

Foreword

In this book on mobility of health professionals we reviewed, analysed and summarised published information and data as well as collected interview data from stake holders, including politicians, policy makers, health service managers and migrant health workers. The aim of the project was an in-depth analysis including assessment of all available statistical data and analyses as well as of qualitative data collected in 25 countries around the world.

The partners involved in the MoHProf project gathered evidence around basic questions and knowledge gaps relating to the international migration of health professionals, which involved an analysis of migration flows, evaluation of policies addressing migration and the development of recommendations concerning these policies.

The country specific issues are elaborated in specific volumes of 25 national reports and national profiles, which summarise these findings. This comprehensive background material is available on the project website, www.mohprof.eu. In this book we draw attention to some European wide and global issues raised by our research results.

Certain countries both within the European Union and outside do not produce a domestic supply of health professionals sufficient to satisfy demands. They have through many years relied on an inflow of health workers from abroad. Often these workers are educated and even received specialty training in their home countries, which are frequently low- or middle- income countries.

Do policy makers consider this an issue that should be addressed, and if so, in what way? Ethical codes for international recruitment, increased intake of health/medical education institutions, exchange of relevant information regarding migration of health professionals within and between EU countries as well as with other relevant nations?

Another important issue is the way migrant health workers are received in the destination countries. We note that lead times for assessing their credentials and qualifications, in particular for those coming from non-EU countries, sometimes take as long as 5–10 years – including even processes of deskilling.

Again, is this an issue for European policy makers? Is there a need for an EU-wide, or even global data bank on country specific information on health/medical education and training?

Regarding the latter, some data suggests that content and level of education in some Member States, in particular new members in the Eastern part of the European Union, are lower than the standard applied in receiving countries and that discrimination of these workers exists in receiving countries. We can observe that migrant health workers may not reach the career levels for which they are qualified, for example, qualified nurses working as care givers in the homes of the elderly, or physicians not reaching advanced career positions because their qualifications are not fully recognised. We need more evidence on possible discrimination and the variation in standards of education between countries.

Not all receiving countries take full responsibility for ensuring that migrant health professionals fully master the language, understand the regulations to be respected and know their rights and entitlements in the receiving country. This is an issue not only for policy makers but also for further research. But already at the present state of knowledge, policy makers may consider taking actions that facilitate the further and quicker integration of migrant health workers in the receiving countries.

Finally, we would like to draw attention to the global impact of the shortage of employed health professionals. According to forecasts, the competition for qualified health professionals will continue, and even increase, in the coming ten years – in particular recruitment to the USA as a driving force. EU Member States – partly already sending countries – may then lose significant numbers of health professionals and need to replace them by recruits from countries within and increasingly outside the European Union – in a demanding competition with the USA.

This book provides a comprehensive description and analysis of the mobility streams of health professionals, the motives and driving forces behind them and the impact on and challenges for health systems. Finally, the book draws conclusions and provides recommendations for future strategic planning, monitoring and the management of mobility of health professionals as well as further research and policy development needs.

We invite the European Commission, Member States, the European Parliament and other concerned parties to seriously consider the implications of our findings in policy formulation at local, national and regional levels as well as the ethical aspects relevant within and outside the EU regarding the particular topic area of mobility of health professionals.

The

International Council of Nurses (ICN), Switzerland

International Hospital Federation (IHF), Switzerland

International Organization for Migration (IOM) Brussels, Belgium

World Medical Association (WMA), France

and the MoHProf Research Team

Scientific Institute of the Medical Association of German Doctors (WIAD), Germany

Centre of Migration Research of the Warsaw University (CMR), Poland

Medical University of Varna (MUV), Bulgaria

Institute of Health Policy and Development Studies of the University of the Philippines (IHPDS)

Public Health Institute (PHI), USA

International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mission with Regional Functions South Africa

Mobility of Health Professionals

Health Systems, Work Conditions, Patterns of Health
Workers' Mobility and Implications for Policy Makers

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