



[Nouvelles de Bruxelles - Notizie de Bruxelles – Novidades de Bruselas – News from Brussels](#)
[Issue # 25 – 18/03/09](#)

HPCB Spring meeting 2009 – Dublin, Ireland

This 6th of March, the Healthcare Professionals Crossing Border (HPCB) Project organized its first meeting of the year in Dublin. The meeting was hosted by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland and attended by more than 80 participants from 16 countries. FEPI was represented by Mr. Laurent Louette, Policy and Press Officer. Dr. Theodoros Koutroubas was also present, in his quality of CEPLIS Director General.

The theme of the meeting in question was '**Patients' Rights to Effective Healthcare Regulation**' and it focused on the implementation of the HPCB Portugal Agreement (adopted in October 2007) in the context of the European Commission's Directive proposal on 'the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare'.

The session began with a welcome speech by **Ms. Mary Harney**, Irish Minister for Health and Children, updating the audience on the legal evolutions in her country with regards to the lay representation in the councils of healthcare regulatory bodies. In fact, the legislative proposal, due to be discussed by lawmakers in May 2009, introduces a majority of non-healthcare professionals within the Executive Councils of these bodies.

Supporting this legislative proposal, Ms. Harney underlined the importance of public confidence in healthcare providers, saying that: '*Patients do not mind if the care is public or private or lay-regulated, there only concern is to be cared for*'. It is to be noted that the proposal in question has still to be adopted and that its provisions may possibly be changed by the time the Parliament will adopt its final amendments.

Amongst the other speakers, **Prof. Charles Normand**, from the Trinity College of Dublin, put in light some of the possible weaknesses of the European Commission Directive proposal on 'the application of patients' rights in cross-

border healthcare'. According to Prof. Normand, one of the possible effects of the proposed Directive for the national regulation is that *'there are risks of large unexpected costs, as well as new problems of planning capacity if an unknown number (of patients) will travel in or out'*. On the possible future impacts of the proposed Directive on the long term implications for patient mobility, Prof. Normand used an metaphor to compare the European Commission's document to *'a glacier rather than an avalanche'*, expressing the long and gradable change of patient mobility. He also expressed his concern on the *'risk of shortages occurring in countries with more constrained resources'*, joining the opinion of European Commission's officer **Elizabeth Kidd** on the same issue (FEPI Newsletter Issue 24).

Following the intervention of Prof. Normand, Mr. **Ralph Hughes**, from the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) gave an interesting speech on how the network he is working for perceives the Directive proposal on cross-border healthcare, and also stressed his concerns on the specific framework for cross-border healthcare *'We at the EPHA, are not absolutely sure that information shall stand as a guarantee of reimbursement. This issue of reimbursement won't be easily managed, as the European Commission hopes it'*.

Mr. Hughes also underlined the concern of EPHA on *'how will a better coordination with social security systems be ensured, in accordance with Council Regulation 1408/71 (on the application of social security schemes to employed persons and their families moving within the Community)'*.

Once again this HPCB meeting gave the opportunity for a large number of stakeholders to discuss and share their experiences and knowledge of regulation with other healthcare regulators and officials from Ministries or national federal authorities, confirming that HPCB are mainly useful discussion forums but have little practical outcome.

The European Parliament ENVI Committee postpones its vote on the report on Cross-Border Healthcare Directive

As you know, from the previous FEPI Newsletter (issue number 24), the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety was to vote at its monthly meeting of 12/03 in Strasbourg on the report of **MEP John Bowis**, on the European Commission Directive proposal on 'the application of patients' right in cross-border healthcare'. However, John Bowis, has decided to postpone the vote until the end of the month (the date of the meeting is the 31/03) to give the ENVI committee's members more time to consider the views of other MEPs. Bowis said that there was *"no ultimate delay"* and that a vote by the Parliament in plenary session could still take place in April as initially planned.

FEPI Secretariat will of course keep you informed on the issue.

.....

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

- 23/03/09
 - **FEPI Working Group on Statutes**
 - Consejo General de Enfermeria
 - Fuente del Rey, 2, Madrid
 - 09.00 – 14.00

- 08/04/09
 - **FEPI Working Group on Education, Training and Competences**
 - An Bord Altranais
 - 18/20 Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, co Dublin
 - 10.00 – 14.00

- 25/03/09
 - **The Pharmaceutical Forum Delivering for Patients: How to move from agreed principles to good practice and positive change across Europe**
 - **European Commission DG Health and Consumer Protection**
 - **Charlemagne Building, Room Jean Durieux (S4, 1st Floor)**
 - 170, rue de la Loi
1040 Bruxelles, Belgium
 - 08.30 – 20.30
 - http://ec.europa.eu/pharmaforum/conference_en.htm
 - FEPI Delegation: Dr. Theodoros Koutroubas and Mr. Laurent Louette

- 29/05/09
 - **CEPLIS General Assembly**
 - Valetta, Malta
 - www.ceplis.org
 - +32 2 511 44 39