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Green Paper European Workforce for Health

HOPE position

HOPE welcomes the European Commission proposal's aim of trying to put together some elements on the migration and mobility issues. In enlarging the scope to all workforce issues, the European Commission is however taking the risk of giving a simplistic perspective on a highly complex issue. By embracing too many aspects, the green paper might be missing the point. It only partly addresses the rather confusing patchwork of EU influence on the health workforce. In other words, it explicitly shows the dispersion of the issue at EU level, in particular in the Commission, certainly more than it usually happens at national level.

There are major tensions and sometimes contradictions between the organisation of health care services and the EU policies and principles. Mobility of professionals is one good example of this. The European Union is pushing mobility without being able to prevent the negative impacts it has at national and local level. More generally, there is a limited explicit EU agenda for health professionals, which means directly focused on health professionals. The implicit agenda is however increasing and is having a major impact on the European health workforce, the working time directive being one obvious example.

HOPE has a long experience in trying to understand workforce issue at European level. It developed in 2004 a report "The Healthcare Workforce in Europe". The key issue yesterday as it is today is the need of indicators, of sound valid and reliable data. Indicators on the use of workforce are still missing. They should be the priority before envisaging anything at European level. The same goes for mobility and migrations.

Once the pre-condition is met, HOPE would broadly supports opportunities of sharing experience between healthcare systems and of coordinated action throughout the EU. Actions should however be built on existing mechanisms at European, national and regional level. The diversity of Member States experiences is a source of lessons but also of misinterpretations. It is critical to engage stakeholders from health and beyond to get the most of this diversity.

HOPE believes however that any action taken at European level must fully recognise the differences between healthcare systems and not undermine in any way the capacity of the Member States to plan, fund and organise patient care for their citizens.

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