SEPEN Workshop 4
Health Workforce Planning, Quality of Care, Patient Safety and Working Conditions
Leuven (Belgium), 13-14.02.2020

With support from the European Union’s Health Programme, SEPEN, the ‘Support for the health workforce planning and forecasting expert network’, aims at supporting EU Member States in the field of health workforce planning and policy.

Bert Van Caelenberg, secretary general of Eurofedop, attended the workshop and reports on the conclusions.

Workers are the capital of the organisation. No reform will succeed without the workers. Social dialogue will have to play an important role in the elaboration of future solutions to nursing questions. A key factor for success will be good working conditions. What are the expectations and how can they be reached? Happy healthy productive people will make it happen.
Long working hours have become a common practice in nursing. The effects on nurses’ fatigue, lapses in attention, difficulty in staying focused, compromised problem solving, poor communication, reduced productivity, should not be underestimated.

There is a relationship between the number of nursing staff and the quality of care delivered to patients. Moreover, the number of nursing has an effect on patient mortality. More nurses lead to less mortality. In order to reach a proportion of 1 nurse for 8 patients, 116 million euro will be required.

The relationship between staff burnout and patient safety is also a matter that needs to be brought to the attention. High rates of job dissatisfaction and burnout are seen among nurses. A greater involvement of nursing staff in the decision-making, better doctor-nurses relations, professional autonomy for nurses, will be factors in the fight against burnout. Staff will ensure the best outcomes for patients when they feel supported, empowered and respected. Burnout is a problem of the whole organisation rather than of the individual.

New models will emerge as a result of healthcare digitalisation, with a focus on prevention. Digitalisation implies a significant disruption of the health system, with potential benefits for the patients, decision-makers as well as the health workforce. A resilient workforce, able to respond effectively to new challenges in the digital field, will be an important factor in making the disruption successful. (The theme of the 5th workshop in 2021 will be the digital transformation of health systems and the healthcare workforce.)

The nurse of the future will be trained for multifunctional tasks. Doing things “better and more with less” will be the aim of future healthcare policies.