

# Exploring areas and benefits of cooperation in Cross-Border Healthcare to protect patients' rights\*

**Three years after the deadline for national transposition of the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive in Member States (2013), patient mobility for planned healthcare remains low. Relatively few patients have used the Directive to receive treatment abroad, despite the fact that the last Eurobarometer of the EU Commission (September 2015) showed that they would like to do so.**

Also, serious concerns regarding a proper and satisfactory implementation of the legislation persist: low awareness among EU citizens of patients' rights to cross-border healthcare, complicated systems of prior authorization, little or denied reimbursements, lots of administrative requirements, disparities between National Contact Points in the way they operate and with regard to the information they provide.

This clearly demonstrates that there is a need to enhance the quality of information addressed to patients in order to make them aware about their rights to cross-border healthcare. At the same time, it is essential to work together to realize its full potential and make it a true added value for all citizens and patients living in the EU.

During the last conference on cross-border healthcare held by the EU Commission, Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis emphasized the importance of this legislation for patients' rights and called for further work to improve patient information and National Contact Points coordination. The Commissioner also underlined the importance of enhanced cooperation with patient organizations, healthcare providers and insurers to overcome the main obstacles to a proper implementation of the Directive 2011/24/EU.

Last but not least, he highlighted how “the Directive provides a framework for a number of areas where cooperation across borders might form part

of the solution to the eternal problem of how to do more with less”. Cross-border cooperation will help make better use of resources that exist just across the border.



Indeed, the Directive 2011/24/EU encourages cross-border collaboration in healthcare provision and has set several cross-border initiatives as, for example, the establishment of the European Reference Networks to bring together highly specialized healthcare providers and centers of excellence from different Member States. The European Reference Networks show how cooperation between health systems can help patients suffering from a rare and complex disease by pooling expertise from across different EU countries.

The meeting was an open debate between civic and patient associations from different Member States, experts in the field of civil rights, Institutional representatives from the European Parliament and

the European Commission, National Contact Points and several stakeholders at EU level.

During the meeting the necessity and benefits of fostering cooperation among Institutions, patient organizations, National Contact Points and European Reference Networks to improve patients' awareness and access to care abroad was thoroughly discussed. They also shared case histories, experiences and common challenges related to cross-border healthcare.

For more info please visit:

<http://www.interestgroup.activecitizenship.net/>

\* this is a reprint from the Active Citizenship Network (ACN) website.

Active ACN is a European network, composed by more than 100 civic, patients and users organizations. Established in 2001, it is coordinated by Cittadinanzattiva, the Italian non-profit organization founded in 1978. The main objectives of ACN are the promotion of civic activism and participation in the political arena, and the protection of citizens' rights, which are both the strength and the uniqueness of ACN.

## Equal access to health care

**The European Patient Forum (EPF) has launched a campaign on access to healthcare. Patients across the EU are facing several barriers to access to healthcare. According to the UN Sustainable Goal (SDG) on Health, EU Member States have committed to achieve Universal Health Coverage for all by 2030.**

This campaign is an opportunity to build on the current political momentum and aims at fostering more EU cooperation on access to healthcare, prompting Member States to act on their engagements towards achieving the UN SDGs.

The kick off meeting of the campaign took place on 27 February 2017 in the European Parliament where EPF General Secretary, Nicola Bedlington outlined the five key dimensions needed to ensure equitable access to high quality healthcare from the perspective of patients such as:

1. Availability – Healthcare services and products are available in the healthcare system of a country
2. Affordability – Healthcare does not cause financial hardship to patients
3. Accessibility – No barriers stopping patients from accessing healthcare
4. Adequacy – Quality healthcare and involvement of patients in shared decision-making with healthcare professionals

5. Appropriateness – Healthcare meets the needs of different groups in the population

The overarching goal of the campaign is to contribute to making universal access a reality for EU patients by 2030, through defining and promoting concrete actions, in concert with the health community, to which decision makers need to commit.

For each of the five areas, EPF and the campaign's partners will develop a set of policy recommendations and actions to achieve the objective set out by the campaign. All the recommendations from the different areas will be presented in a policy document at the end of the campaign, setting priorities and measures to be taken in order to reach Universal Health Coverage for All by 2030.

Martina Jovic, EFCCA Policy Officer, represented EFCCA during the meeting. For more information please contact our office.