

An EU health workforce crisis plan: sustainability of healthcare systems and employment and working conditions in the healthcare sector

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The European Parliament adopted by 514 votes to 61, with 33 abstentions, a resolution on an EU health workforce crisis plan: sustainability of healthcare systems and employment and working conditions in the healthcare sector.

Employment, working conditions and the safeguarding of mental health

Parliament called on the Commission to urgently develop a **comprehensive and long-term European healthcare workforce strategy** to increase the healthcare workforce by at least one million professionals over the next seven-year MFF (2028–2034), covering the estimated EU-wide healthcare workforce deficit of around 1.2 million.

The Commission and the Member States are invited to:

- monitor labour shortages across health professions and across regions;
- adopt and regularly update **comprehensive national strategies** in this field, including long-term action plans and effective workforce planning covering all stages of the professional life cycle, with particular attention to underserved areas and those with constrained health infrastructure capacity;
- promote and coordinate, in close cooperation with social partners, **integrated workforce strategies** at both national and EU levels, aimed at attracting young people to healthcare professions while tackling brain drain, aligning educational capacities with healthcare system needs and ensuring that all Member States have a sufficient number of properly trained health professionals;
- recognise the healthcare workforce as **strategic** for social and economic cohesion, and to ensure working conditions that reflect their contribution to society, as well as a formal recognition of healthcare professions as strenuous and particularly demanding;
- address **workforce shortages** by ensuring job security, fair working conditions, fair remuneration and adequate minimum wages;
- ensure a **genuine work-life balance**, fair working hours, voluntary part-time work, and control over work and scheduling for the whole healthcare workforce;
- ensure the proper implementation of the Framework Directive for **occupational safety and health**, in order to prevent and manage the occupational risk factors affecting the healthcare workforce, including excessive workloads, work-related stress, unsafe working conditions, violence and harassment.

Tackling inequalities in access to healthcare

Parliament recommended that the relevant authorities in the Member States enhance coordination to develop **integrated regional health strategies** that establish better integrated care pathways and adopt a comprehensive and integrated model of care covering hospital, home, community and outpatient care. It also called for the recognition of the status of informal **caregivers**, who are predominantly women, in order to acknowledge and compensate their unpaid work and to ensure them adequate social and labour protection.

The resolution emphasised that **disparities in access to and quality of care** perpetuate health inequalities and jeopardise health coverage in underserved areas, such as rural, remote, and depopulated regions, due to a shortage of professionals. This disproportionately affects the elderly, the disadvantaged, and people with disabilities. Members called for the development of targeted and specific healthcare strategies to strengthen healthcare infrastructure.

Parliament has recommended:

- optimising the use of European and national funds to **attract and retain healthcare professionals in underserved areas** through innovative financial and non-financial incentives (access to housing, funding of scholarships, research grants and structured career development opportunities);
- setting up national **pharmacy** workforce strategies to define hospital and community pharmacists' roles in integrated care.

While affirming that in-person care remains the priority, Members support a targeted and equitable development and deployment **of telemedicine, AI and other innovative technologies** for healthcare professionals and, where appropriate, patients.

Recruitment, mobility and training of healthcare workforce

Parliament called on the Member States to **boost high-quality education** of the healthcare workforce, combined with high-quality mentorships to support the transition to the labour market, promote lifelong learning and flexible career progression pathways and invest in training pathways.

Members encouraged **fair labour mobility** of the healthcare workforce within the EU. They called on Commission to revise the **Professional Qualifications Directive** to include the recognition of qualifications awarded in a digital format, increase the number of professions covered and allow for true portability of qualifications, skills and roles, including in the area of long-term care and improve mutual recognition.

Parliament called for the EU and the Member States to work towards addressing the challenges faced by Member States with regard to brain drain and called on the EU and the Member States to invest in education and training including continuous upskilling. Members called on the Commission to support Member States most affected by health worker outflows and to establish appropriate **incentives** for medical and healthcare trainees who choose to complete their training in rural and underserved areas.

Lastly, Parliament considered it necessary for Member States to set up and develop interoperable and standardised **digital systems** to support real-time collection, mapping and analysis of data on the healthcare workforce. It called for continuous professional development of healthcare professionals in digital skills, biotechnology and other innovative technologies, and, where clinically appropriate, AI-supported diagnostics.