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PATIENTS' RIGHTS IN CROSS-BORDER HEALTHCARE SOON IMPLEMENTED

Brussels, 23 October 2013 – The [EU Directive 2011/24/EU](#) on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare will enter into application on 25 October 2013. EPF has developed a set of [recommendations](#) to guide the national authorities and bodies to ensure that this Directive brings tangible benefits for patients and healthcare.



For the first time, the right of patients in Europe to seek healthcare in another Member State and be reimbursed for it is clearly established in a legal framework. This right already existed prior to the adoption of this Directive but it only applied to prior authorisation or unforeseen medical treatment; there was no guarantee that the cost of hospital care would be met.

“While the final compromise fell short of our ambitious vision, it is still an important milestone for patients”, commented EPF Director Nicola Bedlington. *“Much now depends on the way the Directive is implemented by Members States as many of the provisions are optional or leave room for interpretation by them. We will therefore organise various conferences on this topic to encourage national patients’ organisations make full use of the opportunities”,* she continued.

The [first in the series of conferences](#) is planned on 9-11 December in Brussels with patients’ organisations representatives from The Netherlands, Luxemburg, Germany, France and Belgium.

EPF welcomed the creation of National Contact Points (NCP) for information. The number and precise form they will take is again left up to the Member State to decide. It is also required that they must consult patients’ organisations but not how to do so.

“We recommend that patient groups are proactively informed concerning NCPs’ establishment and engaged on a regular basis from the very onset of the process. This will be key to ensuring that the information provided meets the real-life needs of patients and is provided in a format that is user-friendly and accessible” stated Kaisa Immonen-Charalambous, EPF Senior Policy Adviser.

Patient organisations can contribute to the efficient running of the NCPs by ensuring effective dissemination of information to the grassroots level. They can further engage proactively by liaising with the relevant ministries and parliament to make sure that proposed laws on, for example reimbursement, are patients-friendly as well as calling on national governments to set up a system for ‘direct payments’ as referred in Article 9 (5).

Much of the value of the Directive lied in the legal basis it provided for enhanced European cooperation in key areas of healthcare such as Health technology Assessment, eHealth, rare diseases and healthcare quality and safety standards. We recommend that patients’ organisations take up these initiatives within their national communities to advocate for high-quality healthcare for all patients, whether at home or abroad.

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The **European Patients' Forum (EPF)** was founded in 2003 to ensure that the patients' community drives policies and programmes that affect patients' lives to bring changes empowering them to be equal citizens in the EU.

EPF currently represents 61 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 that all patients with chronic and/or lifelong conditions in the EU have access to high quality, patient-centred equitable health and social care.

The EPF strategic goals focus on areas such as health literacy, healthcare, patients' involvement, patients' empowerment, sustainable patients' organisations and health discrimination.

For more information about our work on cross-border healthcare, please follow this [link](#).

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