

**PATIENT PAYMENTS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**  
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**Policy paper Poland: Patient payments in Poland - preliminary results of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with health system's stakeholders**

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**Abstract:**

Polish patients do not meet formal payment obligations when they use primary care services, out-patient specialists' services and hospital services that are provided within the publicly financed health care sector (except for dental services). However, there are prolonged policy discussions about the introduction of official charges for these services.

The results of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews indicate that formal patient payments are seen in Poland as a tool that could improve health care efficiency and generate additional health care resources. If formal patient payments are voluntary and applied in exchange for higher quality/standard of health care services provided, they could be acceptable to health care consumers. However, the elimination of informal patient payments in Poland by the introduction of official patient charges is doubtful because this requires not only health care reforms but also changes in peoples' mentality.

Overall policy recommendations: (1) formal patient payments in Poland are seen as a policy tool that could play a role in the improvement of health care efficiency and for the generation of additional resources for health care provision; (2) however, the implementation of formal patient payments cannot be treated as a remedy for the efficiency and sustainability problems in the Polish health system. Supply-side measures should be considered; (3) if formal patient payments are voluntary and in exchange for higher quality/standard of health care services provided, they would be acceptable to health care consumers; (4) the elimination of informal patient payments is a long process that requires not only health reforms but also changes in peoples' mentality.

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