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Briefing on European Health Workforce

Background

On 10 December 2008, the European Commission adopted a [Green Paper on the EU Workforce for Health](#) and launched a [public consultation](#) on this matter., which identified the pressing issue of the current and future shortage of health workers, in particular specialist doctors and nurses.

Health professions make up one of the largest segments in the overall European labour market, accounting for 10 % of the total workforce. The EU Commission calculates dramatic shortages in health care provision in the next decade unless countermeasures are taken. The forecasts predict a shortage of one million health professionals in the EU by 2020 (estimated 230 000 physicians), which is likely to reach two million if other employees in the healthcare sector are accounted for. (*)

A number of leading Members of the European Parliament, coming from various political groups, EP committees and EU Member States, initiated in May 2010 a [Written Declaration](#) on the EU Workforce for Health, which was signed by more than 200 MEPs. The objective was to influence the Council and to re-launch the debate in the European Commission, as well as the various EU Member States level. It called on the European Commission and the Governments of the EU Member States to :

*"- ensure that there is sufficient comparable data for EU wide health workforce planning,
▶ establish effective and sustainable recruitment and retention strategies in the health sector,
▶ ensure that all health professionals have access to continuing professional development and that professional qualifications meet agreed criteria,
▶ promote the role of health professionals to identify and implement strategies that facilitate professional and knowledge mobility while recognising the health professionals' contribution to achieve optimal health outcomes".*

At Council level, the health workforce dossier was re-launched, with the Belgian Presidency in the second half of 2010 by the Conference « [Investing in Europe's health workforce of tomorrow](#) », which underlined the need to develop appropriate initiatives to invest in sufficient, motivated and well-skilled health professionals in order to protect the viability and accessibility of the health systems. The Council conclusion invites member states and the commission to develop planning methodologies taking into account health needs, CPD and recruitment and retention strategies in the medicum and long-term perspectives. The Commission is invited to include training and education of the health workforce as a priority area.

(*)Source: Katja Neubauer, Team Leader Health Strategy and Health Systems in the EU Commission (DG for Health and Consumers)