

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002331/25
to the Commission
Gerald Hauser (P/E)
(11 June 2025)

Subject: Disastrous shortage of healthcare workers in the EU

According to the ‘Health at a Glance: Europe 2024’ report, the OECD considers health professions in Europe to be in crisis. In the EU as a whole, there is a shortfall of 1.2 million doctors, nursing professionals and midwives. The WHO describes it as a ticking bomb: Without immediate action, healthcare staff shortages could have disastrous consequences. Moreover, the situation regarding healthcare staff in the EU is significantly worse than it was before the Covid-19 pandemic. With the Union’s crisis prevention strategy, the Commission seeks to take over key responsibilities from the Member States in the area of health, *inter alia* through the Critical Medicines Act and the Union of Skills, as well as with the help of various EU agencies and authorities. The Commission has explained that in order to safeguard citizens’ wellbeing, it is proposing additional measures in order to better cope with a series of threats, including pandemics and all manner of health emergencies.

1. What does the Commission intend to do to overcome the disastrous shortage of healthcare workers in the EU?
2. What sum does the Commission intend to invest to overcome the disastrous shortage of healthcare workers in the EU?

Submitted: 11.6.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(20 August 2025)

Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union⁽¹⁾ states that Union action shall respect the responsibilities of Member States for the definition of their health policy and for the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care. This includes ensuring an adequate supply of healthcare professionals. Union action shall complement national policies.

The action plan on labour and skills shortages⁽²⁾ focuses on this challenge, including in health. The 2024 report *Health at a Glance: Europe*⁽³⁾ underscores health workers’ shortages and outlines various initiatives launched by the Commission to help Member States address this.

They include EU4Health programme actions such as on health workforce planning⁽⁴⁾, addressing nursing shortages⁽⁵⁾, digital skills development projects⁽⁶⁾, training and capacity-building programmes aligned with the pillars of the European Health Union⁽⁷⁾, the WHO-led survey on the health professionals’ mental health.

The results of the survey, planned to be published in October 2025, feed into a set of policy actions to protect the mental health of the health workforce, planned before the end of 2025⁽⁸⁾.

Under the Pact for Skills, three large-scale skills⁽⁹⁾ partnerships have been launched, focusing on health professionals, long-term care, and the medical industry.

Additionally, Erasmus+ supports the BeWell project⁽¹⁰⁾, which will develop a skills strategy and innovative training curricula for the health workforce.

⁽¹⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=en>.

⁽²⁾ Commission Communication on Labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan, COM(2024) 131 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0131>).

⁽³⁾ Health at a Glance: Europe, joint report by the Commission and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development https://health.ec.europa.eu/state-health-eu/health-glance-europe_en.

⁽⁴⁾ EU4Health Programme: <https://www.agenas.gov.it/ricerca-e-sviluppo/ricerca-internazionale/personale-sanitario-ri/heroes-health-workforce-to-meet-health-challenges>.

⁽⁵⁾ EU4Health programme: https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/2024-eu4health-work-programme_en.

⁽⁶⁾ EU4Health programme: https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/2022-eu4health-work-programme_en; AMR EDUCare <https://www.amreduce.eu/>; e-Hospital4Future <https://eh4future.eu/>; GESEA Educational Programme <https://gesea.eu/>; DigiCanTrain <https://digicantrain.turkuamk.fi/contact-us/>; DDS-MAP <https://ddsmap.easpd.eu/>; TRANSITION <https://ehma.org/projects/transition/>; EHMA <https://hpass.healthworkforce.eu/>.

⁽⁷⁾ Initiatives covering for example areas of mental health, cancer, digitalisation, AMR (antimicrobial resistance).

⁽⁸⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en.

⁽⁹⁾ https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Erasmus+ programme: <https://bewell-project.eu/>.

The Commission's Healthcare Systems Performance Assessment Expert Group ⁽¹¹⁾ is collaborating with Member States to explore staffing level solutions in healthcare. Furthermore, other funds ⁽¹²⁾ support complementary, country-specific interventions.

⁽¹¹⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/health-systems-performance-assessment_en#:~:text=The%20Expert%20Group%20supports%20tailored%20activities%20in%20countries.

⁽¹²⁾ Cohesion Policy: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/2021-2027_en; Recovery and Resilience Facility https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en; Technical Support Instrument (TSI): https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument/technical-support-instrument-tsi_en.