

## Fight The Fakes Week 2025

### *Open letter from Kai Mjaanes, General Manager of EMVO*

Every year, Fight the Fakes Week brings attention to the dangers of falsified medicines. This year's theme — **“Deadly Deceptions: The Rise of Falsified Weight-Loss Medications and How to Fight Back”** — is no different. The coverage and public awareness around weight-loss treatments means this class of medicines is particularly vulnerable to the sophisticated techniques of criminals.

But while this week helps raise awareness, the fight against falsified medicines did not start today, and it will not end on 7 December. This growing danger of pharmaceutical crime is well known by public authorities. This year, Europol's report on [\*the threat of pharmaceutical crime in the EU and beyond\*](#) highlighted that falsified and substandard medicines pose a direct risk to public health and safety, while also causing massive economic damage. Criminal networks continue to adapt, exploiting vulnerabilities in supply chains, using digital platforms for distribution, and finding new ways to deceive patients. This challenges the legal supply chain – we must stay ahead and continuously strengthen our defences.

In Europe, this work happens every day through the European Medicines Verification System. The EMVS exists to prevent tragedies. Every medicine pack verified through the system has been checked for authenticity before reaching the patient. Every pack of prescription medicine in Europe carries a unique, secure, digital identifier. When a pharmacist or hospital dispenses that pack, it must be scanned. Instantly, the EMVS checks the identifier against a protected European database containing billions of codes uploaded by pharmaceutical manufacturers. EMVO operates the central European hub where all medicine pack data is registered and managed. Each National Medicines Verification Organisation (NMVO) runs its own national verification system, connected to this hub. When a medicine is scanned, the national system checks it against the registered data. Together, EMVO and the NMVOs form the EMVS.

In a world where falsified weight-loss products have become a booming black-market business, this protection has never mattered more. If the system detects anything suspicious, the medicine is blocked from reaching the patient. The corresponding alert is investigated. This is how the system works in practice. Manufacturers serialise and upload the data for every pack they produce. Wholesalers check packs at key points in the supply chain. Pharmacists and hospitals verify each medicine before it is given to a patient. Regulators oversee it to ensure compliance and trust.

The EMVS is a true collaborative safety net, woven by the entire pharmaceutical supply chain with shared goal of protecting patients and maintaining the legal supply chain. And it works. Since going live in 2019, the system has maintained remarkable uptime, with almost no major disruptions—an impressive feat for any IT system, especially one operating across 30 countries, connecting 125,000 end-users and 3,000 manufacturers. Every year we validate more than 10bn packs of medicines to European patients.

Stopping falsified medicines is about protecting lives and maintaining public confidence. Falsified medicines threaten the safety of individual patients and can erode the trust that is vital to public health. Manufacturers, wholesalers, pharmacists, hospitals and regulators work together to keep Europe's medicines safe, and as we look to the future, maintaining and strengthening this system is critical. This requires ongoing policy support, predictable regulatory frameworks, and continued cooperation across all levels of the supply chain.

Fight The Fakes Week is an important milestone in raising awareness of the continued dangers of falsified medicines. The EMVS is working 24/7 to safeguard not only medicines but also the trust and confidence of patients across Europe. As we mark Fight the Fakes Week, we should recognise not only the risks we face, but also the success of the systems we have put in place — and the importance of protecting them.

As EMVO's General Manager, I remain deeply committed to the EMVS's primary purpose: detecting and preventing falsified medicines. We will continue working to ensure our system is resilient enough to face new threats, efficient enough to handle billions of transactions, and agile enough to address emerging risks.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Kai Mjaanes".

**Kai Mjaanes**

*General Manager of EMVO*