

Cross-border health care

Council does not back provision on rare diseases

By Sophie Petitjean | Tuesday 05 October 2010

According to a note dated 5 October that sums up the French position, none of the member states backs the European Parliament's French rapporteur Françoise Grossetête (EPP) on exemptions she seeks for rare diseases. Upon presenting her recommendations on the proposals on cross-border health care to fellow members of the EP Committee on Public Health (ENVI), the rapporteur made it clear that she would not bend on this point. In her view, patients suffering from rare diseases must have access to health care in another member state without prior authorisation and with the certainty of being reimbursed by their member state of affiliation. For the member states, "the introduction of derogations is in contradiction with member states' responsibility for setting such rules and reimbursement levels".

Meanwhile, France rejects a second point to which the rapporteur attaches a lot of importance, namely an exhaustive list of treatments that can require prior authorisation. For Paris, this provision represents the basis of the political agreement of June 2010 since it led to the emergence of a qualified majority. In its draft compromise, the Spanish EU Presidency introduced a quality and safety criterion that allowed the member state of affiliation to refuse to grant prior authorisation. According to the rapporteur, this criterion paves the way to arbitrary refusals and must absolutely be deleted.

Among other points of disagreement with the rapporteur, France mentions the questions of e-health and the direct payment system. On the first, Paris refuses to differentiate between telemedicine and e-health and does not support the idea of including telepsychiatry in the text. On the second point, the French authorities are concerned that the direct payment system would be hard to implement, make secure and monitor.