

Investing in the Future of Jobs and Skills. Scenarios, implications and options in anticipation of future skills and knowledge needs for the Health and Social Services Sector

Policy Summary

The European Health and Social Services sector in 2006 accounted for a **value added** of over €800 billion. Value added in the sector differs enormously between the EU-15 and the new member states (NMS). The NMS represent only 3% of the EU value added.

EU **employment** in the health and social services sector amounted to about 20 million workers in 2006, the majority of which live in the EU-15 countries. The NMS employ 2.3 million health and social services workers. Moreover, the workforce grew much faster in the EU-15 than in the new member states.

The workforce in health and social services is dominated by women who form not less than 78% of the workforce. Both in the EU-15 and the new member states 43% of workers is younger than 40 years. However, in the EU-15 this share has decreased sharply since 2000 when it was 48%. Workers in health and social services have often a medium or high education level. Not less than 40% of the workers have a high education level in the EU-15.

Employment in the sector is growing mainly because of a rise in government budgets which are in turn determined by ageing, growing national incomes, and the availability of new therapies and medical technologies. Other major drivers of change are the need to provide more personalized services and a more integrated approach to cure and care.

These changes require important **new skills**. Across all job functions both soft skills and new knowledge will become increasingly important, especially so for high skilled professional job functions. Due to the changing nature of jobs, predefined technical knowledge capabilities will become somewhat less important while skills to adapt and learn new competences and life-long learning will be put at a premium. E-skills will become more important. Managers will increasingly require new commercial skills as new products and services will be developed. Medical doctors and health associate professionals need both hard technical skills to keep up with rapid developments in health care as well as soft skills (communication) to provide personalised service to increasingly diverse population. Quality insurance is increasingly important in all professions that deal with patients.

Changes in education and training are required to prepare the workforce for new skills required in the future. **Recommendations for education and training** are to adapt and modernise education and training systems, enhancing flexibility and modularisation. It is also very important to focus on multi-skilling to prepare workers for rapidly changing work situations and for the need to engage in life long learning. Staff retention is an important issue in the sector and developing special courses for older workers will be essential. Information and career guidance will also be needed.

Other recommendations include the need to improve cooperation between stakeholders in the health and social services sector to anticipate future changes. Specifically there is a need to invest in human capital, in e-skills and technological knowledge. More generally it is important to evaluate effects of income and working conditions on the supply of labour for specific job functions. Finally, the health and social services sector is highly regulated and effects on the volume of labour and the skills needed should be a key consideration when changes in the regulatory system are designed.