

# SPEECH FOR MINISTER L. ONKELINX

## KICK-OFF MEETING - JOINT ACTION EU HWF

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2010, I had the honor of closing the Ministerial conference entitled “ Investing in the health care professionals of the future in Europe”. I committed myself to defending the idea to the Council of Europe and the Commission that we needed a plan of action that addressed the challenge of the glaring lack of health care professionals in Europe.

My priorities concerning this plan were data-collection, needs assessment and the analysis of the consequences of skill mix.

I also insisted on the values that Europe promotes and in particular those which prevail in Belgium, notably the importance of human-beings in health care systems, without neglecting performance. I insisted on seeing the global Code of Practice for recruitment implemented, not only in terms of our relationships with countries outside the EU, but also within the EU itself.

Therefore, I can only express my satisfaction that a plan of action was adopted in May 2012 by the European Commission entitled “ Action Plan for the EU Health Workforce”, which is a direct consequence of the Green Paper and the conference of La Hulpe in 2010. In its preamble, the plan recalls the importance of the challenge that the workforce in health care faces. Do not forget that there is a projected shortage of 25% in regards to the necessary workforce with the direct consequence that 13% of care will not be covered in 2020.

Nevertheless, our political will, combined with that of other member states of the EU has helped to raise awareness for the seriousness of this situation and has helped the development of a plan. Furthermore various qualitative research has, with the financial help of the Union, been carried out in this framework.

This certainly doesn't mean that we should stop doing this research and it is action Europe needs. Therefore, today, we welcome the arrival of the “ Joint Action on Health Workforce Planning & Forecasting”

This Joint Action is the result of a long process, and it is not without a certain pride that I wish to emphasize the importance of the role of our Federal Public Service for Health in achieving the commencement of this initiative.

I have supported this investment but it is thanks to our staff and the many partners who have joined us, and they deserve the credit. Credit also goes to our Hungarian, Italian, Slovakian, Finnish, Bulgarian and English colleagues who, together with us, took an active leadership role.

I take note of the strong signal given by the participation of 24 European member states and 4 non-European countries. This portends a concerted and relevant debate in the Council and Parliament when the intermediate and final conclusions on the Joint Action will feed the political structure.

True to the Belgian tradition, I will continue to support this theme especially on the European level. I ask that priority be given to patient safety, access to quality health care for everyone, across Europe, in the frame a sustainable and meaningful employment-market for the professionals concerned.

Belgium's attention will be focused on mobility data and improving the modeling to allow for proper planning. It will also focus on the integration of diverse skills and the quality of care in the calculations of supply and needs. With close to half a million registered health care professionals, Belgium is investing in these projects to open up its planning to Europe, and I have recently approved a multi-year plan which will continue this dynamic after my mandate in Public Health.

I wish this Joint Action which has started so auspiciously good luck and I say to all participants: Europe and myself are looking forward to your results. Thank for all you have accomplished...and I wish you courage for the tasks ahead.

L.O.