

The Migration of Health Care Workers from Balkan States to Slovenia – Some Policy and Regulative Concerns

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Economic growth and development depends on a healthy population. One additional year of life expectancy has been shown to raise GDP per capita by about 4% (World Health Organisation 2016, hereinafter: WHO). Also a reduced likelihood of child mortality can contribute to a faster demographic transition and its associated economic benefits. But many countries are unable to secure the necessary health services, because of the lack of a skilled health care workforce. This problem is increasing with the aging population and with the increasing migration of health care workers.

Future projections in economic demand and supply of health workers point to a continuing acceleration in the international migration of health workers (World Health Organisation 2016). The main driver of this migration is the demand for health care workers in high- and middle-income countries. The statistical data show a 60 % rise in the number of migrant doctors and nurses working in OECD countries over the last decade (WHO 2019). The countries evolved in this process should have a mutual benefit from health care worker's mobility. Instead, many of them witness predatory practices in the recruitment of health care workers.

The lack of health care workers in Slovenia, higher wages in comparison to the Balkan countries and a possibility to migrate from Slovenia to other Western EU countries are the main reasons for migration of health care workers in this part of Europe. Despite the fact that the migration of health care workers to Slovenia is growing (Albreht et al. 2016), the availability of statistical data needed to evaluate the phenomenon and provide decision makers with solid data, is weak. This paper tries to partly fill this gap by providing data regarding the present trends in the number of physicians in Slovenia and some selected ex-Yugoslav countries and data on the number of immigrant health care workers in Slovenia.

Professional mobility of health care workers is subject of EU legislation and domestic legislation. What makes the migration in health care professions possible is the globalised health care education and the system of recognition of professional qualifications of health care professions. This paper gives an overview of regulation regarding education, licencing and employment of health care workers in Slovenia. By evaluation of the main legal challenges that migration of health care workers represents for Slovene legislation it also gives some suggestions for the future regulation of this issue.

Keywords: health care professionals, health policy, workers mobility, labour market, workers' migrations, health care legislation, regulated professions, employment.

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