

Report to the federal Parliament

Urgent medical assistance for people staying illegally – policy cost and effectiveness



In Belgium, people staying illegally with no means of support can apply to the social welfare centres to have their healthcare costs covered by the scheme for urgent medical assistance. The Belgian Court of Audit examined this process.

It noted that these centres often restrict access to care (in terms of duration, choice of the care providers or the care itself), sometimes illegally, while they are not competent in health matters. Such restrictions are likely to further increase health problems, entail more frequent hospitalisations and, consequently, higher public expenditure. This is also a risk factor for disease transmission among the population in general. In addition, the decisions taken by the social welfare centres are not sufficiently monitored, and the impact of these decisions on care access is not assessed.

The Court of Audit recommends removing care access restrictions and improving monitoring of the decisions taken by the social welfare centres.