L'Observatoire social européen (OSE) - European Health Management Association (EHMA)

PRESS RELEASE

Contacts: Rita Baeten (0475/580271) baeten@ose.be (NL-FR-EN)

Elisabeth Jelfs (0032 2 502 6525) elisabeth.jelfs@ehma.org

Brussels holds its first ever Cross Border Healthcare Simulation

Brussels, Belgium, 24 November 2011- The first ever European simulation on the impact of the Directive on the Application of Patients' Rights in Cross-border Healthcare, has been held today in Brussels. The simulation has aimed to find out what effect the Directive might have in practice. As the 27 European Member States prepare to transpose the Directive into their own legal systems, it is crucial that policy makers, insurers, providers and patients know what impact the Directive is likely to have, the key potential bottlenecks, and how different stakeholders are planning to deal with them.

There has been much discussion of the Directive as it was drafted, but many significant questions on how to implement it are still to be answered. Using three case studies written specifically for the event, more than 50 participants from six countries have been working together to identify key issues raised by the Directive. The areas worked on include information for patients, interaction with Regulation 883/04, prior authorization and rare diseases.

Jeni Bremner, Director of EHMA said: "After so much political discussion, we need to know what impact the Directive will have in practice. Health managers in particular need to know how public authorities and health insurance funds are going to apply the rules, if they are to plan and deliver high quality patient care."

The simulation had a particular focus on the information available to patients, with a call for usable and independent information covering both the process and the quality of providers. "We know what kind of information we need but don't know where to get it" observed one participant. The simulation highlighted that the Directive may mean more patients applying for prior authorisation for cross border healthcare in order to avoid the risk of out of pocket expenses, particularly because of uncertainty on reimbursement. With complexities on translating invoices between different countries debated, the potential impact of the Directive in highlighting the need for transparency in invoicing and reimbursement procedures was also underlined.

Bart Vanhercke, Administrative and Financial Director of the OSE said: "As this simulation has demonstrated, many issues remain open for discussion and Member States and stakeholder groups will make use of the new legal framework in a creative way. This might well lead to new litigation before the European Court of Justice."

The simulation has been organized by the European Social Observatory (OSE), the European Health Management Association (EHMA) and the Association Internationale de la Mutualité (AIM), with financial support from the Belgian National Institute of Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI).

More detail on the simulation can be found at
http://www.ose.be/hcconference2011/2425/index.htm

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Notes:

1) The Directive on the Application of Patients' Rights in Cross Border Health clarifies the rules on planned, non-emergency access to healthcare in another EU country, including reimbursement. EU Member States have until 25 October 2013 to pass their own laws implementing the Directive.