

Sophie in 't Veld

Brussels, 16 May 2019

Dear Commissioner Vestager,
Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis,

In the internal market, EU citizens have the right to access healthcare in any EU country and to be reimbursed for care abroad by their home country. This is not only relevant for people who fall ill during travels, but particularly for the millions of citizens who live in border regions and are dependent on healthcare in the bordering Member State. Because of high quality healthcare for specific treatments across the border, shorter waiting times and distance from home, citizens in border regions would like to make use of cross-border healthcare. In this way, wastage of financial, technical and human resources would be prevented as much as possible in these regions.

However, an equal level playing field is necessary for both healthcare providers and healthcare consumers to benefit from the potential of cross-border healthcare. In Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, a Dutch region bordering Belgium, a detrimental situation has emerged in the field of cross-border healthcare, because of the behaviour of the health insurers. Dutch citizens who make use of Belgian healthcare are reimbursed by their Dutch health insurance. However, the opposite scenario is more complicated: if Belgian citizens make use of Dutch healthcare, the Belgian health insurers complicate reimbursement with a very high administrative burden. As a result, Dutch people go to Belgium for healthcare for certain treatments, but Belgian people do not go to the Netherlands. This distortion of competition is very detrimental to Dutch healthcare providers in the border region.

Against this background,

- Is the Commission aware of the practical problems of cross-border healthcare in European border regions for both health providers and consumers?
- Does the Commission agree that an equal level playing field is important for cross-border healthcare in border regions?
- Does the Commission consider this practice to be in line with EU (competition) law and case law, including the Directive (2011/24/EU) on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare?
- Which actions will the Commission take to further investigate this distortion of competition in the Dutch-Belgian border region, and will it take measures to allow for an equal level playing field?

Kind regards,

Sophie in 't Veld
Member of European Parliament (D66 / ALDE)