



Enhancing access to healthcare in rural areas

30 November 2023

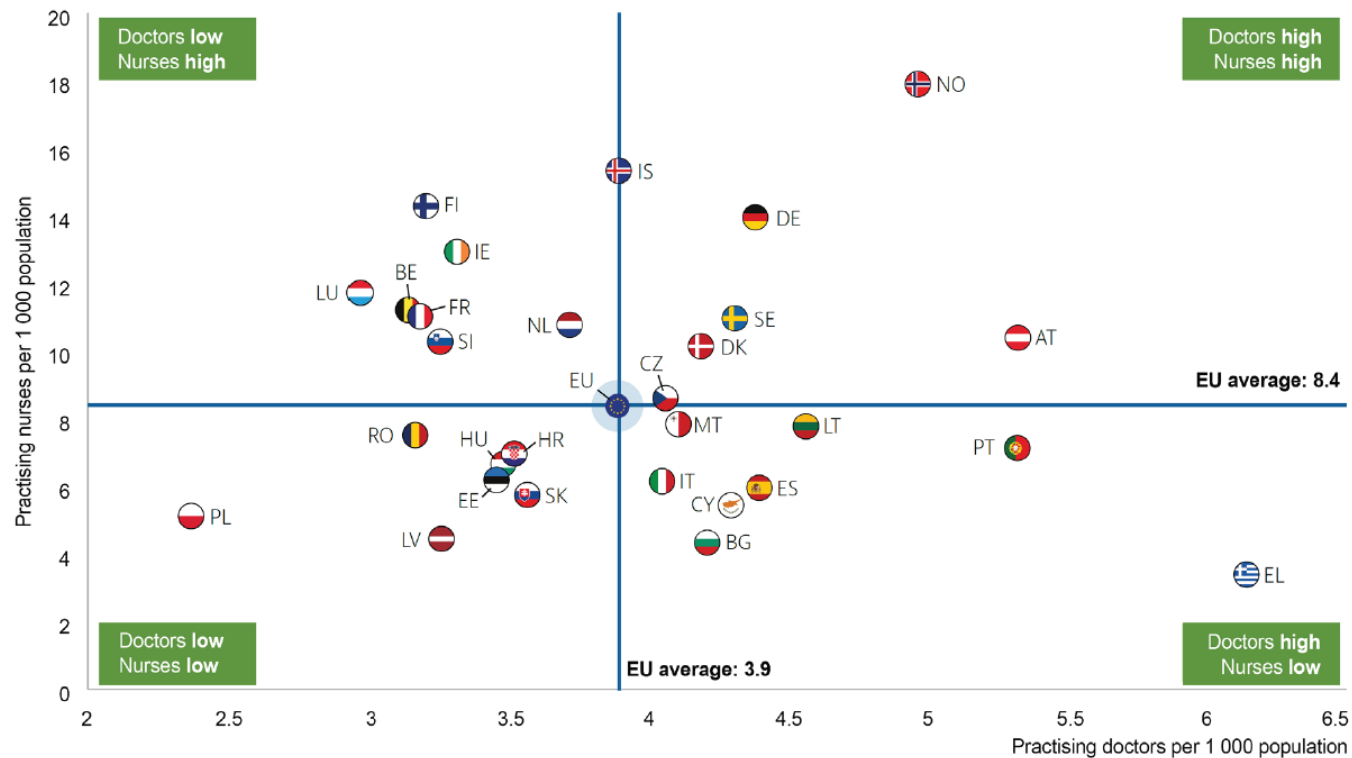
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Rethinking health workforce strategies and planning after the COVID-19 pandemic

Doctors and nurses per 1000 population, 2019 or latest year available



Note: In Greece and Portugal, data refer to all doctors licensed to practice, resulting in an overestimation of the number of practising doctors. In Greece, the number of nurses is underestimated as it only includes those working in hospitals.

