Social security: employed persons, self-employed persons, and their families (amend. Regulations (EEC) No 1408/71 and (EEC) No 574/72)

2003/0138(COD) - 17/02/2003 - Document attached to the procedure

This document consists of a Communication from the Commission concerning the introduction of a European health insurance card. The Commission has proposed 1 June 2004 as the launch date of the common European health insurance card. The single, personalised card is designed to replace all current paper forms needed for health treatment which is necessary during a temporary stay in another Member State. The new card will make life easier for EU citizens, care providers (doctors, hospitals) and social security institutions. It will first replace the existing 'E111' form for short stays such as holidays and then, in a second phase, all the other forms used for temporary stays employees posted to another country (E128), international road transport (E110), study (E128) and job seekers (E119). In a third phase, it will take the form of an electronic 'smart' card, readable by computer. The card will simplify procedures but not change EU citizens' rights and obligations. The card will, for example, allow patients who have to pay for their health care abroad to be reimboursed more quickly by their own social security system. However, the card will offer more advantages as EU rules gradually open up more possibilities for EU citizens to be treated while on a temporary stay in another Member State. One such possibility, already agreed at political level between the Member States, is the right to all necessary care in the host Member State, not only emergency care. The Commission has adopted these proposals at the request of the Barcelona Spring Summit of March 2002, which asked the Commission to table, before the Brussels Spring Summit of 21 March this year, the necessary details for phasing in of a European health insurance card. The European card will be introduced in three stages: 1) Legal and technical preparation (2002-2003), with consultation of Member States and other stakeholders. 2) Launch on 1 June 2004. Initially, the card will replace only form "E111" and subsequently all the other forms used for temporary stays. Grace periods may be requested by those Member States which do not presently use cards but these grace periods may not exceed 18 months (i.e. until 31 December 2005). 3) Introduction of electronic "smart cards". In some EU border regions, such electronic systems already exist for planned health care in another Member State (E112) . However, given the differences in national circumstances and in the technology used, this phase cannot be embarked upon immediately.