Malta stable in low end of today’s EU healthcare ranking

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Malta stays in the low end when the 2012 Euro Health Consumer Index (EHCI) was presented today in the European Parliament in Brussels. The comparison gave the Netherlands 872 out of potentially 1 000 points, followed by Denmark (822), Iceland (799), Luxembourg (791) and Belgium (783). Malta was rewarded 617 points, staying in the same position as in 2009 – no 26. Malta now competes with Portugal and Poland for positions. The EHCI has been published since 2005 by the Sweden-based think-tank Health Consumer Powerhouse (HCP).

What is happening in Maltese healthcare?

- Not too much, says Dr Arne Bjornberg, HCP COO and head of the EHCI team. Still the system lacks transparency, patients rights are weak and the medical outcomes mediocre. There has been some improvement of waiting times though.

- Traditionally Maltese patients have gone to the UK for treatment. Now the hospital capacity has improved, which might explain better waiting conditions, estimates Dr Bjornberg. But the new big university hospital does not seem to have added to the breakthrough of e-Health in Malta.

General improvement – with warning signs

The EHCI reflects a continuous improvement of European healthcare, with better outcomes and overall conditions. Alarm signals concerning the impact from the economic downturns seem a bit exaggerated. For decades healthcare has talked of budget cuts and loss of quality when in reality the opposite development has been more correct. But the Index points to three distinct areas of special concern in the wake of the crisis:

- Tendencies of longer waiting for expensive surgery among countries most affected by the economic downturn

- Increased share of out of pocket payment for a range of treatments

- Lack of improvement and even deteriorating access to new kinds of medicines.

Regardless of the economy Europe remains hospital infection territory. For every second among the 34 measured countries EHCI puts a red alert for the risk of infections.

- An EU initiative to ban sales of antibiotics without a prescription would bring this figure down, claims Mr Johan Hjertqvist, HCP founder and president. This would mean more to patient safety than most other things EU engages in!
About the Index
The EHCI has become a measurement standard for European healthcare. The 2012 edition ranks 34 national European health care systems across 42 indicators, covering five areas that are key to the health consumer: Patients’ rights and information, Waiting times for treatment, Outcomes, Prevention/Range and reach of services provided and Pharmaceuticals. The Index is compiled from a combination of public statistics, patient polls and independent research conducted by the founder, the Sweden-based think tank Health Consumer Powerhouse.

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For more information and the explanatory report:
www.healthpowerhouse.com/ehci2012

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