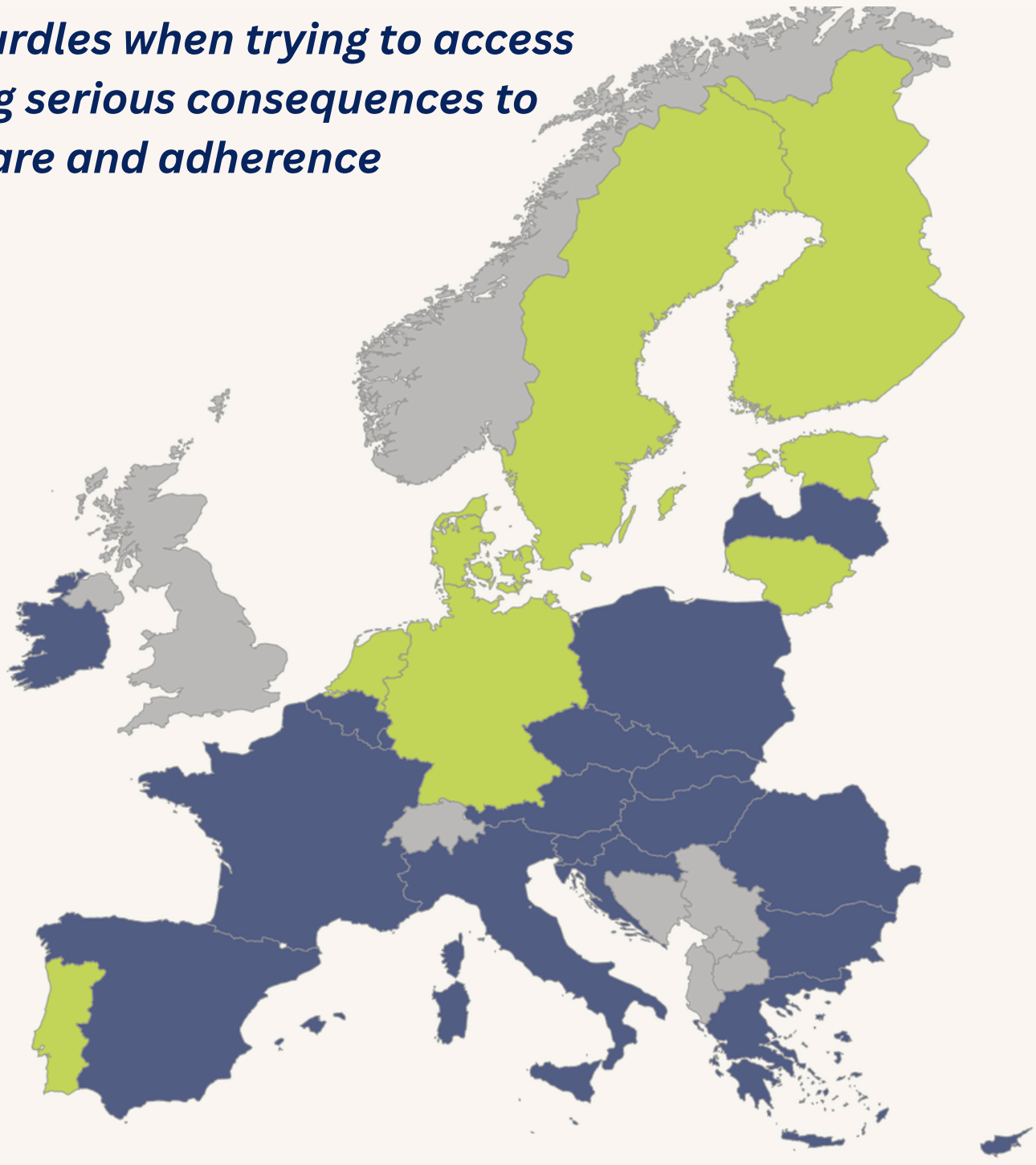
The Digital Gap in Cross-Border Healthcare

Patients consistently face hurdles when trying to access healthcare abroad, causing serious consequences to their continuity of care and adherence

Online pharmacies have long bridged critical geographical healthcare gaps by giving patients access to cross-border medicines and ensuring continuity of care. Yet currently only 8 out of 27 Member States allow patients to order prescription medicines via online pharmacies.



Countries that allow online Rx access are represented in green and countries that do not are represented in blue.

Barriers that limit cross-border healthcare:

Lack of EU wide harmonisation of telemedicine

Unclear reimbursement rules

Cross-border prescription challenges

Administrative complexity

We must update Directive 2011/24/EU

Integrated digital tools provide seamless access to patients' healthcare history, help prevent administrative errors, and bridge language barriers. However, inconsistent adoption across Member States undermines their potential, and with it, the cross-border healthcare use case.

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We suggest the following to help secure the much needed modernisation of cross-border healthcare in the EU:

Legal recognition of telemedicine:

Adopt a clear definition of telemedicine to support patients' rights and consistent, non-discriminatory application across borders.

Harmonised rules on cross-border EU digital health infrastructures:

Enable safe, pharmacist-led cross-border e-dispensing via MyHealth@EU and the EHDS, built on secure e-prescriptions and authentication.

Reimbursement parity of digital tools:

Ensure the Directive's principles apply equally to digital and in-person healthcare care, so patients aren't financially disadvantaged for accessing care remotely.

Update the mutual recognition of professional qualifications rules to support digital roles:

Review Directive 2005/36/EC to ensure recognition of professional qualifications accommodates remote and hybrid pharmacy practice.

Strengthen EU and national efforts to raise awareness and improve access to information:

Scale up EU- and national-level campaigns to close the persistent awareness gap and ensure citizens have sufficient understanding of their cross-border healthcare rights and how to exercise them in practice.

Online pharmacies have been shown to provide meaningful support th follows patients wherever they go. A recent study drafted by UCL School Pharmacy found that:



- 93% of patients are interested in online services
- 84% feel that they would help them with refill suppor
- 79% of patients reported that online pharmacy would support their adherance

By embracing digital innovation and modernising regulation, the EU will be able to deliver seamless, patient-centred healthcare across borders.

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