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EIN Seminar on: "Freedom of movement and the right to an equitable access to healthcare within the EU"

Chair:

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Speakers:

Ivo Belet MEP, EPP Group Vice-Coordinator and Member of the ENVI Committee in the EP, Rapporteur of the report on the "Implementation of the Cross-border Healthcare Directive"

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Maria José Barros, Administrator, Hospital de Braga, Portugal

- Access to health/healthcare is an universal problem.
- The right to medical care and necessary social services is reflected in many treaties and declarations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- The European Court of Justice has embarked on a policy of strengthening the rights of EU citizens to obtain treatment in other Member States.
- To regulate cross-border healthcare should not be understood as a stimulation for patients to look for healthcare across borders.
- Both the European Union and its Member States can still make an effort to improve the implementation of the Healthcare Directive of 2011.
- The main challenges for patients who go to another country to look for healthcare are the legal and the administrative context, which is known for being extremely complex. Thus, it is very important to work towards a better integrated and much clearer legal conditions.
- For people who live in a border region of their home countries, it is often easier to resort to a medical institution of the other state. One of the reasons to do so is the distance to the facilities. These patients will then find themselves not only in another country, but also in another legal environment.
- The big obstacles to access healthcare are the geographical and organisational barriers, waiting times, choice, quality, preferences, financial resources and lack of experience or facilities to provide care.
- Mobility is the answer to insufficient infrastructures.
- There is a lot of disinformation about healthcare legislation. Patients are not conscious of their rights. The majority is not aware of the existence of national contact points to appeal to, in case of a need of clarification.
- To reduce the administrative burden on citizens, we are in need of more regional and international cooperation.
- Several projects and agreements are being discussed between Member States, allowing them to assure cross boarder response.
- Universality, access to healthcare, equity and solidarity must be the values and principles shared within the European Union.
- EU is the birthplace of UHC (Universal Health Coverage), which is fundamentally about equity.
- There is a recently renewed conviction on Universal Health Coverage related with the sustainable development goals that have been issued by the UN, in which is included the regulation of the Member States on assuring health coverage.
- The goal of Universal Health Coverage is that all people obtain good-quality essential health services, including promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliation that they need without enduring financial hardship.
- One of the better protected healthcare system is the dental care sector.
- Mental health is the poorest domain when it comes to European cooperation in terms of health.
- It is essential to find the instruments that allow an easy mobility of patients and services.
- It is also very important to embrace technological developments such as the European Commission's project on eHealth, which facilitates the sharing of data in a cross-border environment, allowing patients and professionals to be in close contact despite the context.

The 'EIN-A4' represents a summary of EIN seminar initiatives. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the EPP Group political line.