

High Level Ministerial meeting on Health Employment and Economic growth – Statement delivered by HE Olaph Terribile Permanent Representative of Malta, on 15th December 2016.

Malta welcomes the publication of the Report “Working for health and growth: investing in the health workforce” and wishes to congratulate the organisers of this high-level conference for their efforts in securing commitment towards the implementation of the report’s recommendations.

One of the reasons why Malta ranked amongst the highest in the recent Lancet publication measuring progress registered across several health domains, is undoubtedly the efforts that have been undertaken to invest in the healthcare workforce.

Indeed, over the past decade the numbers of doctors and nurses per capita have increased significantly. As a small country, Malta has been continuously at risk of losing its qualified health care workforce through emigration associated with the need to obtain specialist qualifications. This situation was exacerbated following Malta’s accession to the European Union.

In response to this health system threat, Malta has sought to establish the development of post-graduate medical training programmes in partnership with institutions in other countries. This solution ensures that doctors are given quality education in Malta and also overseas. The results have been positive for the health workforce, for the health system and for the economy in general.

Malta has now become attractive as a site for medical education from foreign undergraduate and postgraduate students and this generates economic growth.

As a priority for its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Malta is launching a discussion with EU Member States to explore the possible mechanisms for postgraduate cross-border training between hospitals within the European Union.

We believe that the first European Reference Networks, which will be officially announced in March 2017, should play an important role as centres of excellence not only for patients to be referred for services but also to serve as hubs for training and innovation.

Furthermore, experts from these centres could visit other hospitals to provide services and build capacity. This will help the exchange of best practices and therefore, offer better services to patients. It can also provide support to health professionals working outside centres of excellence by linking up using e Health.

In order to plan better this discussion, Malta has prepared a policy brief to answer the question: ***'How can structured cooperation between countries address health workforce challenges associated with the provision of highly specialised health services?'***

We believe that through bilateral and multilateral cooperation for the programmed structured mobility of health professionals, we can work towards the achievement of more equitable, higher quality and more efficient health systems. In practice, professionals can obtain exposure to innovative and specialised techniques by spending short attachments (under one year) outside their region / country and then return to their own hospital or community. Similarly, experts from centres of reference can spend short periods of time visiting other hospitals, training staff and building capacity. This

could vary depending on the nature and levels of expertise required by that particular region.

Malta is committed to start this discussion during its Presidency of the Council of the EU. However, through WHO, we see that this proposal can be extremely useful for other regions of the world, such as for small island developing states and we look forward to working with WHO to explore how this could be made to work through a series of bilateral/multilateral cooperation projects between different countries with the framework of Country Cooperation Strategies.

This proposal is deemed to be highly relevant to the report since it directly addresses a number of recommendations. These include education training and competencies, health service delivery and organisation, use of technology and partnership and cooperation. The policy brief will be available online in March 2017 and Malta would be delighted to report on the outcomes achieved during its Presidency later in 2017.

Thank you.