EMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN HEALTH SECTOR IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

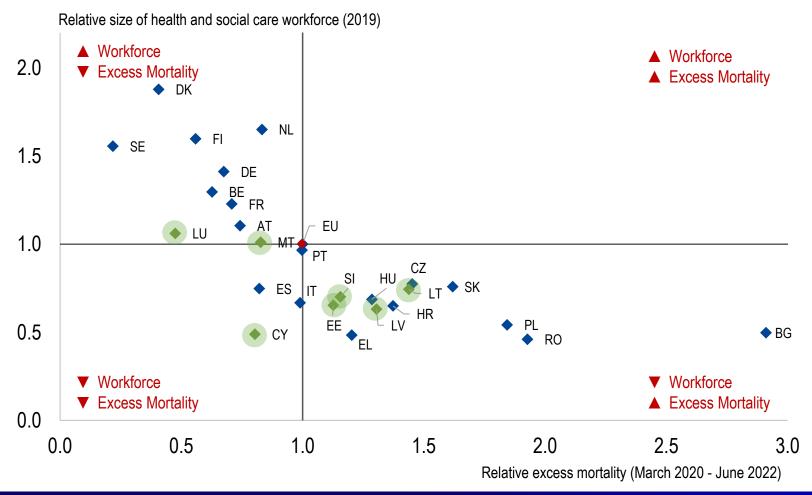
High-level conference
Healthcare human resources crisis: Small countries facing future risks

Francesca Colombo
Head, OECD Health Division
11 April 2025

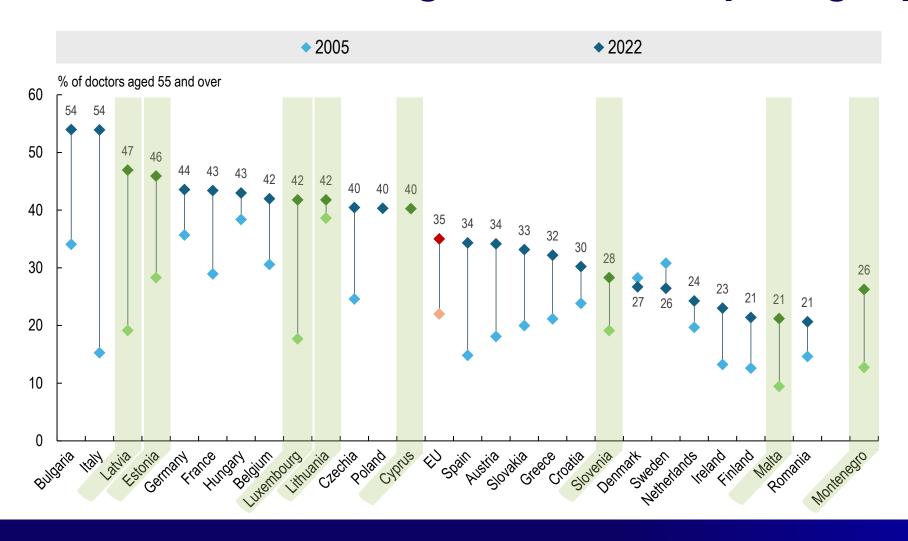




COVID-19 highlighted the need to recruit and retain health workers to improve health system resilience



Ageing in the profession will add to the challenge: over a third of doctors are aged over 55, requiring replacement

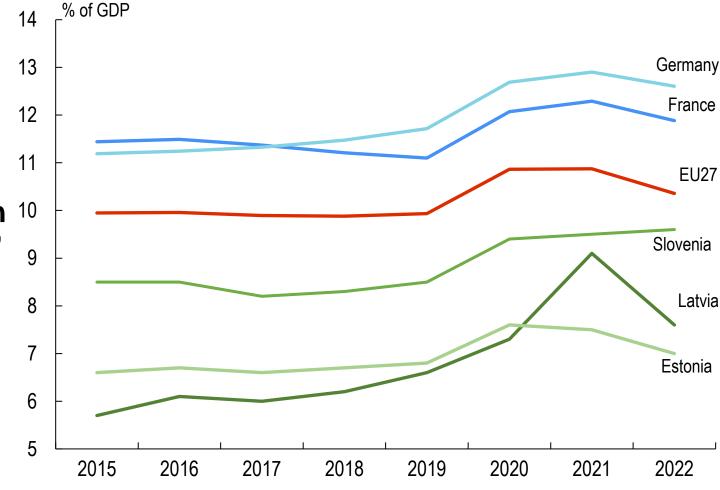


A large share of **nurses** are also aged 55+:

