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Key Note

Future challenges for the EU health workforce

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Abstract

With tough budgetary constraints, EU's health systems are under strong pressure to make fundamental reforms in the way in which they deliver healthcare and to find innovative solutions through organisational as well as technological changes. These changes depend on a highly qualified and motivated health workforce of sufficient capacity and with the right skills. However, with significant shortages of health professionals predicted throughout the EU as a result of increased demands for healthcare from an ageing population at a time when the health workforce itself is growing older, policy-makers are facing a huge challenge.

The Commission has identified a number of areas where structural reforms and efficiency gains could improve the sustainability of health. These include incentives to encourage more cost effective health services, for example reducing the unnecessary use of specialist and hospital care by making general practice more attractive, encouraging the relocation of general practitioners to areas where there is a shortage of them or developing new roles such as advanced practice nurses. The Commission is assisting the Member States through the so-called "reflection process on the sustainability of health systems" to share experiences on integrated care models and EU research funding in projects such as "Integrate" and "Munros" to support policy-makers to choose the best and the most cost effective options to meet the future challenges.

Keywords:

health systems, health workforce, reforms

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