

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EPF welcomes the adoption of the IMCO report on professional qualifications Directive

The European Patients' Forum (EPF) welcomes the report adopted in the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) on 23 January about professional qualifications as a step forward for patient's safety and quality of care in Europe. The report, drafted by MEP Bernadette Vergnaud (Socialist & Democrats, France), takes on board important points for which EPF advocated.



To ensure healthcare professionals have the right training and are fit to practice when they move from one EU Member State to another is of crucial importance for patient safety and quality of care.

EPF has provided a strong patient perspective in the debate on the review of the Professional Qualifications Directive since 2011. It has called for major amendments to the Commission's proposal in its [position statement](#) and through its communication with key MEPs.

Language assessment is a core issue for patients, since good communication between healthcare professionals and patients and with colleagues is essential to ensure a high level of quality of care. EPF embraces the clarification of employers' and competent authorities' responsibilities for language checking. In particular, the report provides the right for competent authorities to check language skills of a professional in the interest of patient safety and public health. Our request for language check to occur before granting access to the professions has also been taken into account. However we strongly believe that in addition to these provisions, Member States should be required to develop national competence requirements with the input of patient organisations to ensure professionals' ability to communicate with patients in real-life situations

The report also marks a step forward in the area of **fitness to practice**. It calls for Member States to develop mandatory Continuous Professional Development (CPD) schemes for healthcare professionals in the sectorial professions. EPF strongly approves this as currency of knowledge and up-to-date skills are crucial to enable health professionals to provide safe and high-quality care. CPD is also essential to adapt skills to innovative solutions, such as eHealth and ICT-supported tools, with confidence.

As regards the European Professional card, EPF was concerned that the provision concerning “**tacit recognition**”¹ of qualifications (Para. 5, Art. 4d) would undermine patient safety. The report has corrected it stating that this tacit recognition does not grant healthcare professionals with the right to practice.

The adopted report clearly elucidates that **partial access** should not be granted to healthcare professions under the **automatic recognition regime**. Unfortunately EPF had called for this measure to apply to all healthcare professionals - not only those benefiting from automatic recognition - but this was not taken on board.

Another good point in the report, in terms of patient safety, is that it also extends the **Alert mechanism** between competent authorities. They have to warn each other when a healthcare professional with restricted/prohibited right to practice applies for recognition.

EPF will continue to advocate to ensure these changes are adopted in the plenary vote on the review of the Professional Qualification Directive in the European Parliament which will take place on 22/05 (provisional information).

Please follow this link to read [our position statement](#).

Previous articles on the topic for background: <http://www.eu-patient.eu/Press/News/EPF-advocates-the-patient-perspective-on-Professional-Qualifications/> and <http://www.eu-patient.eu/Press/News/Professional-Qualifications-Directive-MEPs-reports-support-EPF-key-points/>

The **European Patients' Forum (EPF)** was founded in 2003 to become the collective patients' voice at EU level, manifesting the solidarity, power and unity of the EU patients' movement. EPF currently represents 57 member organisations - which are chronic disease specific patient organisations working at European level, and national coalitions of patients organisations. EPF reflects the voice of an estimated 150 million patients affected by various diseases throughout Europe.

EPF's vision for the future is high quality, patient-centred, equitable healthcare throughout the European Union.

www.eu-patient.eu

Contact person:

Kaisa Immonen-Charalambous

EPF senior Policy Advisor

T +32 (0)2 280 23 36

E kaisa.immonen.charalambous@eu-patient.eu

¹ Note: this provision was stating that If the competent authority cannot provide an answer within the timeframe of one or two months, the qualification would be automatically recognised.