

Editorial

How to attract and retain nursing staff

A few weeks ago the European Parliament celebrated its 50th anniversary in Strasbourg. The Parliament is one of the lasting success stories of European integration. From the initial 6 to the current 27 Member States, one of the main reasons for its success can be attributed to exchange of experiences and best practices, opinions and information between the parliamentarians. But what is true for the European parliamentary body is also true for civil society and its non-governmental organisations.

EUROFEDOP, the European Federation of Public Services Employees and a long-time member of HFE, used the general framework of European coordination, with its ever faster flowing exchange of information between European countries, to get further insights into one of the great challenges currently faced by European healthcare systems: the movement of qualified healthcare staff and the struggle to attract and retain them.

To better understand this problem and to be able to develop effective strategies, Eurofedop consulted its national member organisations and conducted a survey to identify the criteria which are relevant for nursing staff in five big European cities (Madrid, Paris, Bratislava, London and Bucharest). The result of this study showed four issues to be the most important.

■ Recruitment

The survey showed that the accessibility and image of the city and the attractiveness of the working place had a positive effect on the decision of healthcare professionals. Whereas housing in the cities was considered an obstacle to recruitment, cities provide a better division of the working day as well as higher salary scales in comparison to the rest of the country. This was considered favourably in the survey.

■ Retention

The primary motive for the enormous outflow and migration lies in the very big salary differences. Working hour regulations, for example working late at night, can be a risk to security. Physically demanding tasks can complicate the retention, in particular when the age of nursing staff would continue to increase. Child care, car parks and public transport all have a

positive effect. A statutory status for the personnel can also be noted as positive.

■ Status

From high esteem to doctor's maid, the profession can be popular but also deprived of any status. The way in which the profession is viewed by public opinion also plays a crucial role.

■ Social partners

The shorter the distance between policy/politics and trade unions, the more effective their relationship is. A clear definition of competences and decentralisation will have a supportive effect. Moreover a good consultation model between equal partners will help to work out a good health policy.

The conclusion from this very limited but nevertheless very insightful survey is pretty straightforward. Money certainly plays an important role and only further investments can improve the general healthcare sector. Yet the nature and allocation of funding needs further consideration as healthcare professionals themselves should remain the primary beneficiaries of increased investment. Investments in special housing initiatives, as the Key Working Living Initiative in London has shown, are important steps. Other issues are healthy and well-structured relations with trade unions of nursing staff, higher salary scales and an improvement of the public image of healthcare professionals. For all this, the elaboration of an extended Human Resources Plan within the healthcare sector should prove to be a very promising activity. Our survey conducted in Madrid, Paris, Bratislava, London and Bucharest shows that these policies are successful and will not only improve the retention rates of healthcare professionals, but also improve healthcare systems in general. All this will lead to better treatment of patients and shorter curing and caring times – and this is ultimately what healthcare is all about.



Bert Van Caelenberg
EUROFEDOP Secretary General
HFE Executive Committee Member

HFE participates in Slovenian eHealth conference

Health First Europe participated in the eHealth conference of the Slovenian Presidency of the European Union held in Portorož, Slovenia between 5 and 7 May. Since 2003, the European Commission has organised, together with the respective EU Presidency at the time, an annual high level conference on eHealth. These conferences act as a focal point for all developments on the European eHealth landscape.

This year's conference brought together over 300 stakeholders including Member States, industry, healthcare professionals and representatives of patient groups. EU Member States agreed on "The Portorož Declaration on eHealth", which includes five main points:

- Building on national eHealth roadmaps;
- Organising Europe-wide cooperation;
- Combining standardisation and safety in eHealth;
- Involving all stakeholders, in particular patients, and supporting the eHealth industry;

- Creating an innovative eHealth market.

For more information about the conference, please click [here](#).

HFE replies to European Commission patient safety consultation

On 20 May, HFE replied to the European Commission's Consultation on Patient Safety.

