

Cross-border health care; Trilateral bridge over the Neisse- Nisa-Nysa

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B-Solutions react to this...



Healthcare

- The Šluknov tip is the most northern edge of the Czech Republic which is separated from the rest of the Czech Republic by mountains and it is surrounded by Germany on 3 sides. In this area there is only one Czech general hospital which faced the threat of closure.
- In the event of closure of the hospital, two nearby hospitals in Saxony (Germany) would be easily accessible from Czech Republic. Yet, differences in the reimbursements of planned medical care costs prevent the Czech citizens to benefit of the services provided by the German hospitals.



Obstacles

- The main obstacle identified lies in the lack of coordination between the Czech and the German national legislations. Directive 2011/24 on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare states that MS are free to regulate the reimbursement costs for planned medical care in accordance with their own national price lists unless different indications are provided.
- The Czech legislation regulating the reimbursement of medical care does not contain any indication about Czech citizens benefitting of medical services abroad.
- In light of this, the amount reimbursed for healthcare services provided abroad does not differ from the one calculated for the same medical services provided in the Czech Republic.
- Given that prices in Germany are higher, Czech citizens willing to access the hospitals on the other side of the border are naturally disadvantaged – unless a prior authorisation of the Czech insurance fund allowing for full reimbursement is provided.
- Finally, due to their proximity, it is essential for Czech citizens to access care provided by the German hospitals in case of urgent and life-threatening situations.
- However, both EU and national legislations lack provisions on how to promptly identify and reimburse patients in case of urgent situations.



Possible solutions

- A possible solution would consider the amendment of the existing Czech legislation on health insurance and services in order to include provisions to regulate the reimbursements for medical care abroad. This should be done jointly with measures based on **multi-level governance structures and bilateral agreements** involving also relevant stakeholders from Germany.
- Life-threatening and emergency situations could be regulated easily through the introduction of small technical facilitating measures to promptly inform the national healthcare companies when a patient is in need to access the closest hospital that is located on the other side of the border (i.e. via a dedicated smartphone apps or a telephone hotline).
- Provisions concerning the reimbursements for such situations should be included in the amendments to the national laws.



Systemic solution for Šluknov tip and the surrounding border region?

- identifying leaders and key actors. It seems that the prominent role should be played at the level of local actors in co-operation with the hospitals on both sides of the region, which could lead to the creation of a “functional region of cross-border healthcare”.
- involving relevant stakeholders and institutionalising their co-operation and the application of a multi-level governance, for example through the establishment of an EGTC and Interreg funding;
- The application of the European Cross Border Mechanism could be an additional appropriate solution. As the current status quo of healthcare service provision is based upon an interplay of the EU legislation and bilateral/multilateral agreements, its adoption would provide further possibilities to create more functional healthcare services.



Developments since 2019

- in 2019, the WG on healthcare provision in the territory established, by an initiative of the Czech healthcare minister
- Considerable advent of the nation state since that time
- Lack of mutual solidarity after the pandemic outbreak/lack of willingness to receive a help from Germany
- „national“ solution was selected in the end – the hospital was taken over by the Ústí Region



Trilateral footbridge

- The territory of the Euroregion Nisa is crossed by the river Nisa, where the borders of Czech Republic, Poland and Germany meet. Discussions on the construction of a common footbridge which would unite the three countries were initiated in 2004 but works have not yet commenced as procedures leading towards building permission differ in the three countries due to divergences in prior recognition of the professional qualifications of the civic engineers to be employed.
- Czech authorities do not recognise the technical documentation of this planned construction submitted by the Polish engineers and, as a consequence, the authorisation to the bridge's construction has been denied.
- Whereas there is a habit to have bilateral agreements on the elements of cross-border infrastructure, it is not the case for trilateral ones





Obstacle

- The main obstacle lies in the need to obtain the sets of three individual national construction permits for one piece of cross-border infrastructure (in the case of “merely” bilateral projects mutual intergovernmental agreements apply – common practice shows that Czech partners mostly act as those who are responsible for construction permits).
- In this case Czech authorities do not recognise the technical documentation submitted by the Polish engineers. The authorisation to the project’s construction works in CZ has been denied: in order to engage in the selected activities in the Czech territory, it is necessary to apply to the Chamber for recognition of professional qualification and for enrolment in the list of registered persons or notify the pursuit of the selected activities
- However, for German or Polish engineers it is extremely lengthy and costly to pursue any of these options is extremely lengthy and costly, and not worth in the scope of one project.



How to solve it?

- The most straightforward and feasible solution is that a team of construction engineers should be enlarged to include.
- Another possible solution can be in switching the role of the main constructing entity asking for the construction permit. Given the previous experience in constructing Czech-Polish elements of cross-border infrastructure in different parts of border, the Polish authorities authorizing construction accepted the work of Czech authorized engineers.



Current plans - bilateral bridge linking CZ and D only

- frustration with the level of cooperation with the PL partner
- Turów case



Cross-border beer exchange - there is always a hope 😊



CBC is sometimes taken too much for granted...

- Allocations for INTERREG are expected to be lower in 2021+
- INTERREG is according to the „bureaucratic logic“ too much part of the regional policy, ignoring thus its soft dimension
- Other levels than euroregions and cross-border co-operation stakeholders take the current level of CBC for granted, without a special need to invest maintenance costs in it
- Covidfencing (Medeiros et al., 2020) could thus highlight the need not to take anything for granted...



Idea of a borderless Europe is not resilient to crisis..

- ...but territorial borders as well as the boundaries socially constructed at the national level by public authorities have clashed with the collective experience and **perception of border region residents, for whom people from the other side of the border are close neighbours and not foreigners.**
- What is more, the imposition of borders has also shown how interconnected European border regions already are and how transnational border spaces have become (Opilowska 2020).
- The re-bordering measures made the inhabitants of the borderlands more aware that **their lives take place on both sides of the border** and that they share a common space.
- Culture played a key role



The immediate challenge underlined by the COVID-19

- Two/or more legislations affecting CB territory have paralysed their efficient co-operation.
- Essential instruments and structures for cross-border crisis management are lacking (Unfried, 2020).
- We need CB data!!!



Make ECBM possible!!!

- The application of the ECBM would make the solution of both cases much more feasible

Thanks for your attention

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