

Press Release



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The Netherlands Top in Healthcare

New European healthcare index says the Netherlands “Meet consumer expectations best”

In a survey of 12 European countries, the Netherlands consumer is the best served by his healthcare system. Closely following are Switzerland and Germany. Perennial top performers France and Sweden, often hailed as model healthcare systems by international rankings, only achieve mid-table positions in the new EuroHealth Consumer Index is launched in Brussels at the Health Consumer Summit 2005.

The EuroHealth Consumer Index ranks national health care systems across 20 indicators, covering five areas that are key to the consumer – patients’ rights and information, waiting times for common treatments, care outcomes, customer friendliness and access to medication, The Index is compiled from a combination of public statistics and independent research by Brussels-based think tank Health Consumer Powerhouse. The Index takes a consumer-centred position, excluding conventional public health indicators such as hospital beds and life expectancy from its perspective.

Johan Hjertqvist, President of Health Consumer Powerhouse, commented “With health consumer mobility growing around Europe, there is a strong need for transparency exposing the pros and cons of the national healthcare systems. If you want to go abroad for a treatment what can you expect in waiting times, level of services, risk of hospital infections and access to new drugs? For the first time there is a ranking tool for consumers providing answers to this kind of questions.”

“It is high time health consumer comparisons are moved out of the statistical office into the street!” Mr Hjertqvist concluded. Dr Arne Bjornberg, Director for the EuroHealth Consumer Index, presented the outcomes at the Health Consumer Summit. The index benchmarked 12 national healthcare systems in Europe. Out of a potential 60 points the Netherlands gained 49, positioning its health care as the most consumer-friendly. In second and third places respectively were Switzerland (47 points) and Germany (46). In 12th place was Poland with 26 points.

Commenting on the findings, Dr Bjornberg stated “Dealing with consumer matters ourselves, we are not surprised to find that nations with practically no waiting lists gain good positions in the Index”. He continued “We deliberately excluded conventional indicators like life expectancy because, although

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such figures might be useful to governments and international organisations, they tell people waiting in line or demanding better services very little.

“Evidently, health care systems based on pluralism in funding and provision deliver the best consumer value”, comments MEP Christofer Fjellner, hosting the Summit. He added “Patient mobility and service provider competition improve the quality of care. That is why it is important to keep health care in the Service Directive”.

“This is only our first step”, stated Johan Hjertqvist. “Assuming this approach is favourably received, we want to rank all 25 EU countries next year. We need to inspire the creation of improved methods of displaying the healthcare standards in Europe, responding to declarations from the European Commission, the European Parliament, patients’ organisations and care industry. It is high time to take the health consumer seriously!”

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Editors’ notes

The overall rankings of the Index were as follows:

1. The Netherlands
2. Switzerland
3. Germany
4. Sweden
5. Xx
6. Xx
7. Xx
8. Xx
9. Xx
10. Xx
11. Xx
12. Poland

To find out more about the EuroHealth Index, and to view/download the Index and the explanatory report, visit: <http://www.healthpowerhouse.com/?p=ehci2005>

To find out more about the Health Consumer Powerhouse, visit <http://www.healthpowerhouse.com/?p=mediaroom>

To examine the Swedish Health Consumer Index (published in 2004 as well as 2005), visit: www.vardkonsumentindex.se (also in English).

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