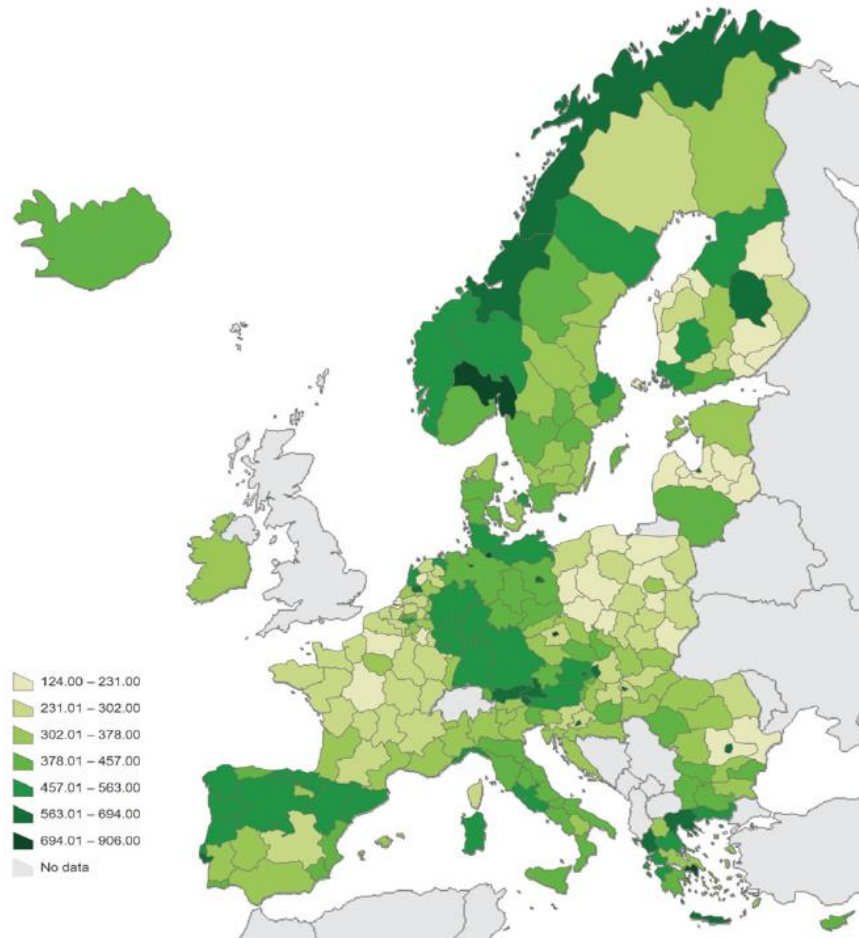
Source: Adapted from OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2021), Country Health Profiles 2021 - State of Health in the EU.



Rethinking health workforce strategies and planning after the COVID-19 pandemic



Doctors per 100 000 population – regional breakdown, 2020 or latest year available



Note: In Greece and Portugal, data refer to all doctors licensed to practice, resulting in an overestimation of the number of practising doctors.

Source: Eurostat database, National Statistical Institutes, National Medical Associations. Regional data (NUTS 1, 2 or 3) not available for Ireland, Estonia, Lithuania and Iceland.

- Strategies to expand health workforce capacity were essential to avert health system failure in the countries hardest-hit by COVID-19.
- **Avenues out of the health workforce crisis post-COVID-19 pandemic:**
 - 1) Implement [better workforce planning](#)
 - 2) Increase investment in **training and education**
 - 3) New skills and **skill-mix innovations** (e.g., task-shifting, not as a substitute for expansion of the size of the workforce)

EU actions on HWF labour and skills shortages

Cluster of 5 health workforce projects (2021-2024)

- **Medical deserts:** diagnostic tools, spatial access tool package, country level research, case studies, policy briefs, guidelines to measure and monitor medical deserts.
- **Retention:** survey on mental wellbeing in 8 hospitals in 4 MSs and policy recommendations on improving retention of health workers.
- **Task-shifting:** tools, practices, case studies, policy guidebook, policy recommendations, training materials.

Joint Action HEROES (2023-2026)

- **Objectives:** 1) improve databases used in HWF planning; 2) develop effective tools and methods to carry out HWF planning; 3) define the best skill-mix needed by professionals to carry out HWF planning.
- Activities will be organized around three main clusters of countries with similar characteristics. Each MS will design a **road-map and carry out an implementation strategy to cover identified gaps.**

BeWell Blueprint alliance for a future health workforce strategy on digital and green skills (2022-2026)

- **Objective:** Skills Strategy, Skills partnership, establish a framework for modernization of curricula for medical professions, putting emphasis on skills required for digital and green transition of health systems and challenges related to ageing.

Training initiative for health professionals with a focus on digital skills (2023-2026)

- Seven projects of European scope are just kicking off. They provide training opportunities covering areas of anti-microbial resistance, oncology care, gynaecological surgery, future e-hospital, but also basic and more advanced digital skills.
- Each project includes modules for nurses, GPs, specialists and non-clinical staff.

Recovery and Resilience Programmes: underserved areas

MS	Reforms and investments
AT	reform to improve working conditions in primary care, establishment of a network of community nurses
BG	reform to improve attractiveness of healthcare professions and ensure a more balanced distribution of health workforce
CR	improve access to pharmacies in remote and rural areas through mobile pharmacies; improving access to cardiologist care in remote and rural areas through digitalisation of cardiology services; mobile primary outpatient system in rural and remote areas; specialist training to address shortages of specialists in underserved areas
EE	expanding the role of nurses within the primary care reform, reimbursement scheme to incentivise provision of services in remote areas
ES	investments in high-tech equipment in regions to address disparities in access to healthcare ; programmes of promotion of physical activity in rural areas ; healthcare workforce reform promoting as one of the objectives better distribution of medical professionals across regions
FI	increasing access to healthcare through support to innovative and remote care model ; implementation of a care guarantee through digital solutions
IT	territorial health network; community health houses; improving access to care at home , community hospitals and telemedicine
PT	investments in primary care; mobile health units to ensure access to healthcare in lower population density areas.
RO	investments in primary care and community centres in rural and marginalised areas ; telemedicine solutions to improve access to specialised care in rural and small town areas; mobile medical caravans
SK	support to new outpatient care units in deprived areas ; optimising the hospital network
SI	training of professionals for mobile palliative care teams

Thank you

