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The Impact of International Migration - View From WHO

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The mental health workforce is a precious resource for countries. A high level of investment has been committed to train doctors, psychologists and nurses. Most European countries also suffer from a relative shortage of trained staff. The migration of such professionals is therefore a major loss of skills, and also exacerbates existing shortages in many countries.

Within the EU, staff migration is a fundamental right that cannot be challenged. Staff migration has a number of undesirable consequences, both to countries of origin and receiving countries that lead to actions. Migration leads to wage increases in order to tempt people to stay. This is in the interest of the individuals targeted, but affects other health service priorities since overall health service budgets are rarely adjusted.

The WHO European Mental Health Action Plan (EMHAP) draws attention to the challenges of migration. The diversity of clinical practice in Europe is still reflected in the diversity of curricula. Considering the extent of professional migration across the Region, reliable competencies need to be assured. Interventions for mental health problems need to be guided by professional codes of practice, as well as adherence to legal standards across the Region. This will require partnership between professional bodies, governments and intergovernmental organizations. The endorsement of the EMHAP is a mandate for Action in this field, aiming to find a balance between rights of the individuals to work where they choose and offering protection for the wellbeing of the population.