



Press Release



Annual EU healthcare index puts The Netherlands in “uncontested leadership”

Emerging pattern among the top countries: Consumer information drives choice and care quality

Brussels, 28th of September 2009

The Netherlands win the 2009 Euro Health Consumer Index (EHCI), for the second year in a row - the first time this happens since the EHCI started in 2005 – and with an outstanding margin. Nevertheless, Denmark keeps its runner-up position from last year. Besides the Dutch and Danish system there is a small group of strong performers: Iceland, Austria and Switzerland. Luxembourg leaves the top league, losing 5 positions. Estonia, “the wonder boy” of the EHCI, drops significantly but anyhow delivers value for money healthcare.

There are general improvement trends among most of the measured healthcare systems, with examples of reform making impact not only in Netherlands but in Ireland or the Czech Republic as well. There are continuous decline in the Spanish, Portuguese and Greek healthcare systems which do not keep up with the improvement rate one can find in countries like the Netherlands, Denmark or Ireland. Large parts of Eastern and Central Europe seem to be affected by the financial crisis.

The HCP research director, Dr. Arne Bjornberg, comments on the EHCI 2009 outcomes: “As the Netherlands are expanding their lead among the best performing countries, the Index indicates that the Dutch might have found a successful approach. It combines competition for funding and provision within a regulated framework. There are information tools to support active choice among consumers. The Netherlands have started working on patient empowerment early, which now clearly pays off in many areas. And politicians and bureaucrats are comparatively far removed from operative decisions on delivery of Dutch healthcare services!”

Johan Hjertqvist, President of Health Consumer Powerhouse, commented: “With patient mobility growing around Europe, there is a strong need for transparency exposing the pros and cons of the national healthcare systems. The EU intends to introduce a cross-border care scheme which requires significantly better information to patients. This year’s measurement indicates that forward-looking governments start using healthcare information and choice to engage patients in the decision-making, building a pressure from below for improvement”.



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EURO HEALTH CONSUMER INDEX 2009 AT A GLANCE:								
Rank	Country	Change	Rank	Country	Change	Rank	Country	Change
1	Netherlands	-	12	Finland	-3	23	Greece	-4
2	Denmark	-	13	Ireland	+2	24	FYROM	+6
3	Iceland	N/A	14	UK	-1	25	Portugal	+1
4	Austria	- 1	15	Italy	+1	26	Poland	-1
5	Switzerland	+2	16	Slovenia	+4	27	Malta	-4
6	Germany	-	17	Czech Republic	-1	28	Slovakia	-6
7	France	+3	18	Estonia	-7	29	Lithuania	-5
8	Sweden	-3	19	Cyprus	+2	30	Albania	N/A
9	Luxembourg	-5	20	Hungary	-6	31	Latvia	-
10	Norway	-2	21	Spain	-3	32	Romania	-5
11	Belgium	+1	22	Croatia	+7	32	Bulgaria	-5

Index performance criteria

The EHCI 2009 groups 38 indicators of quality into six categories: Patient rights and information, e-Health, Waiting time for treatment, Outcomes, Range and reach of services provided and Pharmaceuticals. Each sub-discipline is weighted for importance to provide the overall Index score. The individual category leaders were as follows:

- Patient rights and information: Denmark
- e-Health: Denmark, Netherlands
- Waiting time for treatment: Albania, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland
- Outcomes: Sweden
- Range and reach of services provided: Belgium, Luxembourg, Sweden
- Pharmaceuticals: Denmark, Netherlands

About the EHCI

The EHCI has become a measurement standard for European healthcare. It ranks 33 national European health care systems across 38 indicators, covering six areas that are key to the health consumer: Patients' rights and information, e-Health, Waiting times for treatment, Treatment outcomes, Range and reach of services provided and Access to medication. The Index is compiled from a combination of public statistics, patient polls and independent research conducted by the founders, Brussels-based think tank Health Consumer Powerhouse. The EHCI 2009 takes a consumer centred position and works with the support of the European Commission - DG Information Society and Media - and the assistance of the Swedish EU Presidency.

For more information and the explanatory report:

http://www.healthpowerhouse.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55&Itemid=54

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