

Green Paper
On the European Workforce for Health

Among the main factors considered in the Green Paper are the issues of the age of health force workers and of the people requiring their care. We found reading the Paper somewhat depressing. The focus on 'ageing' and 'old' in many paragraphs verged on ageism. While it is true that the European population is getting older we believe that a more positive approach to older people would be better. We think that it is in Finland that the retirement age is seventy years and people may work longer if they wish. This tactic might be worth considering.

As noted the majority of health force workers are women so family friendly working conditions are essential.

The matter of language is critical. Many Europeans have excellent language skills but there are also many people whose ability to move around Europe is limited by their lack of skill in this area. Any initiative to improve this situation must be welcome.

The mobility of health workers within Europe is accepted as one 'of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by Community law'. However, it must not be allowed to comprise the safety of patients and from our particular perspective, the safety of pregnant and parturient women and their babies. There are wide differences in midwifery education in Europe and this is an area that requires attention.

We noted with dismay the absence of any reference to midwives within this Paper. As the future health of Europeans is largely dependent on good perinatal care and the WHO considers midwives the most appropriate caregivers for healthy pregnant women this is a serious omission.

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