

**Question for written answer E-003721/2018
to the Commission**
Rule 130
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Subject: Combatting the sale of fake medicines online

The illegal manufacture and distribution of fake medicines pose a huge risk to public health. An estimated 1 million people die annually as a result of fake medicines. The profits made by organised criminal groups from the sale of fake medicines is very often used to support their other illegal activities.

Next year new EU rules will come into force to prevent fake medicinal products from getting into the pharmaceutical supply chain and thus into the hands of patients. These rules include a unique bar code and tamper-proof packaging that can be checked at the point of sale. These rules will no doubt increase the safety of products in the traditional medicine supply channels, but they will not solve the problem of fake medicines sold online.

The internet is an ideal place to sell counterfeit medicines. The low prices and convenience and the discreet nature of online purchases makes the internet an increasingly popular place for consumers to buy medicines, and so they easily fall prey to illegal internet medicine sales websites. It is thought that half of all medicines sold online could be fake. This causes significant losses to pharmaceutical companies. What is worse, however, is that counterfeit medicines are dangerous – not only do they not treat the illness they are apparently intended for, but the substances in them could actually harm the patient.

How is the Commission planning to combat the illegal distribution of fake medicines online?