



Budapest with the Danube, the Parliament and the bridges

Budapest, Hungary

General overview

Budapest is the capital of and the biggest city in Hungary with a land area of about 525 km² (203 mi²) and a population of 1.7 million (1). The Budapest metropolitan area is accountable for almost half of the Hungarian gross domestic product (GDP).

Until 31 December 2017, the Budapest metropolitan area and Pest County in which it is situated constituted one of the seven Hungarian regions of the European Union (EU) Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics, level 2 (NUTS2). These Hungarian regions are very inhomogeneous with a gap in development between the capital cities and the rural areas in their peripheries. As a consequence, on 1 January 2018, the Budapest metropolitan area was separated from the rest of the region (Pest County) and became the eighth Hungarian region of NUTS2. The following information relates to the Budapest city and its metropolitan area.

Budapest is known as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, running along both sides of the River Danube. The central area of the city, which has been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has many impressive monuments and buildings, including the Parliament (the second

largest in Europe), home to the unique Holy Crown of Hungary dating back to the 11th century, and the Castle from which there is a breathtaking view of the city. The main synagogue has survived history as the second largest in the world. Budapest is famous for its museums and wonderful Art Nouveau buildings, and not least for its thermal baths, which are supplied from 80 geothermal springs and the largest geothermal water-cave system in the territory.

Health-care system

The Hungarian health-care system is a social health-insurance system covering almost 100% of the population (approximately 10 million people). The country has an ageing population and a high dependency ratio (50%) driven by low fertility and high rates of migration. The average life expectancy in Hungary is 72.4 years for males and 79.0 years for females; in Budapest, the perspectives are better, namely, 74.3 for males and 80.1 for females. The educational level in Budapest (as in the rest of the country) has an enormous impact on health status and life expectancy, especially for men. Around 70% of the health expenditure in Hungary is covered from public sources; in 2016, this amounted to approximately 5.2% of GDP (1).

With rates of smoking in Hungary that were among the highest in Europe, in 2012, the Parliament passed a very strict anti-tobacco law aimed at decreasing tobacco use and the negative health effects associated with the habit in the shortest possible time frame.

Hungary is one of the main medical-tourism destinations in Europe, the most popular treatments being in the areas of dentistry, cosmetic surgery, orthopaedic surgery, rehabilitation, fertility treatment and balneotherapy.

In recent years, Hungary has moved towards a centralized health-care system, most hospitals now falling under one authority (the National Health Care Centre). Most of the provider capacities are located in the Budapest area, which also includes the Semmelweis University, one of Hungary's four famous medical universities. Hospital-bed numbers are still high in Hungary (70 beds per 10 000 people); in the Budapest region, there are 68 acute beds and 42 long-term beds per 10 000 people (2).

The diagnosis-related-group system of payment and the "German points system" (a fee-for-service payment mechanism for ambulatory-care physicians) have been in use since 1993. A unique patient identifier (social insurance number) introduced in 1997 makes it possible to trace a patient's history back across all types of care (primary care, outpatient and inpatient specialist care, prescriptions, etc.) and facilitates the execution of real-world-evidence longitudinal studies. Due to the single-payer system, the National Health Insurance Fund has an outstanding health database.

The "Healthy Budapest Programme" (2017–2026), one of the largest health-care development programmes in the country, was launched in 2017 with the aim of strengthening the health-care system in the Budapest region. Within the framework of this Programme, it is expected that approximately €2.5 billion will be spent on the development of regional and nationwide hospitals and outpatient clinics to serve the capital and the central region. The Programme will cover three central hospitals (one of which will be opened within the next five years), 25 partner hospitals and 16 outpatient clinics.



Strengths

The strengths of the health-care system in the Budapest region are:

- ✓ a concentration of capacities in the form of infrastructure and trained professionals (the region is responsible for approximately 40% of the Hungarian health-care output);
- ✓ a concentration of trained professionals;
- ✓ very good access to health-care providers for the population of Budapest and the surrounding area;
- ✓ innovative training initiatives, such as unique training programmes (master's programmes in English) on health policy, planning and financing for professionals in health-care administration (at the Eötvös Lóránd University).



Aspirations

The Budapest region is aiming to:

- ✓ strengthen regulatory mechanisms on the provision of private and public health services;
- ✓ examine strategies related to health-needs assessment and health-services management in other countries, especially regarding functions at the regional and central levels;
- ✓ introduce new methods of provider payment;
- ✓ improve health data with respect to the connection between administrative data and those in electronic health records and registries;
- ✓ promote health education to reduce health inequalities;
- ✓ develop patient-centred care, using new technologies and telemedicine.



Challenges

These are:

- ✓ an ageing population;
- ✓ brain drain (human resources) for economy reasons;
- ✓ centralization of services coupled with the need to enhance the coordination of health-care capacity at the hospital level;
- ✓ out-of-pocket payments;
- ✓ the need for more transparency in communications between the health and social services involving patients (which is especially problematic for older people);
- ✓ the need to integrate care through intersectoral cooperation.



Potential areas of collaboration

The Budapest region is interested in collaborating with other regions on:

- ✓ ways of achieving well-integrated care;
- ✓ new methods of provider payment, including reimbursement for quality outcomes and integrated care;
- ✓ observing confidentiality in the collection and provision of health data.



Working groups

The Budapest region is interested in participating in working groups on:

- ✓ the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (3)/ equity;
- ✓ women's/men's health;
- ✓ health systems.



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