

Social Partners in the Healthcare sector views on the proposed EU4Health programme



(7 June 2020) The European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospitals and Healthcare sector (SSDC HS), composed of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) and the European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association (HOSPEEM), shared its view with MEP Cristian-Silviu BUȘOI on the draft report on the proposed EU4Health programme in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on European medical and health workforce, patients and the healthcare systems.

In the past months, the healthcare workforce, including doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants and support staff as well as hospital and healthcare employers, have been on the frontline, guaranteeing the delivery of essential healthcare services while facing an unprecedented crisis. Now, the main challenge is to guarantee investments in the health workforce and modernisation of health system infrastructures supporting the capacity of the sector to cope with future crises.

We are pleased to see that the draft report is introducing the "development and implementation of a strategy on the health workforce" and the need for synergies with ESF+ and in particular EaSI. Among other relevant health stakeholders, sectoral social partners must be consulted in the development of the strategy while also taking into account the Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health.

In terms of "harmonised training and education", we would like to emphasise the need to reference the Professional Qualifications Directive and the importance of Continuing Professional Development, such as for the development of digital skills. One of our priority areas is recruitment and retention of the EU health workforce. It is, therefore, vital to pay attention to reducing inequities and inequalities between health systems to improve the quality of healthcare. It is essential to invest in frameworks that support national self-sufficiency in terms of recruitment and retention of the health workforce in particular, by continuing to increase investments in retention policies. However, we consider it essential to refer to recruitment and retention policy alike, while taking into account the free movement of workers and workforce shortages across the European Union. The role and autonomy of European and national social partners in this area needs to be fully respected.

The EU4Health programme needs to be built on the experience and contribution of those that operate hospitals and healthcare facilities and those providing healthcare services. **For this reason, we urge the European Parliament to take into account the role and competences of European and national sectoral social partners when reporting on the EU4Health programme to reflect the reality and prospective needs of this sector.**

Signed by Marta Branca, Vice-Secretary General European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association and Jan-Willem Goudriaan, General Secretary European Federation of Public Service Unions.

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