



*Raising standards for consumers*



## Press Release

# Cross-border healthcare: Consumer attitudes and experiences

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**Legislation<sup>1</sup> that gives EU citizens the right to cross-border healthcare offers many potential benefits, but is still not working effectively, according to a [new ANEC study](#).**

Consumers are reluctant to seek planned medical treatment in other EU countries, despite the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive being in place for almost five years, according to an ANEC survey of 1.656 EU citizens. Although 37% of respondents had received urgent and unplanned medical treatment in another EU country, only 4% had travelled abroad to receive planned medical treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> Cross-Border Healthcare Directive 2011/24/EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare and EU Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems

The study reveals that lack of knowledge about rights and choices are key barriers to seeking planned treatment abroad. Less than half (47%) of respondents knew that they could apply to be reimbursed for certain planned treatments by their national healthcare insurer. The study suggests that consumers could be missing out on state funding. The majority of those who had received planned treatment paid privately, with only 34.1% seeking reimbursement from their national healthcare insurer.

Three in ten respondents who had received planned or unplanned treatment abroad reported problems, mainly related to the process of accessing care, receiving reimbursement, or resolving disputes. However, most patients reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their care.

At the beginning of the patient journey, the [study](#) highlights an urgent need to raise awareness of rights, and provide patients with clear, consistent guidance about cross-border healthcare options so that they can make informed decisions about care. At the other end of the patient journey, there is an urgent need for effective systems of redress so consumers know where to complain and can achieve satisfactory resolution to problems. The study concludes with recommendations to relevant authorities and organisations.

## About ANEC

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending consumer interests in the processes of technical standardisation and conformity assessment, as well as related legislation and public policies.

ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and is open to the representation of national consumer organisations in 34 countries.

ANEC is funded by the European Union and EFTA, with national consumer organisations contributing in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.



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