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Strategic objective of the conference

Eng Michel Van Hoegaerden, Programme Manager of the Joint Action

Honourable Minister, Ms. Lorenzin,
Mister Director, Dr Rys,
Dear Colleagues gathered here today,

December 2014.

Four years have passed since the last European Presidency Conference specifically on Health Workforce, that has been organised by Belgium with the title : “Investing in the health professionals of tomorrow in Europe “.

The topics were:

- Assessment of health professionals in the future.
- Skill-mix and redistribution of tasks.
- How can we create better working conditions to attract health professionals?
- Improving quality, safety and efficiency.

You may recognise that these topics are still very present and constitute the backbone of our action.

I was there in La Hulpe, where the Belgian conference took place, as General Manager in charge of health professionals, and I’m here today as Programme Manager of this Joint Action. Being a witness of the journey through years we did, I can tell you that Europe, its Member States and many stakeholders haven’t stand still. Europe has set up various projects and notably this Joint Action on Health Workforce Planning & Forecasting.

Today, as always, it is a real pleasure for me to welcome you all to the second Joint Action Conference that will illustrate the progress accomplished since then. It is even more a pleasure to enjoy the very strong support of Italy, who considered the importance of Employment in the Health Care sector as central to many policies and granted our conference with the official recognition in the Italian Presidency Agenda. I wish the start with thanking Ms. Beatriz Lorenzin, Minister of Health, and Ms. Ugenti & Mr. Leonardi, General Managers of the Italian Ministry of Health, for their commitment to enhancing health workforce planning in Italy and in Europe, and also for offering the Ministry of Health to host this conference.

Since 2010 the very important feasibility study on EU level Collaboration on Forecasting Health Workforce Needs, Workforce Planning and Health Workforce Trends have been issued on 29th of May 2012. Since 2010, we have built up this Joint Action, starting with 30 associated partners and 22 collaborating partners, we now reached 49 collaborating partners. In total 26 Member States are actively taking part to the Programme. The Joint Action started in April 2013, as part of the comprehensive EU Action Plan for the health workforce.

Since 2010 our various brother projects like Prometheus, RN4Cast and Health Workers for All have published important papers.

Our world is changing fast, and the various demographic, economic & health care crises adds to the evolution. It is clear that our human resources policy action can hardly manage to keep on track with the evolution. The need for planning is reinforced by our limited capacity to adopt the right kinetics of managing the changes. But we show with Programmes like the Joint Action that we don't give up. We work, we fight, we care for the future, and these two days will prove that.

On the way to achieving the goals of the Joint Action, this conference is an important milestone.

It's been two years now since we started, and we have been working hard. Still, among many speeches myself and the team gave, we have been pushing that the Joint Action was obviously an action, targeting tangible realisations. Today, it is time to demonstrate this statement by presenting tangible products and results. Today it is time to show value for money. Today it is time to show that we must tackle the health workforce crisis as a collective, European collaboration.

The blueprint for this collaboration is to be found in the Action Plan for the EU health workforce, adopted as part of the Commission Communication for a job rich recovery in Europe. We may affirm that the statements from these papers are still valid. Especially, the healthcare sector, despite the current strong budgetary pressure it is still one of the fastest growing employment sectors. Also the various challenges like data collection, estimating and balancing needs and supply, re-engineering of healthcare for a sustainable perspective, addressing threatening migration patterns, and others are long run trails, leading to a better management. The strategy behind our Joint Action is to share the knowledge, build useful tools and demonstrate the feasibility of implementing EU knowledge at member state level. The aim of the Joint Action is to save money but even more save a lot of time by preventing the reinvention of the wheel, and learning and sharing together.

This conference has the goals to expand on the sharing of knowledge, and the great variety of attendees show that networking could be at its best here. Also we want to dig into practice. Therefore the program proposes a mix between theory, field experience and joint action products presentation. Finally, we aim at inspiring policy makers and reinforce our commitment to deliver the Grant agreement, and doing this our share of action plan for EU Health Workforce.

There is no sustainability without a strong employment strategy. We therefore decided to put Employment as the major item on this first day of the conference. Right after the lunch, you will hear that putting Europe

back on track of sustainable job creation and economic growth, is the top priority and various speakers will propose you different points of views, building a bridge between the future we want, the feasibility we have and the resources we need. A special attention will be given to the current work in progress within the Joint Action on a report on the insights on future skills and competences.

The core business of our action is to improve planning capacities across Europe. This very strong focus shall be expressed through our tomorrow morning session, with among other very interesting topics, the Italian Team of the Joint Action will share with you a first look at the first ever “Handbook on Planning Methodologies” bringing together 7 EU confirmed methodologies.

We shall also hear from the Work Package 6 team, how we might think about the future more robustly and consider emerging research on future skills and trends from across Europe so we might all collectively better understand the future drivers that will shape the workforce and the health of our populations as a whole but also within our own contexts.

Finally, Mobility being both a threat for many healthcare systems and an opportunity for a EU employment and space of freedom will be addressed during the last session tomorrow afternoon.

Between eminent speakers and panellists, the Hungarian team will offer a first view on the report on the applicability of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel to the E.U..

This year the Joint Action demonstrated through its various workshops the need for a EU-wide area of discussion on the planning of Health Workforce. Within this conference we want to further promote the interaction. Therefore we have made quality time available in all sessions for Questions & Answers and discussions. Also, we have assigned

different moderators for all sessions that take on the task to organise the questions and create the interactivity.

Because we plan for a lot further than tomorrow, and because the real focus are the young professionals of today and to come, we mostly asked several young health workers and policy advisers to be our moderators. These people that will help us through the sessions are showing the way to the future with their quality and involvement.

I'm confident that these two days we will learn a lot from each other, and I'm looking forward for tomorrow's end of the conference, when standing up again in front of you, I'll try to draw the conclusions of these days. But with your presence here today, I may already draw one conclusion. Europe is taking action on ensuring the various health care systems, recognising the importance of the Health Workforce employment and skills. Your presence is a treat for the Joint Action team and we see our efforts recognised.

On behalf of the team, I want to reinforce our thanks to the Italian hosts, and I wish all of you a very good conference.

Honourable Minister, Ms. Lorenzin,
Mister Director, Dr Rys,
Dear Colleagues gathered here today,
Thank you for your attention.

I now invite the honourable Senator Dr. Amedeo Bianco, President of the National Federation of the Orders of Doctors and Dentists of Italy, to inspire us on the Need for Planning.