



BeWell.

Blueprint Alliance for a Future Health Workforce
Strategy on Digital and Green Skills

**PACT FOR
SKILLS**

PACT FOR SKILLS:

**Large Scale Partnership for the
Health Ecosystem**

Partnership Manifesto



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A **pan-European multi-stakeholder Partnership on health workforce upskilling and reskilling** has been launched to support the twin transition to a green and digital economy, make EU health systems more competitive globally, and enhance Europe's open strategic autonomy. It will do this by creating a movement to **discuss, anticipate, and address the skill needs** of the health workforce, factoring in current issues such as staff shortages; identifying and forecasting the skill gaps in the sector; bringing together existing initiatives; and working towards a future-proof skills strategy to be implemented at local, regional, national, and, ultimately, European levels. The Partnership is co-funded by the European Commission and coordinated by the BeWell project. All agencies involved in health in Europe are invited to join the Partnership.

The challenge

The health workforce represents a significant share of the European workforce. Figures by Eurostat¹ have identified almost 15 million people who work in health occupations, representing over 7% of all persons employed and almost 4% of the EU population. Despite its importance, the health sector continues to face **considerable workforce challenges**. These were exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted how unique, complex, and constantly evolving the sector is, and the pressures it faces.

A starting point to address these challenges is by tackling the **urgent need for health workforce upskilling and reskilling**. However, the health sector is faced with **complexities that make upskilling and reskilling a rather difficult exercise**. Such complexities include the rapid transformation of the sector – including digital and green transformations – coupled with the known workforce shortages, further increased by large-scale resignation of health professionals, in particular from the frontline. This comes as a consequence of increased workloads and difficult working conditions and impacts the ability and willingness of health professionals to participate in training opportunities.

Despite these difficulties, **developing skills which support the health sector's transformation is essential. Digitalisation is core to this transformative process**, a key towards better health outcomes, strengthened and supported practitioner-patient relationships, interdisciplinarity, and health systems resilience. Nevertheless, the health sector is lagging behind when it comes to seizing digital opportunities. Training on digital technologies is often offered only as an optional course and health professionals report that they do not have enough opportunities to make full use of digital technologies.²

Digitalisation, however, is just a piece of the puzzle. **A future-ready health workforce should also be resourced and trained to engage with the green transition towards more environmentally sustainable health provision which respects the 'one health' principles**. According to studies, the health climate footprint is equivalent to 4.4% of global net emissions³ and its carbon footprint is set to triple by 2050.⁴ Updated skill profiles and training will be thus required as the health sector is making headway towards more sustainable activities and tasks.⁵ In addition, the broader 'greenification' of the health sector should also pass through providing the health workforce with the skills and tools to better understand the immediate as well as the long-term health impacts of the climate change or environmental health risks such as air pollution and limited access to blue/green spaces.

Besides digital and green skills, attention should be also paid to **developing other competences in the health workforce**, including **logistics, management, communication and other skills such as patient-engagement, cross-sectoral collaboration, and leadership**, providing professionals with even more tools to handle the evolving health environment.⁶

Finally, **to succeed, upskilling and reskilling will need to take into consideration several other crucial and sensitive points, including the complex transition from education to the labour market and the need to avoid excessive burden on a health workforce already dealing with shortages and high levels of pressure on employees' mental health**.

¹ Eurostat, 2020. Majority of health jobs held by women. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20200409-2>

² For instance, analysing data and using digital tools for collaboration were among the most requested skills in the sector in 2020, with demand set to grow substantially by 2030. (European Skills Panorama. Most requested skills in online job ads in EU27 in Skills in 2020 (health and social care sector). https://skills Panorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/dashboard/skills-online-job-advertisements?country=EU27_2020&occupation=&year=2020#3 and EIT Health and McKinsey, 2020, 'Transforming healthcare with AI: The impact on the workforce and organisations')

³ https://noharm-global.org/sites/default/files/documents-files/5961/HealthCaresClimateFootprint_092319.pdf

⁴ <https://www.arup.com/-/media/arup/files/publications/h/hcwh-road-map-for-health-care-decarbonization.pdf>

⁵ OECD. Greener Skills and Jobs. Greener skills_Highlights WEB.pdf (oecd.org)

⁶ Pact for Skills report from the roundtable with Commissioners Kyriakides, Schmit and Breton for the health ecosystem.

