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News Members

Ireland

The Hospital Administration Wants to Reduce Private Hours

The Irish hospital administration has just announced that it wants to reduce the income which medical specialists derive from private fees paid for the treatment of private patients.

The medical specialists and the Irish hospitals are authorised to treat private patients, even if they work mainly for the Irish national health service. The hospital administrators suggest to offer two separate contracts to doctors from now on.

A.: Doctors who work in a public hospital are not authorised to treat private patients.

B.: Doctors can treat a certain number of private patients, up to 20% of their working hours. If they treat more, the employer has the right to reduce the fees related to their services in the public health service. The Irish Medical Organisation (IMO) opposes the measure and describes it as unjust, because it punishes diligent specialists.

Germany

Health Reform

After almost a year of negotiation, the Bundestag (federal parliament), followed by the Bundesrat (federal council), adopted health reforms on 2 February, and voted for the 600 pages of legislation on 16 February. Finally, the Federal President Horst Köhler signed the law; the controversial reforms became law as envisaged on 01 April.

Politicians and associations consider that certain parts of the reform, particularly the interventions of private health insurance (PKV) are anti-constitutional.

The last word belongs to the constitutional supreme court, because the PKV association has been preparing a series of constitutional complaints against the health reforms for a long time and the political parties also envisage this procedure.

France

New Minister of Health

At the end of March, Philippe Bas, the acting Minister for Social Security, was named Minister of Health, replacing Xavier Bertrand, who left the government to dedicate himself to his function as spokesperson for the campaign of one of the principal candidates in the French presidential election.

Belgium/ France

Agreement on Emergency Interventions

A Franco-Belgian agreement was signed this month between health ministers of the two countries on emergency interventions (SMUR) in the cross-border zone. This is a first in Europe, which finalises a move which has been in progress for many years. The zone concerned extends from the Belgian coast as far as Luxembourg, and concerns the French regions of Lorraine, Champagne-Ardenne, Picardie, and Nord- Pas-de-Calais.

The process of cross-border emergency interventions existed already in practice between Belgian and French emergency departments. The objective of the partnership convention which was just signed is to look after the daily concerns of people. The only problem lies with mastering Flemish (one of the national languages of Belgium) in certain zones. In an initial analysis, it is estimated that between 150 and 200 interventions per year in each country have the potential for cross-border collaboration, meaning 400 interventions in total. The advantages are the rapid

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intervention of the SMUR and the transfer of victims to the nearest hospital. A framework agreement permits reimbursement of interventions abroad. The caller pays, the intervention time being calculated by half-hour. This project is also of interest to Germany, according to the Belgian health ministry.

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