

Letter dated:
30 March 2009

From:
Deutscher Verband der Ergotherapeuten E.V. (DVE) [German Association of Ergotherapists], D-76307 Karlsbad

To:
European Commission, B-1049 Brussels

By E-mail to (SANCO-health-workforce@ec.europa.eu)

Subject: Opinion on the Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health, COM(2008) 725 final.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your consultation on the Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health, on which we are pleased to give our opinion.

From the viewpoint of the German Association of Ergotherapists (DVE), the Green Paper provides a good starting point for developing measures able to confront not only future but existing challenges in the health systems in Europe and worldwide.

The Green Paper clearly states in its introduction (see page 3) that "health systems [are required] to have efficient and effective work forces of the highest quality" in order to be able to overcome the many challenges facing all European health services.

For the German Association of Ergotherapists, this is confirmation of its demand for the foundations that must finally be laid for a new reorientation of ergotherapy training in Germany based on the Bachelor and Masters study programmes introduced as part of the Bologna Process.

Germany also requires ergotherapy to be specifically included in the key areas of higher education courses, as has been the case in Switzerland and Austria since 2006. Only in this way can education at European level be made competitive and the career mobility of German members of the profession be sustainably improved upon and promoted.

In the meantime, Germany is bottom of the table in Europe in its vocational education colleges for the health professions (ergotherapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy etc.) with the result that career mobility for German members of the profession is often limited and only possible on completion of retraining.

As a countermove, the potential of ergotherapy was able to be brought out in a project financed by the European Social Fund entitled 'Ergotherapy 2010 – Further development of the profession and training in ergotherapy, in particular, in regard to health promotion and prevention, taking account of the labour market and employability' for the entire German-speaking area (Germany, Austria, Switzerland and South Tyrol). We now need the appropriate steps to be taken to utilise this potential to also benefit the health system.

In this connection, it should also be pointed out that the competition for future health workers will also have an ever-increasing financial aspect. As long as many health professions are paid markedly less in comparison with other occupations, the keywords here being 'social professions' and 'jobs typically held by women', the tendency towards shortages in the workforce which is already apparent in some branches will certainly be

exacerbated. This will find expression in the qualitative selection of the corresponding job applicants who will be struggling to fulfil the increasingly high professional requirements.

We would be grateful if you would accordingly take our remarks into account in an opinion from the BFB.

We are at your disposal should you require any further information.

Yours faithfully,

Arnd Longrée
Chairman
German Association of Ergotherapists