



SUPPORT FOR THE HEALTH
WORKFORCE PLANNING AND
FORECASTING EXPERT NETWORK

LAYMEN REPORT ON THE ONLINE WORKSHOP 5
ON
**“DIGITAL HEALTH: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPPLY, DEMAND,
MONITORING AND ORGANIZATION OF HEALTH WORKFORCE?”**



Funded by
the Health Programme
of the European Union

This workshop was organised by AGENAS and Semmelweis University, and was part of a series of workshops foreseen in the frame of EU Health Programme 2014-2020 under a service contract (no. 20167301) with the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea) acting under the mandate from the European Commission. The information and views set out in the workshop are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission/Executive Agency. The Commission/Executive Agency do not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in the workshop. Neither the Commission/Executive Agency nor any person acting on the Commission's/Executive Agency's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein. The contract is signed with the joint tender led by Semmelweis University (SU), and further partners are KU Leuven, the Italian National Agency for Regional Health Services (AGENAS), the Italian Ministry of Health (MDS) and the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME).

Seventy experts from across Europe registered to attend the fifth and last SEPEN workshop on “Digital health: what are the implications for supply, demand, monitoring and organization of health workforce?” in the context of the joint tender ‘Support for the health workforce planning and forecasting expert network’ (SEPEN).

Workshop 5, originally planned for 26-27 March 2020 in Rome, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergency situation has affected all of the EU Member States with a different degree of severity. Following approval of the Consumer Health Agriculture, Food Executive Agency (CHAFAEA), the contracting Authority, the SEPEN consortium transformed the workshop into a digital workshop held in three different steps (½ day sessions), from June 2020 to October 2020.

The online workshop addressed the topic of digital transformation of the health workforce (HWF) and its impact on HWF planning.

While the issue of the digital transformation of health care is now on the agenda of the discussions of policy makers and experts, and the consequent digital transformation of healthcare professions are gradually being addressed in a systematic way, the impact of these changes on HWF planning systems and related forecasting models are issues yet to be explored by experts.

Through interaction and discussion among invited experts - health workforce planners, eHealth experts, policy makers, health professionals’ and patients’ representatives – workshop 5 aimed to:

- Present the emerging trends of the digital transformation of the health workforce by facilitating knowledge transfer and sharing Member States’ experiences on recent initiatives, and also inform on activities carried out by the main European networks and organizations;
- Discuss the main challenges and opportunities that digital transformation brings to health workforce planning from different perspectives:
 - the policies needed to ensure a resilient health workforce that can facilitate and accompany this transformation;
 - the necessary organisational changes that can make the most of the contribution of health workers by exploiting their full potential while ensuring their safety, improving their working conditions and providing the motivational environment;
- Investigate the most effective health workforce planning and forecasting models to anticipate the changes brought about by digital transformation and thus better inform policy makers;
- Propose solutions and recommendations for the issues discussed during the workshop.

Factors emerged as particularly important from the discussions held during the workshop are the following:

- interprofessional collaboration,
- collaborative practices,
- multidisciplinary approach,

- engagement of different stakeholders, including intersectoral dialogue,
- data protection issues and safety of end-users is a key priority,
- synergies with the social care sector, and integrated care models,
- the altered skill-mix in the light of technology driven health professions,
- task sharing and task shifting to machines,
- implications of patient empowerment in HWF planning.

With regards to the future of health workforce planning, it is crucial to have accurate data and build more sophisticated planning models, e.g. including projections incorporating the role of digitalisation.

Some lessons were already learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic. It brought significant influence and impact on digital transformation and digital upskilling, and acted as a facilitator in understanding the benefits for HWF planning.

Finally, considering HWF from a wider perspective, it can be observed that HWF planning has improved in the past decade. As a matter of fact, some years ago, the challenges included difficulties with data categories and how to identify the total number of HWF in different countries given the insufficient data availability. The workshop highlighted that data coverage is no longer an issue anymore, now the focus should be on how to select the right data and how to select the essential tools that are already existing in data development for HWF planning. Similarly, a few years ago many countries were struggling to understand how to build the HWF planning model, how to do the calculations and now, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the discussion includes scenario building and other more advanced aspects of planning. Significant gaps were also present regarding national strategies on HWF planning and development, meanwhile discussions on task shifting, effective digital transformation, targeted interventions driven by real-time data, international efforts for the development of transversal skills and knowledge transfer, aiming at improving cross-border care and universal coverage are continuously on the rise, strengthening the foundations of a more effective development and planning of health workforce and patient care.