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As Development Director, Ulla-Maija Laiho is responsible for implementing the social and health care sector strategic programme put into place by the Ministry in 2009. The aim of the programme is to strengthen service provision capabilities as well as developing the sector into one that is growing and internationalising.

The main emphases are on business activity and promoting growth and internationalisation, ensuring the availability of a skilled workforce and developing customer-centered service markets.

Presenting:

Policy / guidelines for the ethical international recruitment of health staff, Finland

Summary:

Flexible and ethically sustainable international recruitment for health care services

In Finland, 16 per cent of the employed workforce work in social and health care services; more than in industrial jobs. Of these employees, 80 per cent work in the public sector for municipal and joint municipal authorities.

The large, post-war age group is of retirement age. Within the social and health care sector, over 40 per cent of the workforce will retire within the next ten years. As the younger age groups are smaller than previously, there are not the same numbers of students entering social and health care training as in previous decades. The need for labour that will be created by retirement cannot be met by increasing the supply of employees. Productivity has to be increased, the service concept needs reforming and attitudes encouraging people to take care of their health have to be promoted. International recruitment is needed, but it would supply only a small part of the labour needed.

The number of doctors or nurses in Finland that have come from abroad is a very small proportion of the workforce. It is only in the last ten years that nurses have been recruited from within and outside the EU/EEA region. The Finnish language, the country's northern location and associated climate are not factors that are very attractive.

As a member of the WHO, Finland is naturally committed to ethically sustainable recruitment. This means that health care personnel are not recruited from countries where the population's health care would be endangered by skilled professionals moving abroad. Ethically sustainable recruitment also means equality of treatment for employees who come to Finland. This covers working conditions, salary, induction and opportunities for career advancement.

The Ministry of Employment and the Economy's strategic development programme for the wellbeing sector, HYVÄ, has brought together a national collaborative network to develop approaches to international recruitment. The network, which is composed of public and private sector organisations, has gathered the necessary information, identified problems and drawn up proposals for resolving them. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the sector's supervisory authorities will be responsible for implementing them.