

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5463/06
by Alejandro Cercas (PSE)
to the Council

Subject: European health card

The introduction of the European health card has done a great deal to remove the obstacles to mobility for patients in the Union and to building a people's Europe. However, many Spanish pensioners living in Member States other than Spain have complained to me about the costs which they have to pay for medicines when staying temporarily in Spain. According to their accounts, what used to happen was that they would produce their E-111 form, which proved that they were pensioners, and then needed to pay nothing at all for medicines prescribed for them by Spanish doctors while on holiday in Spain. However, the situation changed completely when the European health card was introduced.

According to the Spanish Autonomous Community health services, the European health card gives no indication, where applicable, that the holder is a pensioner, and the cardholders concerned cannot, therefore, enjoy the benefits accorded to pensioners under Spanish legislation. In some cases the doctors treating them ask them to produce a certificate mentioning their pensioner status. There is, however, no standardised certificate for all the Member States, and Spanish doctors consequently cannot distinguish between and recognise the different documents, which, when they exist, are written in different languages and vary as regards their content.

Is the Council aware of this problem? Does it think that the success and acceptance of the European health card might be undermined by the difficulties described in the preceding paragraph? Does it believe that steps should be taken to resolve these difficulties and seek immediate solutions enabling European pensioners to take full advantage of the benefits and entitlements theoretically granted to them under Community rules?