

# ITALY TO FOCUS MORE ON MEDICAL TOURISM



After food, culture, fashion and design, health is another candidate to become one of the distinctive features of Made in Italy. The goal is to make Italy a top destination of medical tourism.

Medical tourism is a complex social and economic phenomenon that has an estimated global value of over 100 billion dollars per year. About 10 million patients travel from their homeland to seek treatment abroad, or they travel within their country.

A survey by the European Commission for Transport and Tourism focused on medical tourism in EU. **Within the 28 states of the Union, 56 million domestic arrivals and just over 5 million internationals were registered.**

Of these, 4.3% were linked to health reasons (almost 6% of national arrivals and just over 1% of internationals), with an overall value of 47 billion euro. This represents 4.6% of the turnover of the entire EU tourism sector.

The incidence of health in the motivation of incoming trips from non-EU countries is higher, reaching 6% of the total. The stakes are high, and the lowering cost of air travel has greatly improved access to healthcare and medical tourism industry as well. Especially for patients coming from countries with poor healthcare systems or long waiting lists. This factor, along with others, is driving the growth of the sector.

According to estimates, Italy generates a revenue of 2 billion euro thanks to medical tourism.

For now, the balance is negative. There are about 200 thousand Italians going abroad for treatment, mainly for dental, aesthetic or hair treatment. On the other hand, only 5 thousand foreigners arrived in Italy - mainly from Arab countries, Russia, Switzerland and the Balkans - for medical treatment. They are mainly driven by highly specialized treatments in neurology, cardiology, oncology and orthopedics. This is reflected in the average expenditure between 20 and 70 thousand euros.

**Italy is still far from the 1.2 million patients received in Thailand or a million in Mexico, but the country is moving in the right direction.** "We have created a working table with the ministry of tourism and those of Foreign Affairs and Health to identify private companies of excellence and enhance the segment of medical tourism. This will open up markets and bring resources to our health system in a field that must be enhanced," Dorina Bianchi, a political representative, noted.

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