The ambition

The Partnership will **plan and address how to better prepare the health workforce for current and upcoming challenges** within ever-evolving societal contexts, through a sustainable, inclusive, resourced, and collaborative life-long learning approach. Properly implemented, upskilling and reskilling initiatives will **increase the attractiveness of the health sector**, thereby helping to retain existing workers and recruit new ones to mitigate current workforce shortages. These initiatives should also support the shift towards a health-promoting and person-centred sector, **able to adapt quickly to emerging challenges and provide professionals with resources that will help them to reduce their workload and stress levels**, while guaranteeing effective patient care.

The Partnership will focus on **key skill sets deemed** most urgent and relevant to strengthen and build resilience across all areas of the complex network of health systems that exist across Europe at local, regional and national levels, which collectively we call the health ecosystem.

- Skills to support the **digital and green transformation** of the health sector, for existing and emerging occupations.
- **Interdisciplinary skills** and skills to enhance the **integration of care** across patient pathways and of health promotion and disease prevention across health-relevant sectors.
- **Communication and other skills** including patient engagement, leadership, and advocacy.

Change management and organisational skills to help the health workforce become more engaged in co-creating innovation across the health ecosystem.

The partnership proposal and objectives

All the large-scale skills Partnership partners will commit to shaping a shared model for skills development in Europe for the health ecosystem. They will focus on:

- Ensuring that **individuals entering the health workforce are equipped with appropriate skills** and ready to face a constantly evolving environment. This approach should be coupled with establishing a **culture of life-long learning for all**, guaranteeing that the health workforce is properly resourced and trained throughout their career, and re-establishing both the positive image and attractiveness of the sector. This should be achieved through matching skilling opportunities with optimal working conditions and sufficient frontline health professionals, thus guaranteeing both patient care and the ability to engage with upskilling and reskilling.
- **Ensuring dialogue with and between health professionals** to understand and take into consideration their needs and challenges, increasing their willingness and ability to engage with training opportunities.
- **Addressing the disparities among health and educational systems** within and across European countries, which are in many cases directly linked to unfair health inequalities within and between European countries.
- Ensuring that - independently of where they live and their social and economic conditions - **every patient and resident in Europe would have access to an adequately educated and resourced health workforce**
- **Exchanging and transferring knowledge of best practices in skills across Europe.**
- **Creating synergies with pan-European projects** and initiatives in the health field.
- **Exchanging data on skills gaps and needs for existing and emerging occupations** within and beyond European countries' borders, for assessment and forecast.
- **Work against discrimination, and for gender equality, health equality, and equal opportunities**, within the health sector.

Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators

To measure its success, the Partnership will take into consideration the following **indicators**:

- **Coverage of the Partnership:** number of organisations involved in the partnership and its steering committee. Number of health sectors and number of countries represented in the Partnership.
- **Communication/dissemination events:** number of events promoting the health ecosystem Partnership carried out within the framework of the Pact for Skills and beyond. Number of other communication/dissemination activities such as joint statements and campaigns.
- **Skills intelligence:** number of skills needs assessments produced at European, national and/or sectoral levels by stakeholders of the partnership and shared within the partnership.
- **Upskilling and reskilling actions run by the stakeholders in the Partnership:** number of participants in education and training actions (considering the levels of training, gender, age, geographical balance, with inclusiveness and access to education as key elements).
- **New training models and tools, including pilot initiatives created and tested by the stakeholders in the Partnership:** number of new training initiatives, programs, materials, and tools.



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