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## European Union has 'Three-Speed' Healthcare System - Many Countries Lagging in Reform

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The EHCI compares all the EU 27 national healthcare systems, along with Norway and Switzerland, from a consumer-friendly point of view, measured by 27 indicators across five categories. Runners-up were 2005 winners the Netherlands, with 2006 winner France in third place. Closely behind the top three came Switzerland, Germany and Sweden. In addition, Estonia warrants a particular mention as a country that has successfully revitalised its healthcare system -which cannot be said for other new members of the EU.

"The Index shows that healthcare reforms in Europe are delivering improvements, but it is patchy - some bigger countries, such as Italy and the UK, remain relatively poor performers", says Johan Hjertqvist, president of the Health Consumer Powerhouse. "The information presents a potential platform for comparisons between Europe and the US; in the US, consumers pay far more for their care services, but how do we measure the value for money? A global comparison would be fascinating!"

"We will launch a Canadian Index later this year", added Hjertqvist. "This will provide an initial comparison between European and North American services, and perhaps be the catalyst for a wider benchmarking exercise including the US".

About the Euro Health Consumer Index:

The EHCI groups 27 indicators of quality into five categories: Leading nations in the categories were as follows:

- Patients' rights and information: Category winner, Denmark.
- Waiting times for treatment: Category winner, Belgium.
- Outcomes: Category winner, Sweden.
- Generosity of the healthcare system: Category winners (tied), Finland, France and Sweden.
- Pharmaceuticals: Category winners (tied), Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Measuring "Value for money"

Given the disparate economies within Europe, it is important to consider the 'value for money' that countries deliver. The "Bang for the Buck" index rates the systems on a different scale - in simple terms, what the consumers get for the money spent on healthcare. Here, it could be said that if you do reforms properly, it pays off. This applies to both low and high-income countries!

"Bang for the Buck" - adjusted rankings

- 1 Estonia
- 2 Austria
- 3 Netherlands
- 4 Finland
- 5 France
- 6 Germany
- 7 Cyprus

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- 27 Bulgaria
  - 28 Poland
  - 29 Latvia

The 2007 Index delivers statistics that reveal the weak position of the European care consumer:

- Three quarters of the national health systems make many patients wait more than three weeks for a cancer treatment;
- Only one third of the Member States would allow you direct access to a specialist as well as the right to get a second opinion;
- Medical records are accessible for the patient in only half of the Member States.

About the HCP

Health Consumer Powerhouse is the leading European healthcare analyst and consumer information provider.

For more information about the Health Consumer Powerhouse please visit:

<http://www.healthpowerhouse.com>

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For more information about the Health Consumer Powerhouse call: Director Ms Kajsa Wilhelmsson +32-496-23-55-30; Office Brussels: Rue Foss

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