

GHWA – July 18th, 2014

Executive Board of the Global Health Workforce Alliance (GHWA)

Supporting document to the presentation of the Joint Action on European Health Workforce Planning & Forecasting, given by M. Van Hoegaerden – Programme Manager – on behalf of the Joint Action Team.

Attached document / *Joint Action Leaflet*
Web ref. / www.euhwforce.eu

Dear Members of the Board,
Dear Colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank you on behalf partners of the Joint Action on Health Workforce Planning and Forecasting for your invitation to talk to the Executive Board of the Alliance. Your interest in our responses to the specific European concerns regarding the present and arising challenges of Health Workforce Planning & Forecasting is important to us.

Management Summary

The Joint Action on Health Workforce Planning & Forecasting (JA EUHWF) is a collaborative project sponsored by the EU Commission & Consumer, Health and Food Executive Agency. Its very large support among the EEA countries (74 important partners up to date, among which most countries and professional organisations) reflects the eagerness within Europe to make progress in meeting the challenges facing our Health Workforces through the sharing of knowledge, the build of useful tools and expand the use good practice.

EU Member States and several EU Third Countries share a specific amount of threats against the sustainability of health care. We share an open market, with free movement of health professionals and patients. We have a considerable knowledge waiting to be shared among our various health systems. Implementation strategies, tailored for each country/region, and recognizing the variety of health care systems and planning objectives, need to be tested and supported by tools and experts.

The JA EUHWF offers this knowledge sharing and a very valuable networking among many stakeholders. The Joint Action programme aims at being a catalyst at international, national & regional level, fostering the dialogue among partners and the focus of all towards a common

objective: Monitor, Analyse, Plan and Re-engineer health care workforce.

The Joint Action highlights the benefits of a catalyst to improve workforce planning in countries around the world and we hope our vision provides a useful example for our GHWA colleagues about the benefits of:

- knowledge sharing;
- data collection for monitoring, planning and transparent policy assessment purposes;
- strong interaction of stakeholders for spotting and monitoring the health care megatrends, and;
- supporting all countries to start the HWF planning process according to their self-defined objectives.

The JA EUHWF is happy to share its knowledge with GHWA working groups when applying and is willing to investigate any synchronization of future activities.

It is our honour to invite the members of the GHWA Executive Board to the second Conference organised by the JA EUHWF under the Italian Presidency of the Council, that will take place in Rome on December 4 & 5 2014.

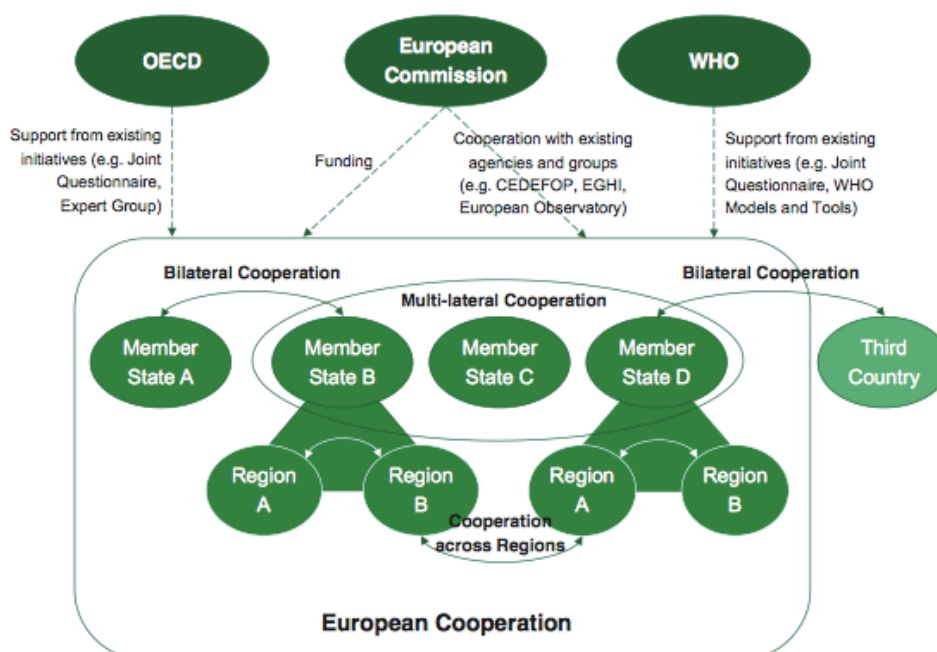
1. Joint Action birth & ambitions

Previous studies have delivered such an amount of useful information on the threats on Health Workforce that the need for action is undisputed.

Following the Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health (2008), after a successful policy dialogue in 2009 (Leuven, Belgium) and an emphasis put by the Belgian Presidency of the Union in 2010 on Health Workforce, the European Commission ordered the “Commission Feasibility Study on the EU level Collaboration on Forecasting Health Workforce Needs, Workforce Planning and Health Workforce Trends”, which was released in 2012.

