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European Parliament's Report on the Directive proposal on the 'Application of Patient's Rights in Cross-border Healthcare' – Debates and Presentation of Amendments

The 10th of February, the European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (**ENVI**) held its third meeting of this year. The main issue of discussion was the drafting of the Committee's report on the European Commission's Directive proposal on '*the Application of Patient's Rights in Cross-border Healthcare*'.

A report project was presented by Mr. **John Bowis, MEP** (EPP-ED), Rapporteur, launching the discussion between the ENVI Committee members. Representatives of the stakeholders were invited to attend the meeting. Our Council was represented by Policy and Press Officer Laurent Louette.

Were also present Mr. **Nick Fahy**, Head of Unit of the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection (DG SANCO) 'Health Information' and Mr. **Bernard Merkel**, a Head of Unit of DG SANCO 'Health Strategy and Health Systems', as well as representative of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council.

706 amendments have been presented to the European Commission's proposal, the importance of the number being an indication of the fact that the European Parliament's final text could be substantially different to the initial document. The number of amendments deposited by different MEP's shows the importance of this issue, although such an activity and zeal demonstrated by MEP's could also be explained by the proximity of the European elections...

In his speech, **John Bowis, MEP** underlined that his group (EPP-ED) was very satisfied with this European Commission's Directive proposal and that 'this document is not about health professionals, services or health inequalities, but about the patients!

The shadow Rapporteur for the Socialist Group (ESP), **Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, MEP**, was less enthusiastic than her colleague declaring that the European Commission's proposal was 'a bit too provisional, with too many guidances'.

ALDE's Shadow Rapporteur, Mr. **Jules Maaten, MEP** expressed satisfaction with John Bowis' text, underlining that 'this Directive was a necessity because we can not allow this so important matter to be dealt only by Court, and because this will permit some interoperability between the National Health Systems, at a time where a lot of differences still exist between Member States'.

On the other hand, shadow Rapporteur for the Green Group, Mr. **Claude Turmes, MEP** was perhaps the most skeptical about the report: 'as long as the European Commission will keep on inserting references to health services, even in its document about patients, etc, we [Group of the Greens-European Free Alliance] will keep on blocking the document in question, we won't be blurred by a Bolkenstein-bis!'

Replying to these comments, MEP **John Bowis** reassured Mr. **Turmes** that 'this document is not dealing with services, but rights for patients' and underlined that this is 'about patient's needs, not means. This Directive is not aiming at facilitating the possibility for rich patients to get an expensive treatment, but on the contrary to give the opportunity for any patients to receive the treatments his/her condition requires'.

Addressing the meeting on behalf of the European Commission, Mr. **Merkel** stated that 'we [DG SANCO] are extremely happy to see the so intense debate this Directive is bringing'. Mr. Merkel also underlined that 'there is no reason for National Health Systems to be scared by the huge influx of patients that this Directive could indirectly persuades to come, because the studies the European Commission has undertaken show that there is a relatively low proportion of patients (1%) concerned by the incomes of this Directive. But, although this proportion is very low, it is crucial to guarantee the right for these patients to choose the most suitable treatment'.

Considering all the amendments deposited, it appears that the most controversial parts of the Directive proposal are the whereas 10 (definition of cross-border healthcare) with 8 different amendments and the article 5 (responsibilities of authorities of Member State of Treatment), with more than 73 different amendments!

The next step in this process is scheduled for the 12th of March, at the ENVI Committee meeting in Strasbourg, where Mr. Bowis' report is going to be submitted to vote. The following step will be the presentation of the final report at the European Parliament's Plenary Session of 23/04/09 in Brussels.

All the documents relating to this issue, including the report and its amendments are at your disposal at the FEPI Secretariat and will appear very soon on the FEPI Website.

The FEPI Secretariat will of course keep you posted on this very important issue.

European Commission's proposal for a Recommendation of the Council on Patient Safety – European Parliament Report

On the 16th of February, the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) has discussed the report of Mrs. **Amalia Sartori, MEP** (EPP-ED) on 'the proposal for a recommendation of the Council on Patient Safety, prevention and control of healthcare associated infections', published by the European Commission the 15/12/08.

In this report, Mrs. **Sartori**, stresses 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 health systems (amendment 5). In what regards the nursing profession, one of the most significant amendments is the 9th, proposing that '**Member States, should envisage [...] to recruit nurses with specialisation in infections control, with the objective of one nurse for 250 hospital beds for 2015**', (our translation).

The following procedural step will be the proposal for adoption at EP committee level, scheduled for the 31/03/09.

The FEPI Secretariat will of course keep you updated on the issue.

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Meetings and Events to come:

- 17/02/09
 - **Access to Treatments: Which rights for Patients?**
 - European Voice Health Check Debate
 - Representation of the State of Baden-Württemberg
 - Rue Belliard 60-62, B-1040 Brussels
 - 12.00-15.00
 - <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/events/access-to-treatments-which-rights-for-patients-/63538.aspx?LG=1>
 - FEPI Delegation: Mr. Laurent Louette

- 25/02/09
 - **IMI Awareness Raising Conference: "The IMI Network and the Services Directive – Connecting administrations, building trust"**
 - European Commission's DG Markt
 - Charlemagne Building
 - Rue de la Loi, 170, B – 1049 Brussels
 - 10.00-16.30
 - http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/imi-net/imi_awareness_raising_conference_en.html#venue
 - FEPI Delegation: Dr. Theodoros Koutroubas and Mr. Laurent Louette

- 06/03/09
 - **Health Professionals Crossing Borders Project** spring meeting
 - The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, Dublin
 - 6, Kildare Street
 - 09.30 – 16.45
 - <http://www.hcpb.eu>
 - FEPI Delegation: Dr. Theodoros Koutroubas and Mr. Laurent Louette