51% in Lithuania 39% in Latvia 28% in Estonia

Further investments in health workforce are challenged by a tight fiscal context

Health
expenditure as a
share of GDP is
generally lower in 10
"small countries"
than in other EU
countries

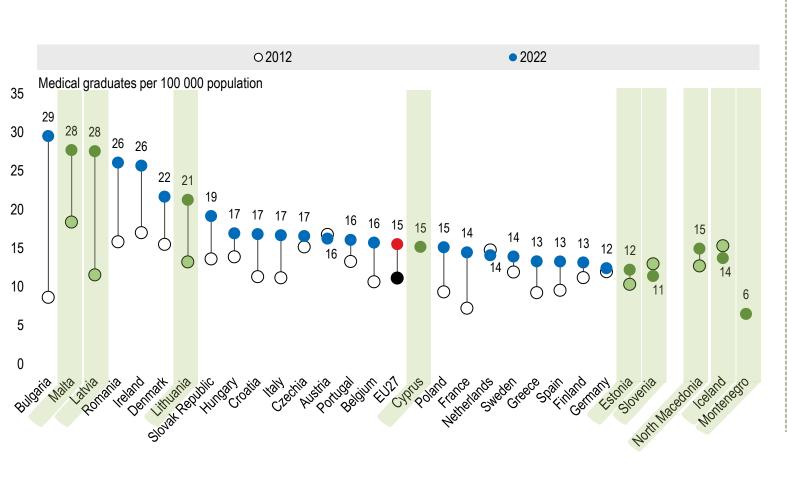


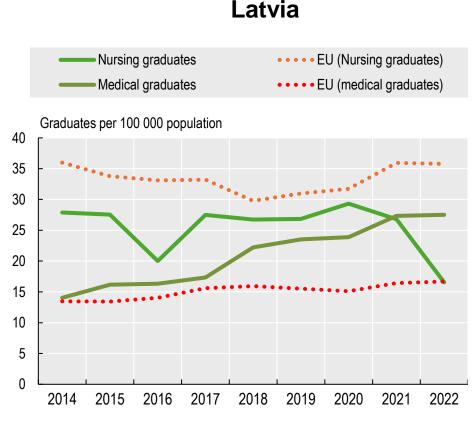
SOLUTION 1: TRAINING AND RECRUITING HEALTH WORKERS



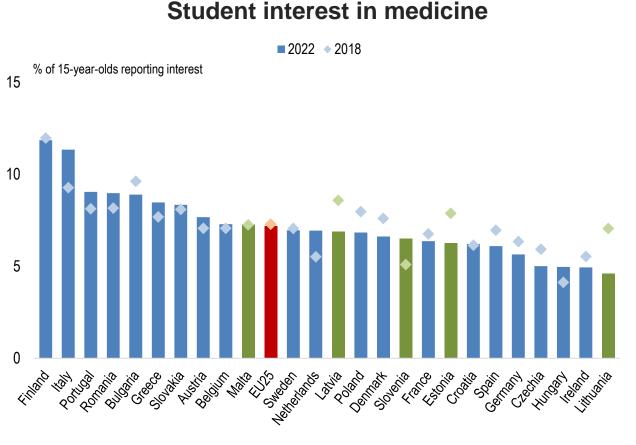


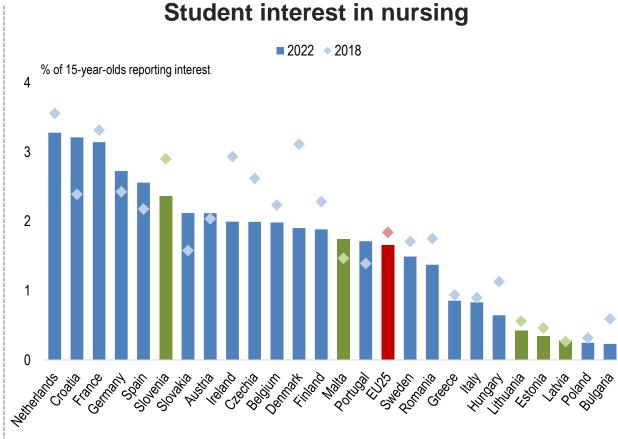
Most countries have recognised the need to train more doctors, but the training of nurses has lagged behind in some countries





Reduced student interest might leave countries unable to fill training places, particularly in nursing



