

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0251/03

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to the Commission

Subject: Health cover of Italian nationals resident in Belgium

Under current Belgian legislation, Italian nations resident in Belgium are obliged to have adequate health cover.

This requirement is a precondition for the recognition of certain fundamental rights, such as entry on the population register of a Belgian municipality and subsequent registration on the register of Italians resident abroad.

It appears that a significant number of Italian nationals are covered by the international 'E 128' agreement (established under Articles 22b and 22c of Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71¹) which, among the various types of health cover available, stipulates that the medical expenses of Community citizens must be borne by their own country. In the case in point, Italy directly reimburses the INAMI, the Belgian federal organisation.

However, pending reimbursement by the health insurance organisations of which they are members (mutual societies), Italian nationals are asked to immediately pay in full for the healthcare they receive.

Unfortunately, Italians resident in Belgium are only reimbursed part of the costs they incur. They receive 75% of these, calculated on the basis of an index called the 'INAMI code number', on a purely flat-rate basis.

Added to this is the fact that the rates charged in practice are actually always higher than this flat-rate amount, and that some hospitals employ doctors who are not registered with the INAMI and who therefore charge exorbitant amounts. It should also be noted that most of those doctors who do not charge the statutory INAMI rates do not inform the public of this by posting an appropriate notice in the waiting room, as is required under Belgian law.

Italian nationals covered under the E 128 agreement are consequently faced with having to pay large fees every time they require medical attention.

In the light of the above, will the Commission:

- ask the Belgian authorities to grant Italian nationals who are resident in Belgium and covered by the E 128 agreement complete compensation for the medical expenses they actually incur;
- ask the Belgian authorities to establish a suitable system for monitoring the activities of doctors not registered with the INAMI, thereby compelling them to advertise the medical fees they charge, in accordance with current Belgian law, in the interests of all Community citizens resident in Belgium?

¹ OJ L 149, 5.7.1971, p.2.