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Germany - German Healthcare Reform

After a long fight, the controversial healthcare reform bill was finally passed in November. The reform means mandatory health insurance charges presently split evenly between employers and workers will rise from 14.9 percent to 15.5 percent of gross wages. Moreover, further increases will be paid for by employers only.

The German healthcare system is highly regarded in Europe and further afield. It takes care of 72 million people through state health insurance and 8.5 million through private schemes.

Parliament also approved a set of rules to limit the power of pharmaceutical companies to set prices in the market. There are now limits on how much pharmaceutical companies can charge for prescription drugs. It is hoped that these rules will save two billion euro for the health insurance system.

Health Minister Philipp Roesler told parliament, "This law will make the healthcare system better and fairer... I'd have preferred bigger steps. But small steps forward are better than big steps backwards."

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