



MEDICRIME COMMITTEE

Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health (CETS No. 211)

Questionnaire for the 1st thematic monitoring round:

The protection of public health through the MEDICRIME Convention in times of pandemics

As adopted by the MEDICRIME Committee on 27 May 2021

Replies should be addressed to the MEDICRIME Committee Secretariat

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by 30 November 2021

Introduction

1. The [Council of Europe Convention on the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health](#) (hereinafter “the MEDICRIME Convention” or “the Convention”), which entered into force on 28 October 2011, requires the criminalisation of offences set out in the Convention in Articles 5-8. It sets out that states, in Europe and beyond, shall adopt specific legislation to prevent and combat threats to public health by criminalising certain acts, protecting the rights of victims of the offences established under the Convention, and promoting national and international co-operation.
2. The Committee of the Parties to the Convention (also known as the “MEDICRIME Committee”), established to monitor whether Parties effectively implement the Convention (Rule 25 of the Committee’s Rules of Procedure), decided that:

“3. The monitoring round shall be initiated by addressing a questionnaire on the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Convention with respect to the selected theme. The Parties shall respond to the questionnaire within the time limit set by the MEDICRIME Committee.”

3. As available data show that offences involving medical products committed during a pandemic target critical funding through fraudulent scams, counterfeiting of vital protective personal equipment and critical medical devices to save lives and to detect the presence of the disease, and attacks on critical infrastructure in the fight against the disease, the MEDICRIME Committee decided that the first monitoring round would focus on “The protection of public health through the MEDICRIME Convention in times of pandemics”.¹
4. On 27 May 2021, the MEDICRIME Committee adopted this thematic questionnaire. Its purpose is to collect specific information on how Parties implement the MEDICRIME Convention with respect to offences involving medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health and related to a pandemic. The replies to the questionnaire will be assessed against the related background information provided by the Parties when answering the “General Overview” questionnaire on the implementation of the MEDICRIME Convention (hereinafter “Country Profile Questionnaire” or “CPQ”) and any other relevant information from reliable sources.

¹ Committee of the Parties of the MEDICRIME Convention, *List of decisions*, 3rd Plenary meeting (1-3 December 2020), T-MEDICRIME-(2020) LD, paragraph 4.5.

5. It is recalled that, in accordance with Rule 26 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure:

"(...) 2. The secretariat shall address such questionnaires to the Parties through the member in the MEDICRIME Committee representing the Party to be monitored and who will act as "contact point".

3. Parties shall co-ordinate with their respective domestic authorities to collect replies, which shall be submitted to the secretariat in one of the official languages of the Council of Europe within the time limit set by the MEDICRIME Committee. The replies to the questionnaires shall be detailed, as comprehensive as possible, answer all questions and contain all relevant reference texts. The replies shall be made public, unless a Party makes a reasoned request to the MEDICRIME Committee to keep its reply confidential.

4. The MEDICRIME Committee may also receive information on the implementation of the Convention from non-governmental organisations and civil society involved in preventing and combating the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health, in one of the official languages of the Council of Europe and within the time limit set by the MEDICRIME Committee. The secretariat transmits these comments to the Party or Parties concerned.

5. The secretariat may request additional information if it appears that the replies are not exhaustive or are unclear. Where warranted, with the consent of the Party or Parties concerned and within the limits of budgetary appropriations, the bureau may decide to carry out an on-site visit to the Party or Parties concerned to clarify the situation. The bureau shall establish guidance as to the procedure governing the on-site visits."

