Patient mobility and healthcare developments in the European Union

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drafted by John BOWIS (EPP-ED , UK) in response to the Commission communication on patient mobility and healthcare developments in the EU.

The report stressed the need for the EU "to develop urgently a coherent policy on patient mobility" in the light of a string of rulings by the Court of Justice, and to agree guidelines for use by patients, health professionals and funding agencies. The committee wanted the Commission to draw up "a firm and timetabled proposal for action"using the open method of coordination. It believed that this matter "needs a separate Commission proposal and should not be included in the general Services Directive".

MEPs also wanted Member States to adopt rules on prescribing drugs, carrying out prescription orders and refunding the cost of medicines bought in another Member State . They said that the Commission should " consider, while respecting national rules, harmonisation of the procedures with regard to reimbursement of costs".The payment mechanisms for health care should be "uniform and impartial so as to avoid inequalities and the creation of disadvantages to certain patients".

The committee also highlighted the potential risk of a "brain drain" from the new Member States to those offering higher salaries, with a subsequent threat to the capacity and standard of their healthcare systems. It therefore wanted to see research into the possible impacts of increased patient mobility on such movements, and research into the future demand for healthcare professionals and supply through EU higher education systems.