

Skills portability - simplifying the recognition of qualifications and skills of third-country nationals

Introduction

The European Network of Medical Competent Authorities (ENMCA) brings together European competent authorities responsible for the recognition of medical qualifications, in line with Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications.

Established in 2010 at the behest of the European Commission, ENMCA has considerable expertise and practical experience in managing high levels of professional mobility of both EEA citizens and third country nationals.

Recognition of third country qualifications

With growing worldwide professional mobility, the recognition of third country qualifications is an increasingly important issue for European competent authorities.

Medical qualifications, training and practice varies considerably across the world with education systems often founded on very different systems, histories and traditions.

This can make it difficult for European competent authorities to comprehensively assess qualifications to ensure that doctors holding these qualifications are safe to practise medicine in Europe.

Each country has thus designed their own individual assessment methods for third country qualifications in a way that ensures the qualification holders possess the most suitable skills and experience to practise medicine in that country. **For these reasons, it would not be suitable to move towards a harmonisation of recognition procedures.**

However, there could be a role for the European Commission to invest in shared resources and repositories of information including verified information on overseas qualifications, education and training. This could take the form of a database for diplomas and educational curricula from third countries.

This would enable competent authorities to confidently assess overseas qualifications and help to protect patient safety and to ensure that only doctors who are fully qualified and fit to practise are allowed to work in the EU.

Another possibility would be to expand the Internal Market Information System (IMI) so that European competent authorities can exchange information on recognition procedures for third countries.

Exchange of patient safety information

To continue to combat fraud and to guarantee patient safety, the European Commission must enforce the legally mandated use of the IMI alert mechanism.

Information sharing between European competent authorities must be further improved, notably through the inclusion of additional relevant data fields within the IMI system.

With growing numbers of third country nationals seeking recognition of their qualifications in the EEA, information sharing between EEA and non-EEA competent authorities must also be improved. As the recent international media investigation¹ found, systemic flaws in information sharing allow doctors to evade disciplinary action by practicing medicine in a different jurisdiction.

Ethical considerations

Accelerating or simplifying procedures for the recognition of professional qualifications, either from the EEA or third countries, must not lead to a lowering of the requirements for prescribed knowledge and professional experience, or for proof thereof.

While the migration of workforce in the healthcare sector offers professionals career and personal opportunities and may mitigate against workforce shortages in countries of destination, it may also exacerbate shortages in the countries of origin, which are often less economically strong and which have invested in the education and training of its workforce.

Migration should not be used as a means of compensating for insufficient workforce planning. European countries should invest to ensure that they train a sufficient number of healthcare professionals to meet the needs of their patients.

Further information on the work of ENMCA can be found on our website: www.enmca.eu or by emailing: contact@enmca.eu

¹ <https://www.occrp.org/en/project/bad-practice/system-failure-banned-doctors-can-easily-move-across-europe-leaving-patients-vulnerable>