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

6. As in the [country profile questionnaire](#), the provisions of the MEDICRIME Convention have been grouped under different sections in this questionnaire without automatically following the structure of the Convention. This methodological choice in no way intends to prioritise the various provisions of the Convention: equal importance is attached to all rights and principles therein.
7. This thematic questionnaire does not seek to collect information on the general legislative and institutional framework established by Parties to implement the Convention. It focuses only on specific legislative and other measures taken or envisaged to protect public health from counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes in the context of pandemics.
8. Responses to this thematic questionnaire will be understood against the background information submitted by Parties in reply to the CPQ. Whenever warranted, Parties are invited to refer to such information. Where questions overlap between the CPQ and this questionnaire, the replies to the latter will be assessed by the Committee in order to prepare its implementation reports of the Convention with respect to the monitoring theme.
9. For the purpose of this questionnaire, the notion of pandemic will include the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other major health crises declared by the World Health Organisation as pandemics, epidemics or public health emergencies of international concern (PHEIC), including the Zika virus epidemic in 2015, the Ebola pandemic in 2014, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2012, the H1N1 Influenza

pandemic in 2009, the H5N1 outbreak in 2005, and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003.

10. If there are differences with the information provided in the responses to the CPQ, Parties are kindly requested to specify which State bodies/agencies and, where relevant, NGOs, contributed to responding to this questionnaire.

11. As with the CPQ, Parties are kindly requested to:

- a. answer the questions regarding central, regional and local levels, to the extent possible. Federal states may, in respect of their sovereign entities, answer the questions in a summarised way;
- b. provide the relevant text (or a summary thereof), in English or French only, whenever questions/answers refer to legislation or other regulations;
- c. respond to all questions marked **mandatory** as they are essential to the monitoring round. It would be appreciated, where possible, if all questions marked **optional** could also be answered.

Prevention and Training

This section aims to collect information on policies, strategies, plans and activities to prevent counterfeit medical products and similar crimes involving a threat to public health, in particular during times of pandemics. The questions concern all those whose responsibilities it is to procure and supply medical products, and those who encounter them or their impact on public health. This section concerns awareness-raising programmes aimed at these people in particular, as well as the public in general. It concerns prevention measures aimed at raising awareness of the availability of counterfeit medical products.

Question 1. (mandatory)

Which legislative, policy, strategic and other measures have been taken to provide training with a view to preventing counterfeit medical products, active substances, excipients, accessories, parts and materials to:

- a. those involved in both public and private procurement programmes, wholesalers, and distributors of medical products to ensure that they are competent to prevent and detect counterfeit medical products and conducts that contribute to the commission of similar crimes involving threats to public health, having regard to the impact of a pandemic (Article 18.1, 2 and 3. a and c)?

No measures have been taken

- b. healthcare practitioners, police, customs, and health product regulators?

No measures have been taken

- c. specialised investigation units/bodies in the investigation of counterfeit medical products and similar crimes, in specialised techniques, including financial investigations (Article 16.2)?

No measures have been taken

According to the Police, no training is provided. It takes part in Operation PANGEA (INTERPOL) with other relevant services, and Operation SHILED (EUROPOL-EMPACT), which takes place every year and aims to identify counterfeit pharmaceutical products and dismantle criminal organizations.

Question 2. (optional)

Are there any oversight programmes to assess the frequency and effectiveness of the training provided? If so, are there revision programmes to ensure remedial actions of any deficiencies (Article 18.1, 2 and 3. a)?

Question 3. (mandatory)

Are there awareness-raising and training programmes for all of those mentioned in question 1.a and b above and for persons and entities responsible for cleaning and waste disposal on the disposal of medical product waste at all stages of the process to prevent the recycling of medical products for the further manufacture of counterfeit medical products and instrumentalities used in the counterfeiting of medical products? **Not, at the moment**

Question 4. (optional)

Please outline any reviews on the effectiveness of the governance and supervision of medical product waste disposal. Are there any awareness-raising programmes on the importance of proper disposal and the risks that can arise from inadequate governance and supervision?

Question 5. (optional)

Apart from the above-mentioned general measures, please briefly describe the details of specific preventive actions targeted at specific medical products involved in any recent pandemic as well as the results achieved.

