



Migration of health care professionals in Europe

22.11.2006

European Parliament, Brussels

On 22 November Eurofedop organised a Working Breakfast in the European Parliament. Secretary general Bert Van Caelenberg explained the objectives of this meeting; raising awareness and start actions with regard to the issue of **migration of health care professionals in Europe**. The breakfast was a jointly organised event with HOPE, the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation and was attended by some 15 Members of the European Parliament (MEP's).

Among the present MEPs were the following: Adamos Adamou (Cyprus), Milan Cabrnock (Czech Rep), Othmar Karas (Austria), Miroslav Mikolásik (Slovakia), Hubert Pirker (Austria), Laszlo, Surjan (Hungary), Jaroslav Zverina (Czech Rep), Paul Rübige (Austria), Jean Lambert (UK) and Reinhardt Rack (Austria).

The European Commission was represented. DG SANCO's Daniel Mann gave a brief overview of the situation of migrating health care workers in Europe.

Two health care professionals participated and clarified the problems in their countries. Mr. Jevgenijs Kalejs, a doctor from Latvia, explained that Latvian health care workers mainly migrate to the UK and principally for economic reasons (i.e. higher incomes). Ms. Jolante Toliusiene, a nurse from Lithuania, said that although most employees rather work in a hospital in their home country, there is a strong economic motive for (too) many professionals to leave and look for higher salaries elsewhere (EU15, Norway, US).

These two examples clearly illustrated the problems that occur in a large part of the region of Central and (South-) Eastern Europe, the new member states of the EU. During the discussion, this tension between the fundamental principle of 'free movement' and migration flows from recently acceded member states into EU15 was further emphasised.

Irena Belohorská, MEP and coming from Slovakia, stated that this problem is entirely a question of money. In other sectors, where salaries are higher and pension schemes more secure, the exodus of personnel is much less visible. Ms. Belohorská stressed that the answer to this (economic) problem lies with politicians.



László Surján, Hungarian MEP

László Surján, Hungarian MEP, noted that the intention of employees to move to other (EU15) countries is increasing.

The danger is that some departments will have to close. In fact, this is already happening.

Mr Surján also explained that governments do have a role, but cannot just raise salaries in the health sector, while leaving others (police, military, and teachers) behind.

With regard to the tension between the freedom of movement, and the problem of migration Mr. Surján emphasised that **negative consequences of mobility need to be managed.**



Adamos Adamou, Cypriot MEP

Adamos Adamou, Cypriot MEP stressed the fact that the “EU” often comes up with guidelines, frameworks and policies.

The question is, however, what to do when problems occur?

As health issues typically concern national policies, they should be dealt with at a Member State level.

The EU is “innocent” in these type of situations. It is also important to remember that the problem has two faces; that of the EU15 and that of the new member states.

Prof. Brian Edwards (president of HOPE) closed the meeting by stating that we do not know precisely how serious this problem is. The lack of statistics and the uncertainty about the future (are we talking about circular or permanent migration?) make it extremely difficult to tackle this problem. Prof. Edwards demands support from the MEPs in exposing this problem more clearly, as well as (jointly) organising a hearing in the European Parliament in which further actions will be determined.

- As a follow up to this breakfast meeting, Eurofedop and HOPE will come forward with a document stating the position of the two organisations on this problem and with a request for support of the MEPs that showed their concerns on 22.11.2006 in Brussels.
- Lobby/actions with regard to this topic, coordinated by the staff of both Eurofedop and HOPE. The lobby should finally lead to a hearing in the European Parliament.

The latest developments will be reported to Eurofedop’s members on a regular basis.



Luc Van Roye, VOV (Vereniging Openbare Verzorgingsinstellingen);
Irena Belohorská, MEP;
Miroslav Mikolášik, MEP.