



[Nouvelles de Bruxelles - Notizie de Bruxelles – Novidades de Bruselas – News from Brussels](#)
[Issue # 27 – 23/04/09](#)

ENVI report on cross-border healthcare

On the 31/03/09, the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) has finally adopted the **Bowis**' report on the European Commission's Directive proposal on *'the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare'*. Many external observers and stakeholders were present to witness this crucial vote for patients' rights. FEPI was represented by Mr. Laurent Louette, Policy and Press Officer.

This long and difficult process of adoption (as you remember from previous FEPI News from Brussels, the vote has already been postponed once) thus came to its end, but in place of a broad consensus, which would have been perceived as a victory for the Committee in general and the Rapporteur in particular, the vote of the 31/03 in Brussels could leave some sort of bitter taste for several MEP's.

Indeed, the Socialist Group and the Greens have abstained to vote on the report, and have announced their intention to do exactly the same when the final vote will take place in plenary (scheduled for the 23rd of April in Strasbourg, we will report on the outcomes of this plenary meeting in the coming FEPI News from Brussels). What happened that day in Brussels was rather theatrical: as the discussion and adoption process of the hundreds of amendments to the report was just over, German **MEP Dagmar Roth-Behrendt** took the floor in order to ask the Chair of the Committee, **MEP Ouzky**, for a 5 minutes break, before the final vote. When everybody came back, Mrs. Roth-Behrendt was again given the floor and she informed the members present that her group (ESP) together with the Greens, were to abstain from the vote on the adoption of the report, because: *'health services are the responsibility of governments. There is not going to be an EU health service, we want to make that clear and to have stricter rules, we don't want it to be a proposal for wealthy people to seek treatment abroad. We want the same rights for everyone'*.

In the agitation that followed this declaration, the Chair invited the 54 members present to vote on the final adoption of the amended report. The amended report was eventually adopted by 31 – 3 in favor, with 20 MEP's abstaining.

As you know this European Commission's Directive proposal is aiming at enabling the patients that wish to seek for treatment in another country that theirs to do so. The Socialists have justified their abstention by arguing that stricter prior authorization rules are needed, meaning that patients should have to get permission from domestic authorities to travel abroad for healthcare before they embarked on treatment.

For MEP **John Bowis**, *'tighter authorization rules would be inconsistent with the rulings of the European Court of Justice (ECJ), which originally put the question on the EU's agenda'*. Not at all troubled by the Socialists and Greens' decision to abstain, Mr. Bowis insisted on the fact that the outcome was *'an excellent result'*.



MEP John Bowis, EPP-ED

From a mathematical point of view, there is indeed no reason to be worried. If during the final vote of the plenary session, the groups split the same way; the report would be comfortably adopted. However, from a political point of view, the issue might be more concerning, as in this delicate matter, every support is important. If the report of Mr. Bowis is adopted with a small majority, its political strength might be very much diminished.

The other worrying issue for the report and its 'after-vote' life is that, the idea raised by the Socialist and Green groups (stricter rules for the prior authorization given by the home country) is close to the views of many Member-States' national governments that want to see tightly-crafted rules on prior authorization, which they believe could help them plan healthcare budgets.

As you can see, the issue of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare will never stop feeding the debate inside the European Parliament.

Patient's safety report adopted

On the 31/03/09, the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee of the European Parliament adopted in its meeting in Brussels the report of **MEP Amalia Sartori** (EPP-ED) on *'the proposal for a Council recommendation on patient safety, including the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections'*.

As you know from FEPI News from Brussels number 23, the report in question is the European Parliament response to the European Commission's Communication on *'the proposal for a Council recommendation on patient safety, including the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections'*, published the 15/12/08.

Mrs. Sartori's report is stressing the importance of healthcare associated infections in the context of patient safety (amendments 1, 2 and 3 of the report), the necessity to ensure a better information structure between patients and as well as health systems (amendment 5).

From a nursing point of view, this document is of great importance as it contains three amendments, especially focusing on the role the nursing profession is playing on healthcare associated infections.

Indeed, amendment 11 states that: 'Member States have to be in a position to reduce the number of persons affected by HCAs (healthcare associated infections). As regards the possible means to that end, it is essential to recruit more nurses specializing in infection control'.

Amendment 12 states that: 'Furthermore, Member States and their healthcare institutions should consider the use of link staff to support specialist nurses at clinical level in acute and community facilities'.

And amendment 13 states that: 'In order to reduce adverse events resulting from healthcare, Member States should be encouraged to set local and national targets for recruitment of health professionals specializing in infection control, taking into account the recommended target ratio of one nurse for every 250 hospital beds by 2015'.

These three amendments have been adopted by a clear majority (the report itself was adopted by 50 votes in favor and no one against). It is now going to be submitted to vote on the plenary meeting of the 23/04 in Strasbourg.

<i>Meetings and Events to come:</i>
--

- 12/05/09:
 - **1st Pan-European Scientific and Professional Nursing Conference**
 - Capsis Hotel
 - Rhodes, Greece
 - <http://www.enne.gr/>

- 26/05/09:
 - **ABA – Irish Nursing Board National Conference**
 - 09.00 – 16.00
 - Davenport Hotel, Merrion Square, Dublin 2
 - <http://www.nursingboard.ie/en/news-article.aspx?article=1f6d3c0c-e3e8-40b7-9955-a99007e3068e>

- 29/05/09:
 - **CEPLIS Permanent Committee Meeting**
 - Radisson St-Julians, Malta
 - 2pm-5pm
 - Participation of DG Sanco and DG Markt's officers
 - ceplis@scarlet.be

- 16/06/09
 - **FEPI Working Group on Policy**
 - Consejo General de Enfermeria
 - Fuente del Rey, 2, 28023, Aravaca, Madrid