

Draft Directive on Cross-Border Healthcare Adopted

Parliament has approved plans to give Europeans the right to seek healthcare abroad more easily and for the costs to be reimbursed. The draft report on cross-border healthcare by John Bowis was adopted by 297 votes to 120 with 152 abstentions.

The aim of the draft directive is to remove the obstacles for patients seeking treatment in another EU Member State and to allow the cost of this treatment to be reimbursed. The draft also stresses the need for high quality, safe and efficient healthcare and that healthcare cooperation mechanisms must be developed among Member States.

The legislation is about patient mobility, not the free movement of service providers and MEPs are keen to stress that the directive does not mean an encroachment on national powers. It has been agreed that patients are to be reimbursed up to the level they would have received in their home country. Also, considering the proposed rules would mean that patients would have to pay in advance and be reimbursed later, a provision was added allowing Member States to offer a system of voluntary prior notification.

Finally, the draft directive also calls for better information on all major aspects of such care including the level of reimbursement and the right of redress in the event of medical error. National contact points should also be established for complaints, as should a European Patients Ombudsman.

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