Education

This section aims at identifying measures aimed at educating civil society on good practices in avoiding the risks associated with counterfeit medical products.

Question 6. (mandatory)

Please elaborate on the strategies, policies and other measures that have been planned or implemented, with a view to educating the public on risks associated with counterfeit medical products, in particular those that may be encountered during a pandemic (Article 18.3.b):

- a. on purchasing conducts of medical products, including through real world/physical and virtual means, such as online and e-commerce platforms and social media;
No measures have been taken at the moment
- b. on promoting good purchasing conduct among the public to encourage rational consumption of medical products and avoiding procurement from sources that are not within your country's authorised supply systems;
No measures have been taken at the moment
- c. on developing and delivering risk awareness campaigns regarding counterfeit medical products and similar crimes.
No measures have been taken at the moment

Are there any reports on the results of these measures? If so, please attach them to your responses to this questionnaire.

Question 7. (optional)

Do public authorities have a policy to encourage or support the involvement of civil society (such as industries, publishers, academia, etc.) in the promotion of measures to combat, prevent, detect, and respond to counterfeit medical products during a pandemic, or in a more general context? If so, please provide details.

Question 8. (optional)

Is civil society actively engaged in raising public awareness of the risks arising from counterfeit medical products (Article 18. 3, b)? If so, please provide details.

Question 9. (mandatory)

Which legislative provisions, strategies, plans and preventive measures have been taken to prevent the promotion, advertisement and dissemination of material, including virtual information and medicinal product offers, when they are contrary to internal laws, during a pandemic and generally (Article 8. a, and 18. 3. b)?

- The Consumer Protection Law of 2021 (Law 112(I)/2021).

Victims

This section aims at identifying measures focused on the protection of victims' rights.

Question 10. (mandatory)

Is there any national law and policy for the protection of victims of crimes arising from the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes, specifically during times of a pandemic due to the increased risks arising? If yes, please specify it. If not, what steps are being planned, if any, for the setting of such policy or in the absence of which, for victims of crime relating to counterfeit medical products generally (Article 19)?

Yes, under the National Law 105(I)/95

Question 11. (optional)

Are measures provided to protect the rights of victims at all stages of the criminal proceedings, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of internal laws (Article 20. 1 to 4)?

Yes, under the "Establishment of Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Act 2016 (51(I)/2016)".

Question 12. (optional)

What measures are provided to permit victim support and advocacy groups, NGOs and other groups to assist and support victims, with their consent, during criminal proceeding and outside of proceedings concerning offences related to counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes involving a threat to public health? Please provide information on any such organisations and groups/bodies. Please provide information on any assessment of the effectiveness of such involvement by such providers (Article 20.5).

Question 13. (optional)

Is civil society actively engaged in providing supportive facilities for redress and recovery of victims of counterfeit medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health (Article 19. b)? If so, please provide details.

Question 14. (optional)

What measures are in place or planned to enable victims to report offences impacting them and to receive protection and assistance in respect of offences established in accordance with this Convention? Is there any oversight to assess the effectiveness of such measures? If so, please briefly describe the results (Article 22.1).

Cooperation and information exchange

This section focuses on the ability and extent to which authorities/bodies may cooperate between them and exchange information in order to facilitate effective investigation.

Question 15. (mandatory)

Please provide information on measures that your country has taken or plans to take to adopt a national strategy and/or formal action plan on cooperation and information exchange between authorities/bodies to combat counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes and whether they specifically make provision for pandemic situations (Article 17.1).

There are no measures or plans yet.

Question 16. (optional)

- a. Is the implementation of such national strategy and/or action plan supported and underpinned by enabling legislation for the transfer and receipt of information and data between authorities/bodies and to and from other jurisdictions (Articles 17.1, 17.3, 21.1, and 21.2)?
- b. Are there specific Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and/or Data Sharing Agreements (DSA) between bodies, at national and international levels, to give effect to arrangements between authorities/bodies in combating counterfeit medical products and similar crimes. Have they been adopted specifically because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- c. Please describe briefly, and without going into detail, the practical measures that ensure the implementation and effectiveness of the MOUs and DSAs, including periodic reviews.