HFE welcomes the European Commission's goal of increasing patient safety in the EU by consulting health stakeholders and civil society. HFE is now looking forward to the upcoming European Commission Communications on Patient Safety and on Healthcare-Associated Infections, which are expected towards the end of 2008.

Please click [here](#) to view HFE's response to the consultation.

HFE Member News

Eucomed holds media breakfast on patient safety

Eucomed, the Voice of the medical technology industry in Europe, organised on 21 May a media breakfast to inform press representatives about current developments in the field of patient safety and possibilities to achieve a higher standard of protection of patients from healthcare-associated infections. Around 15 journalists listened to the presentations by John Wilkinson, Director General of Eucomed, Albert van der Zeijden from the International Alliance of Patients' Organisations and Dr. Thomas Ulmer, Member of the European Parliament.

For more information, please click [here](#).

John Wilkinson



Albert van der Zeijden



EU Health News

Commissioner Vassiliou presents future health initiatives

On 27 May, the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety questioned the European Commissioner for Health, Androulla Vassiliou, on the Annual Policy Strategy (APS) 2009 of the Directorate General for Health. At the hearing Commissioner Vassiliou confirmed

several European Commission initiatives for 2008:

- The draft Cross-border Health Services Directive (July)
- A health safety package encompassing the Communications on Patient Safety and Healthcare-Associated Infections (end 2008)

- A Green Paper on the Health Workforce (December)
- A Communication on Organ Transplantation
- A Communication on Rare Diseases (end 2008)

The Commissioner said that 2009 will be a year of transition with no new major proposals, but some smaller initiatives will be taken, such as:

- A Communication on Cancer
- A Communication on Mental Health
- An Action Plan on Combating AIDS/HIV
- A draft Directive on cooperation in the field of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) between health services of Member States
- A report on tackling inequalities in health

For more information, please [contact the secretariat](#).

absence, which currently stand at over 7 million every year within the European Union.

For more information, please click [here](#).



**Healthy Workplaces
campaign**

European Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee adopts White Paper on nutrition, overweight and obesity-related health issues

The Committee of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) of the European Parliament adopted, at its meeting on 27 May, a White Paper on nutrition, overweight and obesity-related health issues. The White Paper presents an integrated approach to contributing to reducing ill health due to poor nutrition and obesity and sets the development of effective cross-sectoral action-orientated partnerships at all levels as the cornerstone of Europe's response to tackling obesity and its related health problems. Some of its main issues are:

- Better information for consumers
- Enabling healthy choice
- Encouraging physical activity

The White Paper will be voted on by the plenary of the European Parliament on 2 September.

To read the report by the ENVI Committee, please click [here](#).

Launch of the Healthy Workplaces campaign

With the motto "Healthy Workplaces: Good for you. Good for business," the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work launched on 13 June the Healthy Workplaces Campaign on Risk Assessment. The campaign runs for two years and aims to promote an integrated management approach that takes into account the different steps of risk assessment. Its objective is to reduce the number of deaths per year, which currently stands at almost 167 000 EU-wide and which occur as a result of either work-related accidents (7 500) or occupational diseases (159 500). A second objective is to reduce the number of accidents at work causing three or more days of

EU Health Ministers call for cross-sectoral cooperation and adopt resolution on antimicrobial resistance

EU Health Ministers discussed the issue of antimicrobial resistance twice in the last two months. First, at their informal meeting on 17 and 18 April in Slovenia, they agreed with the European Commissioner for Health on the need for cross-sectoral cooperation among the EU Member States and more political involvement in the issue. Other ways to fight antimicrobial resistance include reducing the use of antibiotics and curbing hospital infections.

Two months later, at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of the European Union (EPSCO) they adopted a formal resolution on the issue. With the resolution, the Council shows an acute awareness of the problem of healthcare-associated infections (HCAI) and calls on the European Commission and the EU Member States to take further action in this policy field. Concrete recommendations concern the exchange of best practice, the improvement of surveillance systems and further support for research initiatives.

