

Dear friends,

I am very pleased today to see so many of you attending this important workshop hosted by the Region of Lombardy. This large audience highlights the importance of Health Workforce (HWF) Issues within our countries, and the very consciousness that HWF is a key trigger for the future of our healthcare systems.

Today, we will address a very important aspect of our Joint Action activity, by working together at defining what is a minimal data set. Indeed, there are more than 10 EU countries which have developed a planning and forecasting system during the last decade, we have committed through this Joint Action to bring the knowledge together and share it. By doing so we will enable many other countries and regions to start the long process of collecting data, benchmark the analysis and enhance their capacity of putting forward prognosis supporting policies. Work Package 5, led by the Italian Ministry of Health together with the Italian Regions through AGENAS, aims at delivering both handbooks and tools, drawing a good picture of EU current applied knowledge on HWF Planning.

Today is the day where the corner stone of this work should be put in place : the minimal data set. The expectations are out there ... this group of people currently gathered in Milano is the EU's experts on HWF Planning and you know your business. You are the architects and builders of our basic and sometimes very advanced planning model. By putting heads together today, you will help many countries to spare lot of effort.

Also, this meeting is very important for Work Package 7 and the future of the EU Action on HWF Planning & Forecasting. Today I look at a number of high-level experts who responded massively to Italian's call to share experience. This is a very enthusiastic success, allowing me to think that the network to be created between you will start very easily. Europe may be sure that you will provide heavy support in the coming years or decades. With your support, no doubt that Europe will implement capacity building objectives of the WHO Code of Conduct.

Now it is time for the workshop to start.

I want to thank the Region of Lombardia for their hospitality and the Italian WP5 leaders for their dynamism and for the quality of their commitment.

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