

## **Dimensions of Health Tourism in Europe**

*Magdalene Rosenmüller, IESE Business School, EC FP6 Project Europe for Patients*

The Europe for Patients (e4p) project, part of the component on "scientific support to policies" (SSP) of the 6th Framework Research Programme, launched in February 2004, studies the benefits and challenges of patient mobility in Europe with the objective to provide the evidence needed to maximise the benefits that can be achieved with enhanced patient mobility in Europe. It should enable policy makers at EU and national level to take concerted and coordinated action to allow Europe's citizens / patients to benefit from enhanced mobility in Europe through actions at different levels (regional, national, European) employing legal, organizational and regulatory approaches.

Patient mobility being high on the European health policy agenda, the project has continuous interactions with the patient mobility policy process and the High Level Group on Health Systems and Medical Care in order to increase the impact on European policies in the area of public health, health systems and social protection.

At midterm, the project's first phase on evidence gathering has been completed. Activities have been carried out on two levels: across Europe and in-depth case studies. The horizontal studies looked into the legal framework at EU and national level, patterns of patient mobility, contracting arrangements, patient orientation and information, and communication between professionals, while the case studies give in depth accounts of cross border arrangements (Ireland/Northern Ireland, Slovenia/Austria, Estonia/Finland), purchased care (Belgium/UK), long term residents (Spain) and mass tourism (Veneto region). In the second phase, the gathered evidence will be the base for situational analysis and the identification of options for change in terms of primary legislation and practical & monitoring arrangements related to patient mobility.

At the healthregio International Symposium in Vienna, the presentation will review the different aspects of "health tourism" and patient mobility in Europe, the different forms it can take and the challenges encountered: such as the difficulties in getting a better insight: poor availability of data, administrative difficulties, unwillingness to share data in health systems, and systems in their design not taking into account the presence of European patients. Other challenges of patient mobility are the quality of and access to care, information to patients, the communication between different professionals and after care, the different concepts of care, difficulties in contractual arrangements and cross-border cooperation - and how some of those issues have been addressed in different settings. It will then look into the potential benefits of patient mobility in terms of thriving of excellence of care, sharing capacities, and exchanging best practices, and how these benefits can be enhanced.

The presentation will conclude with lessons learnt and some suggestions for improvement, and how actors at different levels can contribute in view of improving policies on European health systems and medical care.