



Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

Another ticking timebomb

"My beloved friend, I wish you all the best and as healthy as your soul is in good health." 3 John 2.

We remember the words of our Savior, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Mark 2:17, Matthew 9:12, Luke 5:31). I love this verse. As a seeker of God, I am impressed by the wisdom of the literal interpretation. As a new convert, I was captivated by its wisdom in the Word. As a practicing Christian physician, I humbly acknowledge to God that there is great truth in every aspect of this verse.

Health... According to the World Health Organization (WHO) definition, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Humanity has made huge progress in improving health. What has not changed is that patients need a doctor. A nurse. Assistants. Physical therapists. Physiotherapists. And many other people in the helping professions who can make a huge contribution to the patient's recovery and well-being.

"Ignoring the challenges facing the health and care workforce is no longer possible." – said Dr Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat, Country Director for Health Systems and Policies, WHO/Europe. The WHO Minister of Health also spoke of the need to recognize and support the hard work and dedication of health workers, both in managing health emergencies and in providing essential, everyday services, in countries and in our region. Without support and recognition, there will soon be no qualified staff at the bedside.



"The health workforce crisis in Europe is no longer a looming threat – it is here and now. Health providers and workers across our region are clamouring for help and support" – said Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe. *"The health and well-being of our societies are at stake - there is simply no time to lose"*.

A WHO/Europe regional report published last September warned that health systems in Europe and Central Asia are at risk of a "ticking timebomb". Both the population and the health workforce in the

region are ageing rapidly. Chronic diseases such as diabetes and dementia are on the rise. All these factors, combined with the impact of pandemic COVID-19, mean that key areas of countries' health systems are on the verge of collapse. Unless these problems are tackled with rapid, concrete policy measures - starting with the health workforce (e.g. training places, increasing the number of people in training).

The COVID-19 pandemic has only increased the burden on health care, leading to stress, burnout and violence against workers. As a result, many workers have left the profession. During the first wave of the pandemic, in the spring of 2020, the region saw a staggering 62% increase in the number of health workers leaving the workforce. Almost all countries in the region reported an increase in mental health problems among health workers, with more than 80% of nurses in some countries reporting some form of pandemic-related psychological distress. In addition, WHO/Europe received reports that 9 out of 10 nurses said they wanted to quit their jobs.

The article is a cry for help from health workers:

Let's Pray

- Increase the number of workers in the health and support professions, keep current workers in their careers.
- Effective development of processes to help, recognise and support health workers, in which we Christians also find our place (prayer, pastoral care, expressing gratitude for them, etc.)
- Adequate training, further training and protection of health workers

This article is based on the WHO Bucharest Declaration 2023.

Immigration

This week the European Parliament finally approved the EU's long-delayed Immigration and Asylum Pact, which comprises 10 regulations and directives. These have been negotiated since 2016 and include burden-sharing quotas that would require governments to pay financial compensation to front-line countries if they refused to take their quota, as well as other controversial measures such as provisions to allow asylum seekers to be sent to 'safe' third countries for their claims to be processed.

Although criticised by human rights groups, the pact is seen as a necessary compromise package. EP President, Roberta Metsola, said it had "shown that Europe lives up to its responsibilities".

Migration is expected to be a major campaign topic in the June European elections.

Further Prayer:-

1. Thank God for the clear message from Catholic bishops that abortion "can never be a fundamental right". Despite the EP passing a resolution proposing this, pray that this measure goes no further and that the national culture and competence of each member state should be respected.
2. Let's continue to pray that there will be no further escalation of the war between Israel and Hamas after threats of action from Iran.

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