It has been highlighted that European countries are facing similar challenges when it comes to sustainability and affordability of their health systems, despite the variety of health care and social security systems in place. The study strongly recommended the initiation of cooperation mechanisms, through the international organizations, through bilateral & multi-lateral agreements, but also between regions (see figure below).

Figure 29 – Different Level of Cooperation on Health Workforce Planning



ref.: Commission Feasibility Study on the EU level Collaboration on Forecasting Health Workforce Needs, Workforce Planning and Health Workforce Trends

The study suggests that there are mainly two ways in which European collaboration could help to address the EU-wide health workforce ‘crisis’:

- a) Providing support to national authorities, in order to improve national health workforce systems, through any possible available tool and relying on existing initiatives; or
- b) Creating tools, methodologies, common definitions and indicators to carry out monitoring and analysis exercises at the European level.

The JA EUHWF was built as the response to these recommendations, with as scope five health care professions (medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and midwives).

The action is targeting many tangible objectives, turning recommendations into practice and initiating roll-out or improvement of health workforce planning culture(s) across Europe, with full respect for local objectives.

The Joint Action is also part of the Action Plan for EU health workforce of the European Commission, adopted in 2012, that heads into various integrated directions, each contributing to a common objective of ensuring EU response to HWF shortage and inadequacy challenges. If improving workforce planning and forecasting is a major element of the plan, anticipating future skills,

improving recruitment and retention and mitigating the negative effects of migration on health systems receive also special attention.

(more on : http://ec.europa.eu/health/workforce/policy/index_en.htm)

Summary of the products of the Joint Action on Health Workforce Planning & Forecasting:

A report on the terminology issues in International Reporting (Joint Questionnaire). This report will improve the international reporting on HWF data and build trust in this useful tool.

A report on the applicability of the WHO Global CODE of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel within EU. This report is meant to be exploratory and lead to future actions

A report on mobility data This report is of major political importance and must lead to clear proposals for implementating a monitoring process

A report on the planning data gap This report should build a map of the current capacity of the EU countries/regions to collect the minimal data needed to set up a HWF planning process. Based on this shared knowledge, the countries/regions can benefit from each other's experience and start an improvement process

A proposal of minimal planning data requirements This proposal will help EEA countries and Regions to define the basic indicators and objectives of a planning process and enable the set-up of a data collection process

A handbook of best practices among health workforce planning methodologies This important handbook will build on the experience of eight selected countries with advanced methodologies in HWF Planning and provide a set of good practices and analyses of the models used. As a consequence, this very valuable knowledge will be shared and will be adapted to particular needs.

Two implementation pilot projects and two feasibility studies on health workforce planning methodologies The Joint Action is a programme that drives EU forward. Through the pilot projects and feasibility studies, tangible steps will be achieved in 4 countries towards the building of a planning system, with full respect for local context and objectives.

Guidelines on current methodologies for gathering qualitative information Experience has shown that pure quantitative extrapolations prove to provide numbers with a huge error factor as the health care context

	evolves quickly. This report should help Countries/Regions to install an expert dialogue enabling the elaboration of appropriate scenarios.
A report on the skills needed in the future	Applying the horizon scanning methods, the influence of an evolving context of healthcare delivery will be addressed. This activity will lead to future actions.
A pilot study conducted among general practitioners in Belgium, in order to assess the main qualitative drivers influencing the needs of this professional category	By testing methods in the field, the Joint Action will offer proven expertise to the Countries/Regions that will be made available for further replication.
Web content on planning methodologies & horizon scanning	This dissemination activity proves the open source idea behind our work and makes all information available not only to the stakeholders but also any other partners.
A stakeholder analysis	This inventory and analyses of the stakeholders help EU to understand the many players involved in any EU/Country/Region based planning system. Stakeholders' involvement is a major success factor for the future.
A network of experts	This network will help to ensure the sustainability of the Joint Action results through a further exchange of practice. We also expect from this network to support national/regional processes of implementation.
Technical recommendations and policy recommendations	Leading to feasible next steps of our action.

2. Our Joint Action programme in a World wide context

In EU, Universal Health (and social security) coverage is globally a last century achievement. We are all among High Incomes Countries. The crisis of HWF that EU must face could be seen as minor compared to other countries in the World.

Still, from a patient and health care system perspective, the challenges are complex. At EU level, some health care systems risk regressing due to health workforce migration issues. Chronic diseases, older population, isolated people, local imbalances, and many other issues are acute. Also more has to be achieved with less money. Last but not least, EU is a unique environment of peaceful

association of countries and cultures with an open labour market and free movement of patients and services.

Health Care services represent more than 10% of our Labour Market – counting the commonly regulated professions only - and one of the major factors in EU citizens' happiness and belief in a bright future.

The current concerns of EU and some EU third countries will 'hopefully' be the World's concerns when most countries will reach development and health care targets. The European experience, with a variety of country structures and major differences between them, is a mini-world experience. Also, EU with its long tradition of health care expertise must sustain a capacity to help other countries by training health professionals and developing new sustainable systems of health and social cares.

