

EU cross-border healthcare: better management needed to deliver on high ambitions

04/06/2019



EU patients still face challenges in benefiting from the actions envisaged by the EU directive on cross-border healthcare, according to a new report by the European Court of Auditors. Only a minority of potential patients are aware of their rights to seek medical care abroad. At the same time, the auditors also found problems and delays in exchanging patient health data electronically between Member States. Moreover, actions to facilitate access to healthcare for rare disease patients need to be improved.

The 2011 EU cross-border healthcare directive is aimed at ensuring safe and high-quality medical care across borders in the EU, as well as providing for reimbursement abroad under the same conditions as at home. EU patients who seek healthcare in another Member State – for example, undergoing planned hospital treatment or purchasing medicines – are therefore entitled to relevant information on standards of treatment, reimbursement rules and the best legal route.

The auditors examined whether the European Commission has monitored the implementation of the EU cross-border healthcare directive and supported Member States in informing patients of their rights. They assessed the results achieved on exchanges of health data across borders and checked key actions on rare diseases.

“EU citizens still don’t benefit enough from the ambitious actions set out in the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive” said **Janusz Wojciechowski, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report.** *“EU action includes the right to cross-border*

treatment, facilitating the exchange of patients' health data across borders, and initiatives for rare diseases. But better management is needed to deliver on these ambitions.”