



European
Commission

Workshop



Working for a healthier future Promoting sustainable employment in the health sector in developing countries

1 April, 2019, from 09:00 to 17:30
Hotel Bloom, Rue Royale 250, 1210 Brussels

Objective

2019 marks the 100th anniversary of the International Labour Organisation. For this occasion, the ILO has released the report on the future of work: *Work for a brighter future* identifying the care economy, including the health sector, as an area of employment growth which is critical to social and economic development.

The workshop aims to assess the situation, identify key challenges and develop policy solutions to promote sustainable employment in the health sector in developing countries.

It will be a one-day informative, interactive and participatory workshop to assess ways to increase investment in education and skills development, while ensuring the quality of health sector jobs, in terms of working conditions, labour protection and rights at work.

economic growth, advancing rights, and important socio-economic returns in quality education, gender equality without forgetting health and well-being.

The High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth, established by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2016, identifies the health and social sector as a major and growing source of employment, and as a strategic area for investment that translates into more decent work opportunities than most other industries and sectors, particularly for women and young people. Each health and social worker, is supported on average by at least two additional jobs in other occupations in the broader health economy, offering the potential for job creation in and beyond the health and social sector.

Background

For a long time, investment in the health workforce was perceived as a burden on the economy and as the sole responsibility of the public sector. Yet, recent studies show the big potential that the health sector has in creating decent employment and inclusive

Few other economic sectors present such opportunities for steady growth in decent work, especially in light of large potential job losses in other economic sectors due to rapid technological advances and the changing organisation of production and work.

Moreover, the health sector remains, along with education, science and engineering, one of the sectors less affected from the

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point of view of employment, the professionals in these sectors being in shortage according to OECD [Skills for Jobs Database](#). In addition, technological advancements offer new opportunities for job creation, as they demand new skills.

Beside the direct effect on maintaining existing employment and creating new jobs, the health sector has a decisive influence on other areas such as, developing institutional and educational capacity, strengthening health security, engaging the private sector, supporting youth and women empowerment, reacting to the need for building resilience in countries, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, advancing human rights and addressing the root causes of migration, while promoting the regularisation of migration.

The [New European Consensus on Development](#) identifies health as ‘central to people’s lives and as a key element of equitable and sustainable growth and development, including poverty reduction’ and it appears in relation with human development and dignity, but also linked with planet, prosperity and peace objectives.

To highlight its importance in development cooperation, EU and its Member States launched the Universal Health Coverage initiative translated into action by the EU, Luxembourg and the World Health Organisation (WHO): the [Universal Health Coverage \(UHC\) Partnership](#) aims to ensure that all people and communities receive the quality health services they need, and are protected from health threats, without suffering financial hardship.

This is a major contribution to the concept of “leaving no one behind”. If universal health coverage is to be achieved and

sustained by 2030, WHO identified a shortage of 18 million health workers, primarily in low- and middle-income countries, need to be made up. Without targeted interventions, the situation in resource-constrained settings could be further exacerbated by increased labour mobility towards countries with more resources and greatest demand, thereby undermining already vulnerable health systems and increasing inequalities. Investing in skills development but also in the quality of jobs in terms of working conditions, labour protection and rights at work is key to retaining health workers, where they are needed.

Last but not least, health is becoming more and more of a concern for citizens with regard to food safety, climate change and new threats such as the fast proliferation of certain diseases (not limited to non-communicable diseases and the risk of epidemics).

In a context marked by the enduring needs of technical health-related training, developing countries face a huge shortage of training structures providing theoretical and practical courses, on-the-job supervision and capacity-building for human resources in the health sector, including administrators (hospital managers, medical secretaries, etc.) and specific competences (e.g. special waste management in hospitals, cleaning staff for surgery rooms, etc.).

All of the above challenges require a comprehensive strategy for creating in a very short time the best conditions, in terms of legislative frameworks, infrastructure and human resources, for the formation of a qualified, reliable and resilient health workforce now and into the future.



The workshop will be moderated by **Marisol Touraine**, Senior Member of the Conseil d’État (France’s highest administrative court), International Health and Social Welfare Consultant and former French Minister for Social Affairs, Health and Women’s Rights.

AGENDA

09:00 – 09:30

Registration and welcome coffee

09:30 – 09:40

● OPENING REMARKS

Marjeta Jager, Deputy Director General, European Commission, Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO)

09:40 – 11:00

● PANEL I: Skills development and decent work in the health sector

Description:

The health sector is a strategic area for investment that has been proven to translate into more decent work opportunities than most other industries and sectors, particularly for women and young people. In order to capitalise on this, countries should do more to prioritise investments in education and skills development. Education models should shift away from narrow specialisations and focus on the lifelong building of locally relevant competencies.

Generally, there is a need to relax unnecessary barriers to entry. Addressing geographical inequities is a priority and demographic transitions present opportunities to strengthen youth education for employment in the health sector. The effectiveness of community-based health workers, including health professionals as well as other cadres, has been proven.

Achieving a fit-for-purpose health workforce requires actions across all sectors associated with the health labour market. These intersectoral processes must engage public and private sectors, civil society, trade unions, health worker associations, non-governmental organisations, regulatory bodies and training institutions.

