



Statement to the 68th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe on session 5 (e) Report on the WHO high-level meeting, Health Systems Respond to NCDs: Experience in the European Region (Sitges, Spain, 16–18 April 2018) and 5 (j) Report on the WHO high-level meeting, Health Systems for Prosperity and Solidarity: Leaving No One Behind (Tallinn, Estonia, 13–14 June 2018) and the draft resolution EUR/RC68/Conf.Doc./8 ‘Reaffirming commitment to health systems strengthening for universal health coverage, better outcomes and reduced health inequalities’.

The undersigned 12 non-state actors would like to bring two pertinent issues to your attention regarding ‘Reaffirming commitment to health systems strengthening for universal health coverage, better outcomes and reduced health inequalities’.

One is that the economic recovery of some countries in the European Region will lead to a growing number of vacancies for health and social care workers in those countries. As many of their domestic health and care workers have left the health sector definitively during the preceding times of austerity, it proves difficult for some countries to fulfill these vacancies. This situation may create a strong pull effect on health and social care workers in other parts of the European Region, as well as from low and middle income countries elsewhere, which may result in increased health worker mobility and weakened health systems in the countries of origin. Therefore, **concerted investments in a strong health workforce in all countries of the European Region**, including retaining policies as a way to prevent excessive workforce

migration, on the basis of solid data, and from a spirit of solidarity and mutual responsibility, remain a high priority. We ask for your continued efforts to achieve this.

Secondly, we want to remind Member States of the currently on-going **third round of reporting on the WHO Code of Practice of the International Recruitment of Health Personnel**. Both the National Reports that are expected from Member States' Governments, and the Independent Stakeholders Reports from civil society, form an important source of information for the World Health Organization Secretariat and the World Health Assembly in May 2019. We therefore strongly urge Member States as well as civil society to provide the WHO with relevant data and case studies on international recruitment of health workers, health worker mobility and their consequences on health systems in the European Region. Without these country-based data and analyses, efforts to improve the implementation of the WHO Code and to strengthen the health workforce are aimless and ineffective.

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Non-state actors supporting this statement:

- **Centre for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation "STUDIORUM"** is a research think-tank working on health and wellbeing policies in South-eastern Europe, and partner to the South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN).
- **COTEC** - The European organization for all Occupational Therapists through their National Associations, with the purpose of ensuring an adequate number of high quality occupational therapy practitioners and services in Europe. COTEC is a regional group of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), representing more than 150,000 Occupational therapists.
- **EMSA** – European Medical Students' Association
- **EPSU** – European Public Services Union
- **European Public Health Association (EUPHA)** – an umbrella organization for public health associations and institutes in Europe.
- **International Federation of Medical Students' Association**
- **International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care**
- **Medicus Mundi International** – Network Health for All is a network of organizations working in the field of international health cooperation and global health.
- **PSI** – Public Services International
- **Wemos** – Dutch global health advocacy foundation promoting the right to health for everyone, everywhere
- **WFOT** - The World Federation of Occupational Therapists is the official representative of occupational therapy internationally, representing 480,000 occupational therapists worldwide. WFOT through its member associations and regional groups promotes and establishes high quality occupational therapy services and education programmes.
- **WONCA Europe** - The European regional network of the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) represents more than 80,000 family doctors through their Member Organisations across Europe.
- **World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)**