Question 17. (optional)

Please state on cooperation arrangements which authority has the lead and which participate in the operation of the plans and what oversight exists on the operation of the plans. Please describe briefly, without going into detail, the main areas of responsibility of the participating authorities.

Question 18. (optional)

Do any arrangements involve cooperation arrangements with civil society, with industry or service providers (such as financial and money transfer services, e-commerce, social media platforms providers, logistics – including postal and delivery services, etc.)? If so, please briefly describe these arrangements and whether they took place during or as a result of a pandemic.

Question 19. (optional)

Please provide details on the membership or arrangements with bodies/groups dedicated to combating counterfeit medical products and similar crimes, whether investigative or advisory in nature. In your reply, please differentiate bodies/groups that put an emphasis on counterfeit medical products but are not solely dedicated to combating counterfeit medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health.

Question 20. (optional)

Does the national strategy/action plan on counterfeit medical products stipulate or facilitate the establishment of a point of contact for receiving and sending alerts on suspect or confirmed counterfeit medical products between authorities? Is there any oversight of the effectiveness of this process? Please provide information on the effectiveness of this process.

Question 21. (optional)

Is there a point of contact specified for the international exchange of information relating to the counterfeiting of medical product, such as product alerts and analytical reports from laboratory investigations, that has different arrangements from other points of contact? Please provide any rationale for this difference.

Question 22. (mandatory)

Is the exchange of information or transfer and receipt of data and evidence between bodies/countries supported and underpinned by enabling legislation?

Yes

Detection

This section seeks to understand and appreciate the various measures that may be proactively taken during a pandemic to detect counterfeit medical products and to prevent them from reaching patients.

Question 23. (mandatory)

Are there legislative or other measures to ensure that industry can promptly report suspicions or detections of counterfeit medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health, to any particular authority? Are there established or ad hoc procedures and processes for this reporting?

Pursuant to the provisions of the Medicinal Products for Human use (Control of Quality, Supply and Prices) Law, the manufacturers of pharmaceutical products are obliged to inform the Competent Authority and the Marketing Authorisation holders immediately if he obtains information that medicinal products which come under the scope of his manufacturing

authorisation are, or are suspected of being, falsified irrespective of whether those medicinal products were distributed within the legal supply chain or by illegal means, including illegal sale by means of information society services; additionally the wholesalers must immediately inform the competent authority and, where applicable, the marketing authorisation holder, of medicinal products they receive or are offered which they identify as falsified or suspect to be falsified.

Yes, complaints/reports to the Police can be made in the usual way, i.e. by a written statement from the complainant, or by providing information over the phone or through the Citizen's Line or through the Police's online platform.

Question 24. (mandatory)

Is there a market sampling programme established to detect counterfeit medical products on the market? If so, which authority is responsible for this? Is this system sustainable in times of pandemic having regard to the additional demands placed on analytical laboratories and testing services by the impact of the pandemic? Are there oversight arrangements to ascertain the effectiveness of these measures?

No. An investigation is carrying out following a complaint

Question 25. (mandatory)

Do these sampling programmes, mentioned in question 24 above, cover public procurement of medical products to detect counterfeit medical products being used in the public health system, such as in hospitals, and not procured for supply by sale to the trade or public? If not, are there arrangements to introduce such a programme?

Yes, from the complaint

Question 26. (mandatory)

Are there laws and policies in place to enable customs services to detect, detain and act on a counterfeit medical product, as defined in Article 4.j, different to the intellectual property counterfeiting? Do the laws and policies enable customs services to take action without reference to a rights holder notwithstanding that the same medical product may also infringe an intellectual property right?