Main discussion points:

- How can more employment in the health sector become decent employment? What are the decent work deficiencies and how can they be overcome?
- What could motivate young people to take a job in the health sector? What would make the health sector more attractive?
- What is the right mix of skills needed and how can they be delivered in terms of finance, human capital, infrastructure, etc.?

Moderator: *Marisol Touraine*, International Consultant on Health and Social Issues

Speakers: *Stefano Signore*, Head of Unit B3 Migration, Employment, DG DEVCO;
Christiane Wiskow, Health Services Specialist, Sectoral Policies Department, International Labour Organisation (ILO); and
James Campbell, Director of the Health Workforce Department, World Health Organisation (WHO).

11:00 – 11:20

Coffee Break

11:20 – 12:40

● PANEL II: Health and demography: opportunities, challenges and ways to address them

Description:

Demographic and epidemiological transitions will further drive demand for health and social care. In many low-income and lower middle-income countries, both demand and supply will continue to fall short of population needs. The growing need for health professionals could be on the other hand, a great opportunity for the very large cohorts of young people preparing to enter the labour market in the coming years, especially in low-income countries.

One key challenge is keeping newly trained health workers in low- and middle-income countries, when faced with the pull from upper-middle and high-income countries? It is recognised that the international mobility of health workers may bring numerous benefits to source and destination nations and health workers themselves. However, the adverse effects of migration and the brain-drain on health professionals must be mitigated. At the same time, when analysing the health system in developing countries, one cannot forget that a defective health system is also one of the root causes of migration. Therefore, investing in an efficient, effective and inclusive health system could contribute to slowing down the migratory flow.

Main discussion points:

- What makes a good health work force retention scheme? Examples of past and current initiatives?
- Could an updated broader international agreement on health workforce that would include provisions to maximise mutuality of benefits be a solution to the brain drain?
- Is a health worker labour mobility platform a viable solution for legal migration in the health sector?

Moderator: *Marisol Touraine*

Speakers: *Jan Paehler*, Head of the Health Sector, Unit B4, DG DEVCO;
Laurent Aujean, European Commission, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME);
Sana de Courcelles, Executive Director of the Sciences Po School of Public Affairs, affiliated professor in the areas of state reform and health; and
Ibadat Dhillonis, Technical Officer, World Health Organization, Health Workforce Department.

12:40 – 13:40

Lunch

13:40 – 15:00

PANEL III: Health and the technological advancement**Description:**

New technologies are seen as a threat for human jobs in many economic sectors, but when it comes to health, there is a completely different story. Rapidly changing technologies are already modifying the nature of health services. New cadres of health workers are emerging, enabled by information and communication technologies, especially in diagnostic healthcare.

Digital technologies also provide opportunities to enhance people's access to health services, improve the responsiveness of health systems to the needs of individuals and communities, and improve the delivery of a wide range of health services. This is especially useful in remote areas where access to health services is difficult because of the lack of infrastructure. In such areas, technology can give access to care services to large populations using digital solutions that rest only on access to the Internet. Moreover, through online programmes, with the support of the private sector, a new health workforce can be trained to deliver basic care treatments and disease prevention information.

Main discussion points:

- What are the barriers to private investment in health force training by way of digital tools? Could a public-private partnership be a solution to the lack of infrastructure, e.g. broadband connection?
- Social innovation and social entrepreneurship in the health sector could be the concrete solution for local problems? Case study: the role of community workers.

Moderator: *Marisol Touraine*

Speakers: *Michel Goldman*, co-Director of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Innovation in healthcare, Brussels, and former Executive Director of the Innovative Medicines Initiative;
Jacques Biot, Consultant on health technologies and their impact on the organisation of health systems, Representative from European Commission, Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT);
Representatives from the private sector and non-governmental organisations.

15:00 – 15:20

Coffee break

15:20 – 15:30

Presentation of parallel discussions and distribution in groups

15:30 – 16:30

Parallel working groups on the themes presented in the morning session:

- Group I: Skills development and decent work in the health sector
- Group II: Health and demography: opportunities, challenges and ways to address them
- Group III: Health and the technological advancement

16:30 – 17:00

Short presentation of each group discussion

17:00 – 17:10

Conclusions and wrap up

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS AND WEBPAGES



A Labour Market Approach to Investing in the Health and Social Workforce to achieve the SDGs, WHO, 2018, leaflet



The future of work in the health sector – Working paper, ILO, 2019



Working for Health: Expanding and transforming the health and social workforce for the Sustainable Development Goals, ILO, OECD, WHO, 2018



Improving employment and working conditions in health services, Report for discussion at the Tripartite Meeting on Improving Employment and Working Conditions in Health Services, ILO, 2017



Five-Year Action Plan for Health Employment and Inclusive Economic Growth (2017–2021)



A European Programme for Action to tackle the critical shortage of health workers in developing countries (2007–2013), Communication from The Commission to The European Parliament and The Council



High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth webpage (WHO)



EuropeAid, Employment and decent work webpage



WHO Health workforce webpage



EuropeAid, Health webpage



WHO Education and training webpage

Selection of DG DEVCO funded projects:



Brain Drain to Brain Gain
Supporting WHO Code of Practice on International Recruitment of Health Workers for Better Management of Health Worker Migration. See the project newsletter here and video here.



Human Resources for Health: a challenge to be met in strong partnership
Enhancing the management of Human Resources for Health to contribute on implementing Primary Health Service Development Programme in the Iringa and Njombe Regions, Tanzania