

Dear guests,

It is my honor and pleasure to open this two-day workshop on "European Planning and Forecasting of Human Resources in Healthcare" and welcome you.

I am delighted that it is exactly Bulgaria which is hosting today's meeting, which brings together teams of professionals at the highest level in seven work packages, in which the activities are distributed on "Working for Planning and Forecasting of Human Resources."

This issue is fully in line with the recommendations and actions of the European Commission for exchange of best practices and development of common strategies for effective recruitment and retention of professionals in the health care system, as well as for the establishment of a suitable working environment that supports and develops young professionals. It is extremely important not only for Bulgaria but for the entire European Union, in the context of the alarming forecast, according to which by 2020, the skills shortages in the system of European public health are expected to reach 2 million people. Recently, statistics in Bulgaria also shows a really disturbing trend. Only for the last three years, about 2,000 doctors have left the country and sought fulfillment abroad, but in terms of health care professionals the data are more striking and alarming - for the period from 2011 till today 3269 people. Distribution of medical specialists in different areas of the country is extremely unequal, the main concentration being in the major cities, where career opportunities and higher incomes are greater.

Given these problems, faced not only by Bulgaria, but also by a number of other European countries, planning and forecasting of health professionals is a priority for all governments of the member states as it affects the processes of mobility, access to healthcare for different populations, education and specialization of medical professionals and efficient allocation of resources in health care. Emigration leads to the loss of highly qualified and has a negative impact on the economic, financial and social development of each country.

Guided by the significance of the topic and the key role of the human resources management, the Health Commission accepted the recommendation of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna, Prof. Krasimir Ivanov's call that the meeting be held under the auspices and hosted by the Commission. I would like to take this opportunity and assure you that all institutions in Bulgaria are committed to finding the right solutions to this major problem and express the hope that the results of the joint work of all teams will initiate the preparation of a Europe-wide strategy for human resources in health, based on which each Member State to establish its policy on the mobility of medical specialists, depending on the specific situation and needs. I think that the results of this and other workshops will help the development of valuable recommendations to the European Commission on planning the next steps for human resources in health. Key components of these recommendations should be setting the policy priorities in terms of human resources, the introduction of new parameters in the collection and processing of statistical information and a methodology for planning and forecasting of human resources.

I wish to express my hope that this workshop will launch a long-term partnership between the responsible institutions of the member states on this very important topic, which in turn will contribute to finding effective solutions and implementing adequate measures and policies for mobility in healthcare. I am convinced that only through joint efforts we can overcome these challenges and ensure efficient, effective and modern health at European level.

On behalf of the leadership of the Parliamentary Commission on Healthcare, allow me to thank all of you for your time to attend this meeting and wish you successful and fruitful work in teams to achieve the goals.