Investing in health requires investing in health workforce

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The European Commission underlines the challenging but vital role played by medical staff in healthcare. The staff are often the first that patients and their families have contacts with. But in order for healthcare to meet today's demands, continuous investment in healthcare, including the investment in healthcare staff, is required.

Eurofedop is pleased with this statement, made by the Commission, that deals with a subject that we as representative trade union organisation for healthcare staff have been raising since many years. Health workforce planning, brain drain, the digital transformation of healthcare have been themes that we discussed at last year's Eurofedop project on 16 and 17 May in Podgorica, Montenegro. And only a few weeks ago, at workshop 4 of SEPEN on 13 and 14 February in Leuven, Belgium, we entered into discussion with academics on the quality of care and the crucial role played by good working conditions in achieving that aim.

Andrzej Rys, Director at the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Food Safety, makes a statement in an interview, which could be literally taken over from a Eurofedop Trade Council Health Report: "... it is not possible for health systems to deliver high quality care to all Europeans without a health workforce in sufficient numbers, with the right skills and in the right places."

Healthcare policy is a national competence, but the Commission supports the member states in addressing the challenges they are confronted with in their national health systems, for example by monitoring and analysing health workforce challenges through the European Semester and with the establishment of an expert network on health workforce planning and forecasting (SEPEN).

In spite of all problems, the Director is optimistic about the future. The European health care systems are among the best in the world. But it is important to continually invest in health. Investing in the people who help keep others healthy is always a wise investment with high returns.

During health threats and health crises as we are living today with the coronavirus, once more it becomes clear that it is important to have a sufficient number of healthcare professionals with the right healthcare equipment at their disposal to deal with the crisis and help overcome a situation which in the meantime has spread over national boundaries.