

10th European Patients' Rights Day

Reducing waste and inefficiency in the healthcare systems, increasing quality of patient care

Opening Remarks and keynote Presentations

Good morning and welcome to the European celebration of the tenth Edition of the European Patients' Rights Day.

As you know, Active Citizenship Network promotes this multi-stakeholder event since 2007, and as its Director, I am so honored to celebrate this relevant anniversary here at the EU Parliament.

For my organization is really a pleasure to host each one of you, and thanks again for being here today, especially for who have travelled a lot. Today there are leaders of civic and patient organizations coming from 25 Countries, some of them outside the European Union, such as Albania, Russia, Macedonia, Switzerland. With them, many representatives and leaders of 18 networks at EU level, professionals and experts, companies and providers, public relation agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

First of all, I would like to thank the European and national Institutions, and of course special thanks to the Members of the European Parliament David Borrelli, Co-Chair of the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group, and to his colleague Piernicola Pedicini, ENVI Committee Coordinator for his political group, for having accepted to host this initiative.

1. Sustainability and waste in healthcare

Well, as you know, the main topic of the daily conference is the fight against waste and inefficiency in the healthcare systems.

The reason of this topic is linked to the past edition of the European Patients' Rights Day, totally dedicated to the sustainability of the European healthcare systems, that represents a major challenge for governments, healthcare providers and patients.

In that occasion, among others, emerged the need to improve the level of awareness about the importance of the common commitment to reduce waste and inefficiency in healthcare.

In fact, as clearly stated by European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, "there is ample evidence of pervasive inefficiency in the process of transforming resources into health outcomes, generating economic waste and being a contributory factor for the excessive health expenditure growth¹".

The World Health Organization² estimated that from 20% to 40% of all the health spending is wasted through inefficiency.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)³ estimates that average life expectancy could increase by about 2 years in Europe, if resources were used more efficiently. Consequently, reducing inefficiencies can lead to substantial gains.

¹ "Efficiency estimates of health care systems in the EU" - European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs.

² The world health report: health systems financing: the path to universal coverage. - World Health Organization 2010

³ L'Organizzazione per la cooperazione e lo sviluppo economico (OCSE) (anno 2010)

Raising sufficient money for health is imperative, but just having the money will not ensure universal coverage. The final requirement is to ensure resources are used efficiently and waste is avoided. But what does waste mean?

2. Waste definitions

There are many definitions of healthcare waste, that is a ~~clever~~ container concept for a whole series of phenomena causing financial losses in healthcare.

The New England Healthcare Institute⁴, for example, defines waste as “Healthcare spending that can be eliminated without reducing the quality of care”.

Some of our guests today will provide us other interesting classifications, talking about waste and source of inefficiency. After that will be showed you a civic approach to the phenomenon, that I just anticipate now:

Waste in the National Health Service is any activity, behavior, good and service that uses resources, without producing results in terms of health, wellness and quality of life as established by the European Charter of Patients' Rights.

3. The active role of citizens in the fight against inefficiencies

There is another and more relevant reason that suggests us to address this topic: we believe that citizens play an active role in the fight against inefficiencies. This is a must for my organization at all levels, included in our corporate vision, as underlined in the following statement:

"Cittadinanzattiva – Active Citizenship - believes that citizens have the power, by organizing themselves, to overcome conditions of subordination and violation of their rights, to build a world where no human being is excluded and no common good is wasted."

For sure, the issue of waste is at the heart of the public debate, but it is often treated in an incomplete way and referred to single areas (energy, water, health, etc.). For us, however, waste is a cross-cutting issue, which refers to the way in which common goods are used and, more specifically, to their selfish and inappropriate use: this happens when economic, environmental, landscape or human resources are underused, abandoned, deprived of value and of their planning skills.

Having a negative impact on those resources, waste - of whatever type - damage common goods and limit citizens' rights, especially those of future generations.

In this sense, the joint efforts of all the social stakeholders (institutions, businesses, experts, media, civic organizations and individuals) are crucial to fight waste in an effective and permanent way.

4. The active role of citizens in the fight against inefficiencies

In general, there are many actions that citizens can undertake to fight waste, and fighting against **waste in healthcare**, both citizens and patients can play a key role:

- on one hand, by acting as sentinels to track and report corruption, irregularities and inefficiency;
- on the other hand, they can contribute to the reduction of waste:
 - by adopting responsible behaviors and effective lifestyles,
 - respecting the rules of access to health services;
 - adhering to therapeutic paths and consciously using drugs. In this regard, in particular, the issue of the adherence of the patient to drug therapies is crucial, as compliance can affect the

⁴www.nehi.net/

outcome of treatment and, therefore, the health of the person and the welfare costs borne by the government. Thus, it is obvious how raising awareness on this issue among all the actors of the society and promote communication campaigns and projects addressed to citizens is a priority.

In general, being committed to the proper allocation of all resources, to the promotion of real and non-formal transparency of public administration, to contrasting inefficiencies, corruption, to ensuring that “economic savings actually remain in health” from our point of view means protecting the right to health for everyone and protecting the National Health Service in each Member State as a common good.

Institutions at different level, citizens and patients through their organizations, professionals, public and private sector, must work together to achieve these goals. We believe that many actors are already doing their part to fight against waste and inefficiency. The main part of the conference will be dedicated to the presentation of these good practices that should be valued.

Of course, only some of the good practices gathered all around Europe can be presented today, anyway the Report that you have received host more examples (22) coming from 10 Countries⁵.

Most of them are related to the fighting of “inefficiently delivered services”. Other to the “missed prevention opportunities” and to the “excessive administrative costs”.

~~Three times has been cited the inappropriate “medicines use” and the “prices set too high” (for medicines, products, services, workers, etc).~~

Only three good practices reported about “unnecessary services”.

The main actors of the gathered good practices are “health professionals”(14/22), followed by the “health care organizations” (12/22) and “Institutions” directly involved in the development of healthcare services. An important role is also played by the universities, patients’ organizations and patients.

The secret of their success often lies in the ability to collaborate with private and public sectors.

I hope that the good practices selected will be the base of the discussion and an intense and effective reflection of the all involved stakeholders.

Our hope is that our work can contribute to raising the public awareness on the topic, foster active actions at local, national and European level by disseminating successful concrete examples to face the waste and inefficiency, and create an informal network of operators of good practices.

I thank in advance all the panelists for having accepted our invitation, they can help us to answer to the following questions:

- What has been done and what is being done to fight the waste and inefficiency in Healthcare Systems all around Europe?
- What are the best practices to be shared in this field at local, national and European level?
- What is the role and the contribution of public and private sectors on it, as well as the ones of the civic society and patient organizations?

⁵ Cyprus (1); Germany (1); Kosovo (1); Ireland (1); Italy (3); Netherlands (2); Poland (2); Spain (2); Sweden (3); United Kingdom (6).



Last but not least, special thanks to Neil Betteridge, for having agreed to the uncomfortable role as Chair of the conference. I am sure his great experience as consultant in strategic health issues and involvement in network at national and EU level will be beneficial for the topic and to respect the agenda.

Thank you again for wishing a useful and interesting conference.
Mariano Votta