



European Research programme

**Europe for Patients**

Benefits and challenges of enhanced patient mobility in Europe

## **Benefits and challenges of enhanced patient mobility in Europe**

### **E4P final conference**

**Ghent, 26-27 October 2006**

## **Press Release**

On **26-27 October** the research project “**Europe for Patients**”, funded under the European Union’s 6<sup>th</sup> European Research Framework Programme, is presenting its main results in Ghent. The objective of the research is to provide a clearer view and understanding of the phenomenon of cross-border patient mobility in Europe and to support policy-making on this issue both at national and EU level.

Although patient mobility remains a fairly marginal phenomenon, taking up less than 2.75 € on average per inhabitant per year, the lack of reliable data as well as the fear for medical tourism and its potential disturbances for both sending and receiving health systems turned it into a politically sensitive issue. From the research done under e4p it follows that cross-border patient flows in Europe cover a wide variety of patient mobility types, all embedded in different contexts and settings. This was also reflected in a study published earlier this year, presenting a series of detailed case studies on cross-border care in different regions of the European Union<sup>1</sup>.

Basically, five main drivers motivate people to opt for cross-border care: familiarity, availability of care, perceived quality, financial costs and (bio)ethical legislation. Also the arrangements surrounding these patient flows are diversifying, which not only adds to the complexity but also raises the importance of information for all actors involved. Following the consecutive judgements and the withdrawal of health care from the services Directive, the European Commission is currently looking into new options for providing more legal certainty on healthcare entitlements across the European Union. Besides clarification of access rights outside the home state, clearly cross-border patient mobility also requires flanking measures dealing with informational rights as well as measures to ensure safety and quality and liability arrangements. The growing incidence of chronic conditions combined with increased mobility also highlights the need for organising continuity of care across borders.

Nearly eight years after the European Court of Justice delivered its first rulings on patient mobility cases and five years after another conference was organised in Ghent under the Belgian EU Presidency entitled “*European Integration and national health care systems: a challenge for social policy*”, patient mobility and its wider aspects have not disappeared from the political agenda. On the contrary, the increased impact of market rules on health systems is illustrated by recent infringement procedures launched by the European Commission against some Member States for their planning measures (i.e. the number of Pet Scans in Belgium or pharmacies in Italy, Spain and Austria).

The **e4p Final Conference** comes at a very timely moment, when the European Commission’s DG Sanco just launched a consultation process on the future of an initiative concerning health services in the European Union<sup>2</sup>. The conference will bring together about 150 participants, from a series of different institutions: the European Parliament, the European Commission, from the Health Ministries in the different Member States and regions and representatives of stakeholders in the health sector: professionals, providers, purchaser and last, but not least, patients. The outcome of the research and the conference will be published in a book that is announced for early 2007.

A Press Conference is foreseen on **Thursday, 26 October at 13h.:** **Het Pand, Ghent**

**Conference venue:** Het Pand, Onderbergen 1, 9000 Gent

**For more information, please contact**

- Magdalene Rosenmöller, Project Scientific Coordinator, IESE T. +34 609 76 83 48, [magda@iese.edu](mailto:magda@iese.edu)
- Rita Baeten, Research Director, Observatoire sociale européenne, T +32 2 5371971, [baeten@ose.be](mailto:baeten@ose.be)
- Prof. Yves Jorens, Vakgroep Sociaal Recht, Universiteit Gent, T +32 9 2646863, [Yves.Jorens@UGent.be](mailto:Yves.Jorens@UGent.be)

**Visit the E4P web site:** [www.europe4patients.org/conference](http://www.europe4patients.org/conference)

<sup>1</sup> See “*Patient Mobility in the European Union – Learning from Experience*”, edited by Magdalene Rosenmöller, Martin Mckee and Rita Baeten, published by WHO 2006 on behalf of the Europe 4 Patients project and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, (ISBN 92 890 2287 6) and supported by the EC Sixth Community Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. In pdf on [www.europe4patients.org](http://www.europe4patients.org)

<sup>2</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_overview/co\\_operation/mobility/community\\_framework\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/co_operation/mobility/community_framework_en.htm)