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Healthcare Futures: Visions of Solidarity and the Sustainability of European Healthcare Systems

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Abstract

When it comes to health, Europeans display higher levels of solidarity for the sick than do respondents in other regions, and in almost all studies of deservingness, the sick are singled out as being highly deserving of medical treatment. Scholars have found substantial empirical support for the propositions of these theories of solidarity and deservingness. From the analysis of deliberative forums carried by Norface Our children's future project, however, a much more nuanced view has emerged, on the basis of comparison of discussions on health care in four countries: Germany, UK, Slovenia and Norway. The Deliberative Forums reveal four distinct visions of health care solidarity: exclusive solidarity, universal solidarity, contributory solidarity, and equalitarian solidarity. These visions are comprised of the definition of the appropriate risk-community for health care, as well as the rights and duties of the members of this community. To some extent, these visions are related to the institutional organization of health care and the history of health care institutions in different countries. And, indeed, they are often compatible in some ways with the results of large public opinion surveys. But they also reveal surprising undercurrents of hope, fears, and attitudes of individual residents.