Investigation and Prosecution

This section concerns the ability to investigate and prosecute offenders for intentional crimes related to counterfeit medical products and similar crimes, in particular during a pandemic.

Question 27. (mandatory)

Please outline through the following measures how is the criminalisation of offences achieved in order to enable effective investigation and prosecution.

- a. To what extent does the notion of ‘medical products’ in internal law fully corresponds to the definition in Article 4.a, even if the term is not specifically defined?
Medical device is defined in Regulation 2017/745.
- b. To what extent does the notion of ‘counterfeiting’ in internal law fully corresponds with the definition by Article 4.j as regards medical products? What steps have been taken to ensure that this has been or will be achieved?
It is defined by “falsified device” in Regulation 2017/745.
- c. Please outline what steps have been taken to ensure that offences relating to counterfeit medical products, as defined in Articles 4.a and 4.j, are criminalised in accordance with Articles 5 and 6.
- d. Please outline what steps have been taken to ensure that intentional offences described in Article 8 relating to medical products, as defined in Article 4.a, are criminalised.
- e. Please outline what steps have been taken to ensure that intentional offences described in Article 7 relating to documents, as defined in Article 4.h, are criminalised when performed in relation to medical products.
- f. What steps have been taken to proactively bring to the attention of manufacturers and suppliers of medical products the consequences of actions/inactions by legal persons in relation to their business activities relating to medical products (Art. 11)?

Question 28. Framework for investigation and prosecution (mandatory)

Please provide information, specifically in relation to counterfeit medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health, on:

- a. any national specialised investigation units dedicated to:
 - 1) conducting criminal investigations, and/or
 - 2) coordinating and/or supervising criminal investigations by other units/authorities (Article 16), including inter-agency formal or informal committee or structure;
- b. any specialised prosecutors and whether they function on a national or local basis.

If neither a or b apply, please describe briefly the framework used for specialised investigations and prosecutions to ensure that the full understanding of the crimes involved are taken into consideration.

As for the Police, the Office for Combating Intellectual Property Crime & Illegal Gambling participates in operations to combat the phenomenon of counterfeit drugs in cooperation with other government agencies. However, its members do not possess specialization beyond familiarity with relevant legislations and engagement with staff from the Pharmaceutical and Health Services in the scope of these duties.

Question 29. (mandatory)

In relation to the investigation of counterfeit medical products and similar crimes involving a threat to public health, please indicate, without entering into detail:

- a. the process in place, or planned, for deciding which investigation unit/body takes responsibility/the lead for investigations in general or as they occur;
- b. if there are any different processes or arrangements in place to coordinate crimes related to a pandemic (Article 16.2, 17.1 and 3. b).

Certain prohibitive or mandatory provisions of the relevant legislation are punishable by the imposition of administrative fines by the Medicines Council, as stipulated in Section 101 of the Human Medicines (Quality, Supply and Price Control) Law of 2001 (Law 70(I)/2001). The offenses outlined in Article 99 are investigated by the Police with assistance from the Pharmaceutical Services. No criminal prosecution shall be initiated under this Law without the consent of the Attorney General.

Question 30. (optional)

Please provide details of any dedicated facility available for the public to report information to investigating authorities (this does not relate to pharmacovigilance or product quality defect reports). Please provide details of whether the reporting is done by telephone, email, via an online platform, or other means, and whether this is a confidential report system. Is the reporting system reviewed for effectiveness? Please provide your assessment of the effectiveness of such facility.

Question 31. (mandatory)

Are complaints on counterfeit medical products and similar crimes collated on a national basis for record keeping, analysis, and effective investigation or dealt with on an ad hoc basis by individual investigating authorities/bodies?

The offenses described in articles 5 - 7 and article 9 are investigated by the Police after a complaint from a citizen or information/complaint from the Pharmaceutical or other competent services. Regarding whether the investigation or criminal prosecution continues if the victim withdraws his complaint, the Police informs the Legal Service of the Republic accordingly, and receives instructions for further handling.

