

## Bucharest Declaration Promises to Protect, Support & Invest in Health Workers



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A newly adopted bold declaration urges political action and commitment to protect, support and invest in health and care workers across Europe and central Asia.

Representatives from 50 Member States of the WHO European Region are joining forces with health workers, their unions and associations, along with academics and experts to support this declaration.

The shortage of labour workforce is no longer a looming threat; it is a present threat and health providers across the region are requesting urgent support.

Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, said, “The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of health systems and the importance of a robust and resilient health workforce. We cannot wait any longer to address the pressing challenges facing our health workforce. The health and well-being of our societies are at stake – there is simply no time to lose”.

Healthcare workers are expressing their growing frustration and concern, and this is being reflected into the industrial action.

Last year, WHO/Europe had published a regional report to warn health systems that they were being threatened by the declining health and care workforce. Accordingly, the report warned of imminent collapse, fueled by the effects of the recent pandemic, by a fast-ageing population and a surge in chronic illnesses.

13 out of the 44 countries stated that 40% of their medical doctors are already aged 55 years or older which poses a significant challenge to the sustainability of the workforce. Simultaneously, labour markets are making it more challenging for workers to migrate. As a result, several countries are struggling to attract and retain young people in the health and care work.

The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated the existing challenges, leading to higher rates of burnout and violence towards workers, many of whom left.

The Region saw a 62% increase in health worker absences, as well as an increase in mental health issues among health-care workers, with over 80% of nurses who reported some form of pandemic-related mental distress.

The Bucharest Declaration calls for political action, aiming to improve the recruitment and retention rates of health care professionals, improve health workforce supply mechanisms, improve the workforce performance, and increase public investment in workforce education, development and protection.

Source: [WHO](#)

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