Next steps in this policy field will be a technical workshop on antimicrobial resistance in Paris on 6 and 7 November 2008, organised by France; a European Antibiotics Awareness Day on 18 November organised by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in collaboration with the European Institutions and other stakeholders; the publication of a European Commission Recommendation on healthcare-associated infections at the end of the year as well as a conference, organised by the Czech Presidency of the EU to be held during its term in the first half of 2009, which will aim to formulate basic standards for hospitals' antimicrobial programmes. In 2009, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) will publish a detailed report and outline policy possibilities in the fight against microbial resistance, which will form the basis for further action by the European Commission. For more information about the informal meeting of Health Ministers, please click [here](#).

To read the complete formal resolution from the EPSCO Council, please click [here](#).

Employment and Social Affairs Council of the European Union calls for investment in training of health workforce and appropriate supply of equipment

At the meeting of the European Council on Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs on 9 and 10 June, the EU Health Ministers called, by way of a resolution entitled 'Reducing the burden of cancer', for more investment in training of the health workforce and an appropriate supply of equipment, effective diagnostics and medicines. Besides this, the resolution stresses the importance of prevention and screening for, and the role of lifestyle in, cancer development. It invites the EU Member States to develop and implement comprehensive cancer strategies or plans and the European Commission to present an EU action plan on cancer addressing all aspects of comprehensive cancer control. It also calls on the European Commission to promote the exchange of information and the sharing of expertise.

The next step in the fight against cancer is the publication, in 2009, of a European Commission Action Plan on the fight against cancer.

To read the resolution on cancer, please click [here](#).

HFE MEP supporter Liz Lynne calls for better protection from needlestick injuries and healthcare-associated infections

On 25 June, the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs called for better protection of healthcare workers against needlestick and medical sharp injuries as well as better protection of patients and healthcare workers from healthcare-associated infections. This call took the form of two amendments, tabled by HFE MEP supporter Liz Lynne, to the Employment Committee's opinion on the EU Health Strategy "Together for Health: A strategic approach for the EU 2008 – 2013". The complete report is to be adopted by the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee on 9 September and will be discussed in plenary on 8 October. The Health Strategy provides a general framework for all European Commission activities in the health policy field for its next term.

For more information, please [contact the secretariat](#).

European Commission prepares Green Paper on health workforce

The European Commission, DG Sanco, is currently preparing a Green Paper on healthcare professionals. The Paper is entitled "Green Paper on the European Health Workforce - Promoting a Sustainable Workforce in Europe" and will be presented to the public at a small conference in Brussels in December. It will cover all issues related to healthcare workforce planning under the currently changing conditions of European health systems, such as the ageing population and workers' mobility. This includes issues of healthcare workers recruitment under ethical aspects, investment in training and professional development, healthcare workers' migration or the development of human resources strategies. The publication of the Green Paper will be followed by a period of stakeholder consultation.

For more information, please [contact the secretariat](#).

European Parliament calls for improvement in access to treatment for rheumatic diseases

On 21 May, a written resolution by the Members of the European Parliament on rheumatic diseases received so much support from Members of the European Parliament, that it was adopted as an official resolution by the Parliament. The resolution was written by HFE supporters Adamos Adamou (GUE/NGL, CY) and Dorette Corbey (PES, NL) as well as Edite Estrela (PES, PT). It calls, among other things, for better access to medical treatment for people suffering from rheumatic diseases, for a Commission- and Council-developed Community strategy on rheumatic diseases and for the drawing-up of a Council Recommendation on the early diagnosis and treatment of rheumatic diseases.

To read the written declaration, please click [here](#).

Calendar of upcoming Events

10 - 11/07/2008 - An Informal Meeting of the European Union Member States Ministers responsible for Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs will take place in Chantilly, France.

For more information, please visit www.healthfirsteurope.org