

13 Jan 2022 | Analysis

Government Skepticism And Over Regulation Holding Back Self-Care In France – GSCF Analysis

by [David Ridley](#)

France's self-medication market lags behind its European rivals. Why is that? A skeptical and over-cautious government and a stifling regulatory system may provide at least part of the answer, the Global Self-Care Federation's recently published Self-Care Readiness Index suggests.

France's self-medication market lags behind its closest European rivals, both in absolute terms and relative to the size of its Rx equivalent.

According to the most recent comparable data from the Association of the European Self-Care Industry, sales of OTC medicines represented only about 8% of the country's total pharmaceutical market, in contrast to roughly 10% in Germany and the UK.

Like many others, France's self-medication market shrank in 2020, impacted by lockdowns and social distancing measures. Even so, total sales of non-prescription medicines in the country were significantly lower, at €1.8bn (\$2bn) compared to €6.8bn in Germany and roughly €3bn in the UK.

The Global Self-Care Federation's recently published Self-Care Readiness Index report points to a number of factors that can explain France's current situation. (Also see "[GSCF Calls For WHO-](#)

France 'Not Receptive' To Self-Care, But Wellness And E-Commerce Trends Are Driving Change

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Regulatory barriers, government conservatism and a generous reimbursement system have all held back the development of France's self-care market. However, executive

[*Backed Global Self-Care Agreement*](#)" - HBW Insight, 6 Oct, 2021.)

At a regulatory level, despite a national emphasis on well-being, illness prevention and the self-management of chronic conditions, "the concept of self-care as such, and self-care products, are not reflected in any governmental policies," the report finds.

director of the French self-care industry association, Luc Besançon, thinks that the growing trends for prevention and e-commerce will change this in the future.

[*Read the full article here*](#)

This has something to do with the government's lack of appreciation for the economic value of self-care, the GSCF suggests.

NèreS, the French OTC industry association, has published a number of studies showing the economic benefits of self-care, but the trade group says that the government is "not receptive," the GSCF's research shows, "despite repeated asks from the industry."

If anything, the government's attitude to self-care has been deteriorating, the GSCF points out, with there having been a number of reverse-switches prompted by safety considerations in recent years.

"In the past year, [drug regulator] ANSM has moved to tighten consumer access to self-care products, requiring pharmacists to put non-Rx medicines containing paracetamol, ibuprofen, or acetylsalicylic acid, as well as alpha-amylase medicines, behind the counter," the GSCF explains. (Also see "[*France Wants To Move Paracetamol, Ibuprofen And Aspirin Behind The Counter*](#)" - HBW Insight, 4 Oct, 2019.)

In terms of pharmaceutical distribution, France also has some of the Europe's most restrictive access policies, the GSCF report says. "All drugs, whether prescription-only or OTC, may only be sold in pharmacies and dispensed by pharmacists or pharmacy technicians."

Furthermore, against European Union rules, online sales of OTC drugs are limited to websites owned by brick-and-mortar pharmacies and the government forbids the use of online platforms as intermediates between patients and community pharmacies, the GSCF points out.