

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000945/25
to the Commission
Kathleen Funchion (The Left)
(5 March 2025)**

Subject: Emergency Department at Ennis Hospital, Ireland

The Emergency Department (ED) at Ennis Hospital closed a number of years ago, which has led to unsustainable overcrowding and overwhelmed services within the remaining ED at University Hospital Limerick (UHL). It is clear that the midwest region in the South constituency has struggled to cope with the number of patients presenting themselves for treatment at its only ED located in UHL. It is obvious and proven that this overcrowding is leading to increased mortality rates within the ED and the wider hospital.

Given the focus of EU health policy on protecting and improving health and giving equal access to modern and efficient healthcare for all Europeans:

1. What is the Commission's position in regard to protecting citizens' right to equal access to healthcare services?
2. Does the Commission believe that the EU health forum can assist with the local campaign to reinstate the ED at Ennis Hospital?

Submitted: 5.3.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(20 May 2025)**

According to Article 168(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ⁽¹⁾, a high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities. Article 168(7) provides that Union action shall respect responsibilities of the Member States for the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care. The EU supplements and supports these efforts, especially by encouraging cooperation and exchange of best practices among countries. This means that the Commission has no mandate to call for a reopening of the Emergency Department as referred.

The challenges in accessing healthcare have been reported in the Country Health Profile 2023 for Ireland under the 'State of Health in the EU' ⁽²⁾. In the context of the 2020 European Semester, a Country-Specific Recommendation was addressed to Ireland to improve accessibility of its health system and strengthen its resilience ⁽³⁾. A number of EU funding programmes, such as the EU4Health Programme ⁽⁴⁾, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and the Cohesion Policy Funds, offer significant funding opportunities, which Ireland can use to strengthen its healthcare system in response to this recommendation. For example, the Irish Recovery and Resilience Plan ⁽⁵⁾ has earmarked EUR 75 million for reforms and investments to progress on the implementation of the Sláintecare reform programme.

The EU Health Policy Platform, which has replaced the EU health forum, is used to facilitate stakeholder engagement in EU health policies. It is a restricted Platform accessible through membership and is not designed to be used for national health system issues.

⁽¹⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=en>.

⁽²⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/20f96f89-7286-4e4f-8a2c-bea12cf97576_en?filename=2023_chp_ie_english.pdf.

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52020DC0507>.

⁽⁴⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/funding/eu4health-programme-2021-2027-vision-healthier-european-union_en.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4939-national-recovery-and-resilience-plan-2021/>.