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Action Plan For The EU Health Workforce Adopted For a Job Rich Recovery In Europe

On April 18 2012, the European Commission adopted a Communication "Towards a job rich recovery", which sets out a range of measures to encourage employment and strengthen economic growth in Europe. It also identifies healthcare as one of three key sectors with a high employment potential and includes an Action Plan for the EU health workforce.

The Communication focuses on the demand-side of job creation, setting out ways for Member States to encourage hiring by reducing taxes on labour or supporting business start-ups more. It also identifies the areas with the biggest job potential for the future: the green economy, health services and ICT. The policy communication underlines the need for a stronger employment and social dimension to EU governance and lays down ways to involve employers' and workers' representatives more in setting EU priorities.

President Barroso said: "Europe needs a job-creation strategy to tackle its unacceptable level of unemployment. The EU has a large untapped potential to boost job creation. All together, the green economy, the health and new technology sectors will create more than 20 millions of jobs in the years to come. Member States need to seize these opportunities, mobilise existing resources and stimulate their labour market in close cooperation with the social partners. Together we can make it happen."

Healthcare is highly labour intensive and one of the largest sectors in the EU, accounting for about 17 million or 8% of all jobs in the EU. Despite the economic downturn, the sector continues to grow and, with an ageing population and the rising demand for healthcare, will remain a key driver for jobs with an estimated 8 million job openings between 2010-2020.

However, the sector faces major challenges at a time of severe budget constraints, including health workforce shortages and skill mismatches in many countries.

The Action Plan aims to assist Member States to tackle these challenges and sets out actions to foster European cooperation and share good practice to help improve health workforce planning and forecasting, to anticipate future skills needs, to improve the recruitment and retention of health professionals while mitigating the negative effects of migration on health systems.

The Action Plan for the EU health workforce was announced in the Commission Communication "An Agenda for new skills and jobs" in November 2010. The actions proposed reflect the priorities identified by EU health ministers in December 2010 and build on feedback from the Commission's public consultation on the Green Paper European Workforce for Health in 2008.

Presenting the new package in Strasbourg, László Andor, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion said: "current levels of unemployment in the EU are dramatic and unacceptable. Job creation must become a real European priority". He added: "If we are to restore growth and cope with major structural changes like the greening of the economy, an ageing population and technological change, the EU needs a dynamic and inclusive European labour market".

For more information, please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer

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