Strategies and Impacts of Health Workforce Migration in Post-EU Accession ROMANIA

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Context

- ROMANIA - population, as of 2023, is around 19 million, witnessing a decline due to factors such as low birth rates, high mortality rates, and emigration.

- Romania joined the European Union in 2007, leading to significant health workforce migration.

- In 2015, Romania was facing a severe deficit of health workforce with shortages in family medicine, emergency medicine, Intensive Care, and certain surgical fields.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ROMANIA</th>
<th>EU AVERAGE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Doctors per 100,000 inhabitants</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Nurses per 100,000 inhabitants</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>843</td>
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</table>

- A 2016 survey by the Bucharest College of Physicians, titled "Migration, Causes, and Perceptions Among Young People Studying Medicine at the University and Residency Levels":
  
  - 82.3% of respondents, mainly young professionals, were considering emigration.
  
  - primary reasons cited: low salaries, poor material conditions in medical facilities, long working hours, and insufficient support for research activities.
Methodology

- Mixed-method approach.

- Analysis of datasets and reports: WHO assessments, OECD migration statistics, Romanian national health data.

- Qualitative insights from policy documents and articles.

- Multi-dimensional view of migration trends, causes, and impacts.

- The study offers a nuanced understanding of the Romanian health workforce evolution in recent years.
Romanian physicians reported working in the OECD Countries 2011–2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>331</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
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<td>855</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2,697</td>
<td>5,064</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12,789</td>
<td>21,802</td>
<td>9,013</td>
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</table>


Note: Numbers represent total stock reported by each "destination" country in respective year.
Romanian nurses reported working in the OECD Countries 2011–2021

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<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>513*</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>431</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>8,115</td>
<td>7,369</td>
<td>6,206</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>11,215</td>
<td>11,714</td>
<td>11,906</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14,538</td>
<td>22,524</td>
<td>23,109</td>
<td>8,286</td>
<td>585</td>
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</table>

Data Source: Compiled from https://stats.oecd.org/ - Health Workforce Migration (accessed on 15th November 2023. Numbers represent total stock reported by each "destination" country in respective year
Policy interventions

A. Educational interventions
   - Increasing the number of students and graduates in the medical field
   - Increasing the number of residency positions

B. Regulatory interventions
   - Expanding Public Sector Job Opportunities
   - Encouraging Growth of Private Healthcare Providers
   - Streamlining Diploma Recognition and Equivalence

C. Financial incentives
   - Substantial Salary Increase in the Public Hospitals
   - Enhanced Financial Support for Family Doctors
EU Graduates – Medical Doctors, 2011 and 2021
(per 100,000 inhabitants)
Currently, the country is home to 11 accredited public medical universities (located in Bucharest, Timișoara, Craiova, Iași, Cluj-Napoca, Constanța, Galați, Târgu Mureș, and Brașov) along with two private medical universities in Bucharest and Arad.
Evolution of Health Workforce in Romania

- **27.5%** over the span of 2015 to 2022
  - 282 doctors per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015
  - 374 doctors per 100,000 inhabitants in 2022
- residents in training – **55%**
- specialists employed in the public sector – **20%**
- specialists employed in the private sector – **15%**
- **The Covid-19 pandemic**
  - +1000 specialists hired in the public sector

Evolution of Health Workforce in Romania

- 21% over the span of 2015 to 2022
  - 667 nurses per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015
  - 843 nurses per 100,000 inhabitants in 2022

- percentage of nurses with university-level education, which increased to 11.8% by 2022 from 9.7% in 2015

- 13,000 more nurses hired in the public sector

Median gross wages for selected positions and grades in the public hospitals (in lei at constant prices 2022)
Enhanced Financial Support for Family Doctors

- Expansion of contracted working time for consultations paid by fee-for-service with 2 hours per day;
- Expansion of the scope of services in family medicine such as preventive consultations, screening procedures, ultrasonography, spirometry, EKG, diabetes prescriptions;
- Increase of tariffs for all consultations either reimbursed by capitation or fee-for-service;
- An additional increase of tariffs for preventive consultations;
- Introduction of a pay-for-performance mechanism for preventive consultations;
- Generous lump sum payments for three years for family physicians who settle in local government with no family medicine practice.
Romanian Healthcare Workers by categories in 2022

- Residents: 6% (21,131)
- Doctors: 19% (71,293)
- Other specialties: 10% (37,717)
- Higher education Nurses: 5% (18,925)
- Family Physicians: 3% (12,445)
- Auxillary Personnel: 21% (76,583)
- Other medium level healthcare personnel: 4% (15,017)
- Physiotherapists: 1% (2,713)
- Pharmacists: 6% (22,661)
- Dentists: 6% (21,430)

Total Healthcare: 370,293
Romanian Healthcare Workers by categories in 2022

- **Doctors**: 29% (71% female)
- **Nurses**: 34% (66% female)
- **Private Sector**: 34% (66% female)
- **Public Sector**: 29% (71% female)
Main Challenge Today – Geographic Distribution

- Number of Doctors per 100,000 inhabitants in 2022

Ongoing Reforms

  - Retention and Workforce Planning
  - Rural Healthcare and Local Authorities Involvement
  - Growing Specialization Needs
  - Professional Development and Attractivity of Specialties
  - Anticipating Future Workforce Needs – National Registry of Healthcare Professionals

- National Program for Resilience and Recovery & Health Operational Program 2021–2027
  - Investments in Healthcare infrastructure – employment opportunities and improving working conditions
  - Regional Hospital Development
  - Expansion of Universities and of Centers for Skills Development
  - Enhancing Healthcare Management Training
Discussions – The Way Forward

• This study underscores the critical need for multifaceted policy interventions to manage healthcare workforce migration effectively

• It emphasizes the importance of balancing workforce supply with equitable distribution:
  
  • Targeted Financial Incentives
  • Investment in Healthcare Infrastructure
  • Aligning Educational Outcomes with Regional Needs
  • Proactive Distribution Approach
  • Continuous Policy Evaluation and Adaptation
  • Strengthening Professional Development and Career Pathways
  • Enhancing Collaborative Efforts – LOCAL AUTHORITIES’ INVOLVEMENT
Bibliography

3. Romania Human Resources for Health Rapid Assessment 2022 by World Health Organization
4. Bucharest Declaration on health and care workforce
5. „Framework for action on the health and care workforce in the WHO European Region 2023 – 2030“ Resolution adopted during RC73
Thank you!

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