



Proposal for an EU directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare



Dear Members,

This important proposal has significant implications for citizens of the EU and national Ministries of Health within the EU. I urge all national diabetes nursing organisations in association with other key diabetes stakeholders to read the full proposal and make representations to their national MPs and MEPs in order to formulate a relevant response. The proposal can be downloaded at: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/co_operation/healthcare/cross-border_healthcare_en.htm

It is greatly regretted that this proposal does not include healthcare professional mobility. This must be regarded as a major deficiency.

At the opening of a press conference on 2 July, Commissioner Vassiliou DG Sanco expressed enthusiasm in presenting the proposal, which, in her view, responds to the concerns of EU citizens. The Commissioner stressed that the Directive does not aim to interfere with the member states' exclusive competence of organising their healthcare systems, but rather to clarify the rights of patients as ensured by the Treaty. She outlined three main pillars of the Commission proposal.

1. Help citizens use their rights to gain access to healthcare in another EU country

- Ensuring clear rights and rules for patients who receive healthcare outside of their home country;
- Setting a clear framework that allows patients to have an informed choice on their treatment and its reimbursement, including:
 - whether their national healthcare system provides the same or similar treatment;
 - whether the amount of reimbursement would be the same as in their home country;
 - allowing member states to use a system of prior authorisation in hospital healthcare so as to safeguard their overall system in case of an unpredictable surge of search for cross-border healthcare;
 - according to the Commissioner, under normal circumstances patients should not require prior authorisation to seek treatment abroad;
 - guaranteeing patients fair and quick procedures, including reimbursement;
 - providing patients all information necessary related

to cross-border healthcare through, inter alia, national contact points.

2. Ensure that all patients receive safe and high-quality cross-border healthcare throughout the EU

- Defining standards for safety and quality in healthcare systems and ensuring their effective implementation;
- Guaranteeing access to their medical records and protection of the personal data to patients receiving healthcare outside their home country;
- Providing assistance to patients who seek redress and compensation;
- Treating patients coming from abroad in the same manner as nationals from the hosting country and by not discriminating them.

3. Foster European co-operation between healthcare systems

- Developing European Reference Networks to enable the exchange of knowledge and innovation, which should increase the availability of treatment of, for example, rare diseases;
- Promoting the co-ordination of health technology assessment tools among member states;
- Promoting the use of information and new technologies in health, such as telemedicine applications;
- Ensuring the mutual recognition of prescriptions across member states which should enable a better collection of data on cross-border healthcare.

Summary of the proposal

General overview

The proposal for a Directive aims to remove the obstacles to EU citizens seeking healthcare in another member state, to ensure common criteria for safety and quality of cross-border healthcare, and to provide patients with transparent reimbursement procedures.

The Directive aims to achieve these goals by:

- Setting out common principles for healthcare, which should lie at the basis of member state action;
- Creating a specific framework for cross-border healthcare.

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