While the Joint Action aims to develop material specific to EEA states; we believe that our participation to a global sharing of knowledge is of utmost importance. All our findings, guidelines and reports are now and will remain available to all competent authorities and groups of countries that wish to increase their planning capacity.

By strengthening data collection, sharing of information and by building planning capacity we believe that we are also working in sympathy with the aims of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel; we believe that these actions crucially underpin the principles of the code.

Building knowledge of the current situation, and developing a cogent forecast of future possibilities, is key to making any progress in all domains. The commitment and strong involvement of the countries and the stakeholders within our programme is a success factor to ensure larger commitment in implementing the outputs of the programme. Article 5 and 6 of the WHO Global Code can be fully applied at EU level, especially article 6.2 that states e.g. that Member States are encouraged to establish or strengthen and maintain, as appropriate, health personnel information systems, including health personnel migration, and its impact on health systems.

In future actions, we could open the comparison and exchange of knowledge with the world partners, which we already started, by welcoming a high level Brazilian delegation and by listening to the South African testimony at our first conference (Bratislava January 2014 - <http://euhwforce.weebly.com/140128-joint-event-bratislava.html>). EU can also learn a lot from the World.

3. The European Joint Action Ambitions in an evolving context

We are developing a sustainability programme so that at the end of the Joint Action, we shall make sure that our progress is turned into future actions. The building of a network of EU experts will help our countries to implement the products, but also to make sure these products evolve. Moreover, the relations built within the programme and through the network will ensure bilateral and multilateral dynamics.

The Joint Action Partners do not seek a big bang approach and none of the products of the Joint Action are designed as ultimate knowledge or definitive good practice. These will need to be adapted country by country (or region). It is legitimate that each country has different planning objectives. One country puts more emphasis on planning of HWF for optimizing the financing of training capacity, while another merely plans to keep on top of the country resilience to external workforce, and this other country plans with major target of keeping the cost of health care balanced.

We believe each country should be offered expertise and knowledge to evolve at its own pace and according to its own challenges and particular situations. We nevertheless believe that all knowledge, study, best practice is worth sharing and building on.

We also believe that even within European tradition of diplomatic relations, we are only scratching the surface of mutual health workforce understanding and the development of bilateral and multilateral relationships. Hopefully the Joint Action can be a catalyst for further cooperation across the EU and EEA, through better data collection and understanding of the immigration flows of HWF's.

Finally, it seems self evident that planning health workforce is an important but not isolated part of planning health care services provision, which is the ultimate goal. The EU/EEA allows free space for provision of service offers a variety of parameters and local solutions, additional to self-sustainability of the health care system. It is needless to say that this should be taken into account in future HWF planning approaches.

4. The Joint Action on Health Workforce Planning & Forecasting and GHWA Strategy

The Joint Action is probably moving forward in the fields of the following GHWA Board thematic working groups:

1. The drivers of change in health labour markets;	Through its activities on Horizon Scanning and New Skills (WP6)
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3. Data and measurement of HRH availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality;	Through its activities on Data & Mobility (WP4), on Planning methodologies (WP5 & WP6)
7. Improving productivity and performance: the roles of regulation, professional associations and standards;	Through its activities on Planning methodologies (WP5), the build of a network and future recommendations (WP7).

While the Joint Action is an EU funded programme addressing EU challenges and specificities in a participative way, with aim at implementing the findings, we are happy to share our knowledge with GHWA working groups when relevant. We are also willing to investigate any synchronization of future activities.

We are happy to work with WHO and GHWA in developing specific approaches, benefitting local progress with respect for individual ambitions and specificities. The political process of setting the ambitions is essential, and experience proves that a strong implication of stakeholders in this process provides higher chances of success.

We believe data collection should always be the first feed of any policy and that appropriate data enable a HWF management process to monitor, plan and create transparent policy assessment. We are keen to prove that data collection can be reached in quality and quantity with feasible and reasonable effort. We believe that qualitative information cannot wait and that no population may rely only on quantitative data to forecast labour and healthcare situation due to the complexity of the systems and the fast evolution rate.

We are happy to help European Union and EU Third countries to move forward and to foster further European dialogue on HWF through a network of experts without borders, and are happy to reflect on future expansions.

The Joint Action aims to assist countries across Europe to develop their health systems and workforces and to act as a catalyst to promote further shared learning across the EEA. It is important that we build on the work we have done; possibly through a further actions building on methodologies and terminologies and developing networks of shared expertise.

I'd like to end up with an invitation to join the Second Joint Action Conference under the Italian Presidency of the Council - Rome December 4 & 5, 2014 - where planning methodologies, terminology issues in international reporting and the network of experts will receive a special focus.
(<http://euhwforce.weebly.com/141204-joint-event-rome.html> - page currently under construction)

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Belgium – July 15th, 2014*