



Press Release

Luxembourg, 22 May 2018

EU Auditors to examine cross-border healthcare

The European Court of Auditors is conducting an audit of cross-border healthcare arrangements in the EU. The auditors will examine the European Commission's monitoring and support for putting the EU legislation on cross-border healthcare access into effect, the results achieved to date for patients, and the effectiveness of the EU funding framework and of the actions funded. The audit will also cover the eHealth sector, where information technology is used to improve healthcare delivery and the health of citizens. The auditors have today published a Background Paper on the EU cross-border healthcare system as a source of information for those interested in the subject.

An important goal of EU health policy is to ensure patients' rights to access safe and high-quality healthcare - including across national borders within the EU - and their right to be reimbursed for such healthcare. It is also one of the principles of the internal market.

"Although most patients in the EU obtain their healthcare in their own country, in some situations the most accessible or appropriate care may be available in another Member State," said Janusz Wojciechowski, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the audit. "This raises complex questions for patients, health systems and health professionals."

Healthcare systems in Europe are under pressure because of an ageing population and growing budgetary constraints in the past decade. In 2016, persons aged 65 or over accounted for 19.2 % of the EU population, an increase of 2.4 % compared with 10 years earlier. In view of these demographic changes, this share is projected to further increase in the years to come, possibly exacerbating health inequalities across the EU.

The audit will include visits to Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy and Lithuania. The report is expected to be published in the first half of 2019.

Notes to Editors

EU funding for cross-border healthcare comes primarily from the second (2008-2013) and third (2014-2020) Health Programmes, which represent average spending of €64 million per year on health related issues. The Health Programme supports "actions required by or contributing to the implementation of Union legislation in the field of [...] cross-border healthcare". The types of action co-funded include cooperation projects at EU level, action jointly undertaken by Member State health authorities, action related to the functioning of NGOs and cooperation with international organisations.

ECA Press

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The European Court of Auditors' previous report in this area, special report 28/2016, "Dealing with serious cross-border threats to health in the EU: important steps taken but more needs to be done", was published in December 2016.

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' background paper. The full paper is available at eca.europa.eu.