



European
Research Area

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



ASSPRO CEE 2007

Collaborative Focused Research Project
FP7-SSH-2007 Grant Agreement No.: 217431

**Formal and informal out-of-pocket payments
for health care services in Central and Eastern
European countries**

What are the actual patients' contributions?

Findings of ASSPRO CEE 2007, an EU-funded research project assessing efficiency and impact of patient payments policies in Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Ukraine, as well as in Albania, Serbia and Russia.

Ongoing project

December 2012 [DRAFT]

INTRODUCTION:

User fees for public health care services as a policy dilemma in Europe

- Equity in health care as a guiding principle
- Patient charges for services are uncommon
- Scarcity of public resources and economic crises
- Challenge in designing efficient and equitable patient payments mechanisms

POLICY CONTEXT:

Diverse charges for public health care services (basic package) in CEE

- Diverse formal co-payments (legislation)
- Quasi-formal (regulated by providers)
- Informal payments (unregistered)
- Quasi-informal (bought & brought goods)

DATA & METHODS

- Scale of formal and informal patient payments
- Key data for 2010 related to policy projections
- Six Central and Eastern European countries – Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Ukraine
- Simplified estimation module developed within the project based on System Dynamic Modeling.
- The accuracy of the module is tested using macro- and micro-level indicators for different countries.
- Society and Economy 2012, 34(2): 359-378.
<http://www.akademiai.com/content/1588-9726>)

SERVICE USE

Projections (per year)	Bulgaria	Hungary	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Ukraine
Users of out-patient physician service [% adults]	74.2	79.9	73.1	73.6	65.2	56.4
Users of in-patient hospital service [% adults]	16.2	21.1	16.3	15.9	19.2	18.0
Average physician visits per adult user per year	5.7	6.6	5.0	5.1	5.0	3.39
Average hospital admissions per adult user per year	2.3	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.48

PAYMENTS PER SERVICE

Projections (per year)	Bulgaria	Hungary	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Ukraine
Formal payments for physician visits [% adult users]	69.1	12.7	31.5	19.3	42.2	42.1
Formal payments for hospital admissions [% adult users]	56.8	10.5	30.3	8.2	42.2	54.5
Informal payments for physician visits [% adult users]	9.6	20.8	19.8	6.7	28.7	36.1
Informal payments for hospital admissions [% adult users]	19.8	44.2	49.7	16.4	49.5	48.2

Projections (per year)	Bulgaria	Hungary	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Ukraine
Average formal payment per physician visit [Euro]	4.21	10.06	13.03	14.37	22.90	15.24
Average formal payment per hospital admission [Euro]	31.59	34.39	50.68	56.05	56.16	115.98
Average informal payment per physician visit [Euro]	8.23	8.75	16.16	13.51	14.73	9.30
Average informal payment per hospital admission [Euro]	44.11	67.31	79.64	37.88	63.42	54.62

MACRO ESTIMATES

Projections (per year)	Bulgaria	Hungary	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Ukraine
Total formal payments for services by adults [% GDP]	0.30	0.10	0.20	0.10	0.50	1.00
Total informal payments for services by adults [% GDP]	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.04	0.30	0.50
Total formal payments for services by adults [% THE]*	4.30	0.80	2.30	1.40	10.10	14.50
Total informal payments for services by adults [% THE]*	1.50	2.10	2.70	0.60	6.30	6.70

*THE - total health expenditure

Bulgaria – Open Society Institute

Hungary – Gaal et al. 2006

Poland – Golinowska et al. 2008

Romania – Bilefsky et al. 2009

Eurostat 2005

POLICY CHALLENGE (1)

Informal patient payments

- continue to exist
- mixed strategies

1. Improve service quality and access
2. Increase physicians' income
3. Formal service charges managed by insurer/state
4. Eliminate the cash flow from patients to providers
5. Develop the private sector
6. Penalties
7. Information campaigns

POLICY CHALLENGE (2)

The burden of out-of-pocket payments

- unable to pay 30-50%
- catastrophic and impoverishing effects

Requires immediate attention

- exemption policy
- implementation
- monitoring

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS ?