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GOVERNMENT REJECTS SPANISH CRITICISM

José Ignacio Echániz, the PP's National Secretary for Health and Social Affairs has described Gibraltar's health service as being inferior to Spanish medical provision and suggests that, as a result, many Gibraltarians with homes in Spain are making full use of Spanish health facilities.

This impression that Gibraltarians who work in Gibraltar and have residences in Spain use Spanish state health services regularly is not shared by HM Government of Gibraltar. In fact, such persons, and also UK nationals resident in nearby Spain tend to prefer to use Gibraltar's health services, even when the latter should correctly attend Spanish hospitals.

In fact, the opposite is the case, as EU nationals who work in Gibraltar, and their families, are able to access Gibraltar health care and are provided with cover when they visit other EU states. The dependants of all those Frontier Workers are covered under the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) by Gibraltar (as per EU Directives). This applies to school children undergoing studies in another member state other than their country of residence.

All EU nationals are likewise entitled to emergency care when falling ill while visiting Gibraltarians, and other EU nationals have similar rights when they fall ill while visiting another EU state.

Gibraltar patients are referred to Spanish state hospitals for certain tertiary and emergency care only, using long established procedures consistent with EU policies.

Gibraltar therefore fulfils all its obligations to Spanish, and other EU Nationals who work or visit Gibraltar.