Question 32. (mandatory)

Are all prescribed offences in Articles 5-8, and Article 9 investigated? Are they subject to a complaint being made and maintained (Article 15)?

The offenses described in articles 5 - 7 and article 9 are investigated by the Police after a complaint from a citizen or information/complaint from the Pharmaceutical or other competent services. Regarding whether the investigation or criminal prosecution continues if the victim withdraws his complaint, the Police informs the Legal Service of the Republic accordingly, and receives instructions for further handling.

Question 33. (optional)

In relation to counterfeit medical products and similar crimes involving a threat to public health, is there an indicative list of offences, associated with Articles 5-9, 11 and 13 and other criminal laws, to facilitate investigators in deciding the legal basis and the evidence required for successful investigations, in particular during a pandemic when advisory experts and technical staff may not be immediately available (Article 16)?

Question 34. (optional)

Please outline the national approach with regard to investigating bodies/authorities on counterfeit medical products and similar crimes, in a manner consistent with procedural rules of internal laws, on the extent of any discretion on whether to initiate and terminate an investigation without reference to a prosecuting authority or other investigating authorities for medical product counterfeiting?

Sanctions and aggravating circumstances

This section aims at identifying what specific legislative and other measures have been taken to support the sanctioning of persons in relation to the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes in final sentences, in particular relating offences committed in a pandemic.

Question 35. (mandatory)

Do internal laws permit the seizure, confiscation and disposal, including destruction, of medical products, active substances, accessories, parts and materials, and other instrumentalities used to commit the offences described in Articles 5-8? (Article 12. 2. a and b).

The Law allows the seizure of evidence of an investigated case. If the case is registered with the Court for criminal prosecution, at the time of issuing the decision of the Criminal Court or the District Court, the Court decides the safekeeping or destruction or disposal or return of the documents/evidence to the competent Departments, Authorities, Services or persons.

Question 36. (optional)

Are there policies facilitating the prosecution of offences in Articles 5-9 along with other criminal law offences arising from the same set of facts on counterfeit medical products, such as intentional offering, for gain, of medical products to prevent or treat the pandemic disease and without the intention to supply such products, also referred to as scamming?

Question 37. (optional)

Is there a policy for offences in Articles 5-9, either generally or during a pandemic, to be subordinate to other criminal law offences in the case of a prosecution of the same person(s), such as the trafficking of controlled substances in the same consignment as the counterfeit medical products?

Question 38. (mandatory)

Is there a specific sanctioning policy relating to offences related to counterfeit medical products and similar crimes generally, with specific reference to Article 13 circumstances in so far as they do not already form part of the constituent elements of the offence, and if so, whether the fact that the offence occurred during a pandemic is considered as an aggravating circumstance?

Not yet

Question 39. (optional)

Please specify if and to what extent internal law provides for the possibility of removing the professional status of a person who abused the confidence placed in them in their capacity as a professional (Articles 12.2 and 13. b) or, including legal persons, as manufacturers and suppliers (Article 13. c).

Data Collection

This section concerns the effective collection, collation and analysis of data that can support the fight against counterfeit medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health in a pandemic, and in general.

Question 40. (optional)

Please indicate whether data is collected for the purpose of observing and evaluating the phenomenon of counterfeit medical products or for another purpose (Article 17.3.a and b). Please:

- a. Specify if data is collected in the normal course of activity and for what purpose.
- b. Indicate whether they were collected specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. If not, can data for the period of the pandemic be separated from that collected in the normal course of activity?
- c. Specify what mechanisms have been established for data collection.
- d. Provide the relevant data collected, in particular that during the COVID-19 pandemic, and any reports from the analysis of this data.

- e. Indicate if the data and relevant reports based on such data were shared with all the relevant authorities/bodies. Please list the authorities/bodies that compiled the data, produced the reports and those who received them.