

**Question for written answer E-003715/2020
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Cindy Franssen (PPE)

Subject: Counterfeit medicines in the European Union

Counterfeit medicines pose a major problem for public health. According to a EUIPO report ¹, the issue does not only concern food supplements but also medicines such as antibiotics as well as cancer and heart medication. Such counterfeit medicines are more dangerous than a placebo, since in addition to 'not being effective', they also cause harm. Each year, some 300 000 children in the world die because they were treated with counterfeit medicines. ²

In March this year, Interpol rang the alarm bell over the sale of inadequate medical supplies and counterfeit medicines to combat COVID-19. ³ An operation called 'Pangea' identified some 2000 internet links including to counterfeit medicines and fake masks for COVID-19. Such counterfeit medicines are principally made in India and China. In addition to the risk they pose for patients, they also have an economic impact. According to a 2016 EUIPO report, some 37 700 jobs are lost each year as a result of the trade in counterfeit medicines.

1. Does the Commission have any figures concerning the increase in the occurrence of counterfeit medicines during the COVID-19 crisis?
2. How does the Commission intend to prevent increased sales of inadequate medical supplies and counterfeit medicines in any future public health crisis?
3. What legislative and non-legislative initiatives is the Commission planning in order to permanently restrict the sale of counterfeit medicines?

¹ <https://euipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/en/web/observatory/ipr-infringement-pharmaceutical-sector>

² <https://www.ajtmh.org/content/journals/10.4269/ajtmh.18-0981>

³ <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/Global-operation-sees-a-rise-in-fake-medical-products-related-to-COVID-19>