



## EU Patient Safety Progress Report



The European Commission has published a patient safety package detailing progress made in recent years and existing barriers yet to be overcome. The establishment of national programs for patient safety and the implementation of systems for reporting adverse events related to hospitalisation represent two of the most improved areas. Challenges remain in the realm of education and training related to patient safety for healthcare staff, and patient empowerment in the form of information about complaint procedures and informed consent.

### Three Documents Outline Past Progress and Future Challenges

The first document in the Commission's package reports on the progress made since the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Patient Safety in 2009, including the ways in which member states have improved since 2012, when attention was called to three key areas. Those areas involve the development of national patient safety programs and policies; the creation of reporting systems for adverse events; and patient empowerment, whereby patients are informed about safety standards, error prevention, rights to informed consent and how to file formal complaints. Also included in the package were the results of the 2013 Eurobarometer survey and the results of a Public Consultation conducted between December 2013 and February 2014.

### Public Perception: The Eurobarometer Survey and Public Consultation

The Eurobarometer survey, conducted in each of the 28 EU countries at the end of 2013, revealed that slightly over half (53 percent) of European citizens believe that patients could be harmed by the hospital care in their home countries; the figures vary significantly between nations, ranging from 21 percent in Austria to 82 percent in Cyprus. Furthermore, 27 percent of respondents reported experiencing an adverse event while they or a family member received healthcare. Adverse events associated with hospital admission include healthcare-related infections, medication errors, surgical mishaps, misdiagnoses and failure to act on test results.

The estimated percentage of patients who suffer from an adverse event related to their hospital admission in the EU is between 8 and 12 percent. Of those surveyed by the Eurobarometer who said they experienced such an event, only 46 percent made a formal complaint, with the reports more likely to originate in northern and western EU nations. However, that number is higher than the preceding Eurobarometer survey, which was conducted in 2009, when only 28 percent of patients who had an adverse experience actually reported it. The increase was notably higher in France, Spain and Luxembourg, pointing to greater patient empowerment in those nations.

### More Progress Needed in Key Areas

According to the report, 26 EU countries either have or are finalising strategies for patient safety. Patient safety standards are mandatory in 20 countries, up from only 11 in 2012, and 19 nations have patient safety guidelines in place. When it comes to reporting adverse events, systems now exist in 27 countries, up from 15 in 2012. Patient empowerment has also increased, with 18 nations informing patients about safety measures to reduce errors and how to file complaint procedures for redress; only five countries did so in 2012.

Despite these gains, patient safety and care quality will benefit from continuous efforts, not only in individual systems and nations, but at EU level. One proposal includes the development of guidelines on how to inform patients about patient safety standards, and an agreed-upon definition of care quality across EU nations. Of course, adverse events must also be reduced to benefit patients and communities; the package recommends specialised staff for infection control and isolation of patients who are infected. The EU faces a healthcare-related infection rate of nearly 4.1 million cases per year, 37,000 of which result in death.

[Source: European Commission](#)

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