Issues it aims to address

The EU is grappling with multiple compounding challenges:

- A projected shortfall of up to **4.1 million health workers by 2030**, according to OECD and WHO estimates².
- An ageing workforce: 40% of doctors in the EU are over 55 years old³.
- Unequal distribution of pharmacists and healthcare professionals between urban and rural areas⁴.
- Rising demand for chronic disease management, home-based care, and preventive services.

These factors strain national health systems, reduce access to essential services, and threaten the sustainability of universal healthcare.

Definition and scope

Telepharmacy refers to the remote provision of pharmaceutical services using information and communication technology. This includes:

- Digital medication reviews and counselling;
- Remote prescription verification and dispensing;
- Adherence support including through apps and AI tools, with validation from pharmacists;
- Clinical triage and health advice.

² OECD (2023) "Health at a Glance: Europe"; WHO Europe "Health workforce policy briefs"

³ OECD/EC "Health at a Glance: Europe 2022"

⁴ IEGUS (2025) "The role of online pharmacies in the supply of pharmaceuticals in Germany: A quantitative and qualitative analysis"

Benefits in the context of the workforce crisis

- **Extending reach without relocating workforce:** Telepharmacy enables pharmacists to deliver care **regardless of geographical constraints**. It is especially beneficial for:
 - Patients in remote, rural, or underserved areas;
 - People with mobility issues or chronic conditions;
 - Working populations needing flexible access.
- **Relieving overburdened healthcare professionals:** Digital pharmaceutical services can handle **routine consultations, monitoring, and follow-ups**, allowing pharmacists and physicians to focus on more complex cases. This **optimises the use of scarce human resources**.
- **Supporting interdisciplinary collaboration:** Telepharmacy facilitates real-time collaboration with general practitioners, specialists, and care teams. It integrates pharmacists more closely into the **primary care continuum**, reducing duplication and improving outcomes.
- **Increasing the attractiveness of the pharmacy profession:** Digital tools and telepharmacy models improve **flexibility and career satisfaction**, enabling pharmacists to work remotely, engage in patient-centred advisory roles, and **reduce administrative burdens**. This modernisation helps **attract a new generation of digital-native professionals to the field**, counteracting the profession's current workforce shortages. Such digital empowerment can redefine the pharmacist's role from a dispenser to a proactive healthcare provider, making the profession more appealing in a competitive health labour market.

CONCLUSION

Telepharmacy is no longer a futuristic concept – it is a **proven, patient-centred solution that responds directly to Europe's workforce and access challenges**. As the European Parliament SANT Committee develops its health workforce crisis plan, it must embrace telepharmacy as a **strategic pillar** of future-proof, digitally enabled healthcare systems.

The EAEP stands ready to work with EU institutions, Member States, and stakeholders to unlock the full potential of digital pharmaceutical care for every European citizen.

ABOUT US

The [European Association of E-Pharmacies](#) (EAEP) represents the interests of e-pharmacies on the European continent. The EAEP voices its interests mainly 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 and our innovative and secure processes in dealing with health data, offering medicinal products and digital healthcare service while complying with national and EU law, the EAEP members continuously seek for ways to enhance the quality, safety and efficiency of healthcare for Europeans.

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