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## Health Professional Mobility in the European Union Study

### News: First book online available!

HEALTH PROMeTHEUS, the flagship research project on health professional mobility coordinated by the European Health Management Association and co-financed by the European Community through the Seventh Framework Programme, sees the publication of its first volume entitled "Health professional mobility and health systems". This publication presents research on the gaps in knowledge about the numbers, trends, impacts and policy responses to this dynamic situation, in particular in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. It provides a comprehensive analysis of mobility patterns, the impacts of migration on health systems and its relevance for policy-making and policy responses across Europe through 17 colourful case studies and additional in-depth analysis.

[The book is available here to download](#) (PDF, 6MB).

### Background

As labour markets become more interconnected, both globally and within the EU, health workforce policies at national level and the movement of professionals between countries are increasingly under the spotlight. The scale of professional mobility, the range of occupational cadres involved, the numbers seeking work in other sectors, and the potential impact on health systems as professionals move are all causes for concern. Making decisions on how to respond is difficult, however, given gaps in data, lack of knowledge of factors that reduce or facilitate movement, and evidence gaps on the effects on services, staff and financial and health outcomes beyond the anecdotal evidence.

HEALTH PROMeTHEUS, funded through the Seventh Framework Programme, contributes to this discussion by filling a substantial part of the knowledge gap on the magnitude and impact of health professionals moving to other countries. The study seeks to better understand existing patterns of professional mobility and the organizational, contextual and personal factors that push and pull health professionals across borders, to including the positive and negative impacts of mobility.. The project also aims to highlight feasible, effective policy interventions (national and international) and to identify effective managerial responses. In order to achieve these aims the study has included quantitative as well qualitative data analyses and research on trends and policies which aim to manage migration organizationally, nationally and internationally.

### Current state of the project

In its first phase the HEALTH PROMeTHEUS project developed a conceptual framework and a template for country and topical analysis on health professional mobility (HPM). A user friendly resource package was developed, which included a template for country case-study on health

professional mobility, a background document on conceptual frameworks and a user guide for writing country case-study on health professional mobility.

At the same time the project initiated the mapping of the magnitude of HPM, testing the collected data for validity and identifying gaps and incompatibilities. This immense and complex task led to the delivery of maps on the magnitude of health professional mobility and a review of the data's quality. Additionally, a feasibility study on a sustainable European data collection network was written. The mapping of data on health professional mobility is unique, as is the comprehensive analyses of both data sources and the data itself.. The wide coverage includes EU countries, candidate countries (e.g. Turkey), other European countries (including among others Ukraine, Serbia and Norway) and selected OECD countries in order to provide a comprehensive overview. The data collection provides key knowledge on health professional mobility that is essential for policy making and the ongoing 'hot' discussion on the topic.

In addition to this quantitative exercise, the HEALTH PROMeTHEUS project aims to increase understanding of health system and contextual drivers and the impacts of mobility in countries. This resulted in 17 colourful and accessible country case studies, providing insights in the reasons for and impacts of health mobility. The case studies offer data that supplement the quantitative collections from work package 2 by offering a different approach to the topic. A supplementary topical analysis of the country case studies that will also be published as part of the book ('Health Professional Mobility in the European Union Vol. I: Country Case studies') provides a cutting edge overview of trends and processes.

Moving from a system to the individual level, the project also seeks to understand health professionals' personal motivations around migration through an online survey and focus groups set-up in several countries i.e. Germany, the United Kingdom and Lithuania. The research instruments (initial survey and focus group/interview schedule) have been prepared and pre-tested and the administration of initial survey and pilot focus group are in progress. Conclusions on health professionals' motivation resulting from this work package are expected in due course.

At the same time, project partners have been very active in disseminating the project's results. This resulted in the upcoming publication of a book including the case studies, two articles in transfer journals and several scientific workshops at key European conferences, including EHMA, EUPHA and EHFG. A website, a logo and project leaflet were designed and disseminated to support the profile of the project.

Preliminary results show that HPM does affect all EU countries, but that the scale of movements and mobility patterns vary substantially. For both receiving and sending countries impacts on health services delivery and the availability of resources were observed, although evidence is sometimes scarce. The project has also shown that measures to retain staff can be of financial and non-financial nature, including improving working conditions and work-life-balance as well as career development opportunities.

### **Overarching project objectives**

Running until 2011, HEALTH PROMeTHEUS makes a significant contribution to future thinking on the movement of health professionals in the European Union. The expected results of the project are: (1) the promotion of networks: PROMeTHEUS will enhance cooperation between researchers in the field by connecting researchers and promoting the use of common conceptual frameworks and

methodologies. (2) Proliferating excellence: the networking function will also help to of European research in the field through exchanging good practices. One of the key aims of the project is to (3) Support stronger policy making and policy responses to professional mobility in various ways. PROMeTHEUS seeks to clarify the need to respond to mobility and/or improve existing responses by mapping the magnitude of health professional mobility. Also, this research helps countries to better understand the underlying drivers of health professional mobility, and enhanced capacity of proactive policy and decision making will be achieved by providing qualitative and quantitative scenarios, based on the data collected by the mapping exercise and the analysis provided by the case studies.

By reviewing and assessing international and country responses PROMeTHEUS contributes to improving the quality of policy making in International Organizations, countries and health care organizations. This will be achieved by providing the most complete set of possible policy options, thus helping to identify the most adequate option currently available. In order to achieve the goal of supporting stronger policy making, early dissemination of (preliminary) research results has helped to improve the evidence base of the public debate as transferability and feasibility of different policy options were discussed at length. This will contribute to a more realistic perspective on what needs to be done and what can be achieved. All these elements will help Member States to better organize their health systems by seeing the issues in context; identifying drivers for health professional mobility and understanding when and how these drivers are amenable to change. In this way health care organizations and their management will be better able to address the challenges stemming from professional mobility.

Future work within the project will build on the milestones achieved so far. Work to be carried out in the second half of the project include a focus on effective policy responses at international, national and managerial level and aiming to translate scientific evidence and findings into actionable recommendations and model future scenarios of HPM. To ensure that the project is relevant to policy-making and practitioners, an advisory board of key experts and practitioners was established in early 2009 and has met twice to reflect on the project's progress. The project has also worked closely with two other FP7 projects on health mobility, RN4Cast and MoHProf, to allow for added value of research findings.

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