

## Portugal endorses Commission's digital medical leaflets proposal

By Mari Eccles · Dec 5, 2023, 3:10 PM · [View in your browser](#)

Portugal's Health Minister Manuel Pizarro has backed the European Commission's suggestion to allow digital information to accompany — or even replace — paper leaflets in medicine packages.

Existing rules mean that a paper leaflet is obligatory in each packet of medicines. The Commission's proposal under the [pharmaceutical legislation](#) would allow countries to decide if they want to keep that or introduce an electronic format.

"We really need to go to the pharma legislation more quickly," Pizarro told a conference to mark the second anniversary of HERA, Europe's Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, which was created in the wake of the COVID pandemic. "Do we really need to have a leaflet inside each package of medicines in the third decade of the 21st century?"

He was responding to a question about what actions could force the industry to address shortages in the sector.

The minister said that paper leaflets and packaging are a "complication" when it comes to faster medicines imports and called for more simplification.

He also pointed to the environmental impact. "We destroy forests," he said. "The carbon footprint of the health sector must also be on our minds."

In its proposal, the Commission says using electronic product information rather than physical documents "should lead to administrative cost reductions."

But Isabel Proaño Gómez, a board member of the European Patients' Forum, said that paper documents help keep patients safe.

"Here in this room, we might be very well educated patients, but you cannot assume that all patients in Europe have the same amount of information," she said, adding that it "educates the patient on how to take medication."

But she said there might be room for "some exemptions" when time is a factor in moving products across borders.