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Putting The Cross-Border Healthcare Directive Into Hospital Practice

In June 2006, the Council of Europe published its Conclusions on Common Values and Principles in EU Health Systems which called for an initiative on cross-border healthcare to ensure clarity about the rights and entitlements applying for EU citizens seeking treatment abroad. But at end of 2006, the Directive on services in the Single Market was adopted, excluding healthcare.

This ambiguous approach continued until the adoption of the Directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare in March 2011, which is the first EU legislation specifically targeting the healthcare services. It is balancing between the European Court of Justice (ECJ) decisions of the last decade and Member State competence to manage their own health systems.

The Directive aims to clarify the patients' rights to receive healthcare in another Member State and to put in place measures to support the provision of cross-border healthcare for the benefit of both patients and those managing health services. It is supposed according to be transposed into national law in the Member States by 25 October 2013. Member States are free to decide themselves on the conditions, procedures and eligibility criteria to be followed for the receipt of cross-border healthcare and reimbursements. But transposing this directive into national law is a difficult exercise as it concerns the reimbursement, quality and safety standards of healthcare services. Also the creation of an up-to-date and transparent register of all eligible healthcare services, their quality and their costs will be a challenge, given the vast differences between EU health and social security systems.

On the other hand, many initiatives all around Europe have been taken in recent years to face the various challenges and to ensure high quality of care on national, regional and hospital levels. It is important that these initiatives do not remain isolated from the European evolution; on the contrary they deserve a closer look within the context of this Directive.

In February, the Subcommittee European Affairs of the EAHM decided to contribute to this transposition process in two ways:

Questionnaire

The questionnaire, targeting hospital managers, is focusing on quality of care in hospitals around Europe. It includes different aspects, from the definition of quality and its operationalisation to the steering processes for quality. Attention is also given to the provision of information to patients.

The questionnaire was launched on 20 August .

Seminar:

16 November, Düsseldorf During this transposition process, actors involved in hospital management should express their vision and contribute to the actions to be taken. The seminar offers this opportunity and will smooth the path to a consensus on improvements to be made regarding the exchange of experiences and information. The seminar will take place on 16 November in Düsseldorf (Germany). The programme includes various speakers from Europe, a panel debate as well as a guided visit of the exhibitors of MEDICA.

More information on the questionnaire and the seminar can be found on the EAHM website: <http://www.eahm.eu.org>

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