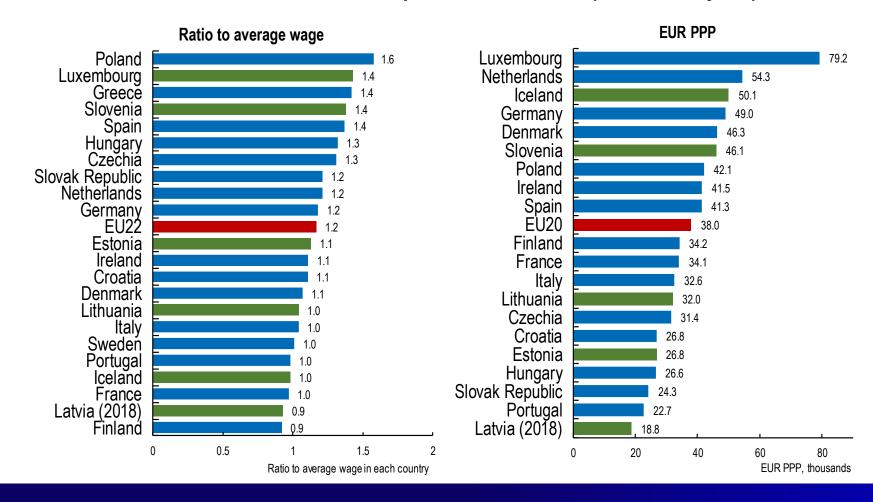


2. RETAINING TALENT

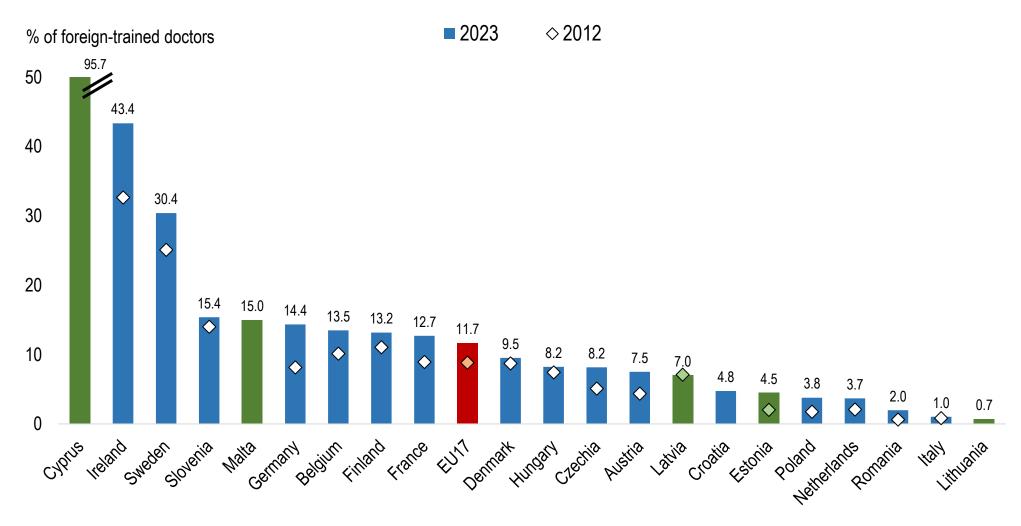


Remuneration of nurses in many countries is not greater or even lower than the average wage in the economy

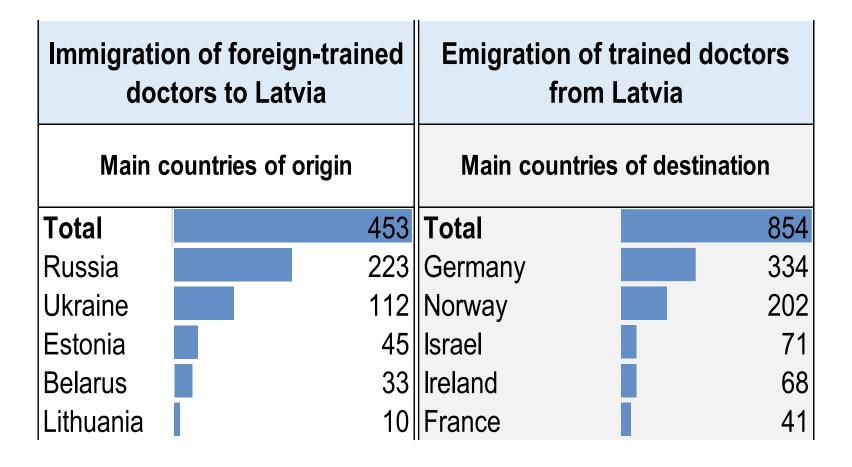
Remuneration of hospital nurses, 2022 (or nearest year)



Growing reliance on recruiting of foreign doctors: but is this a long-term solution?



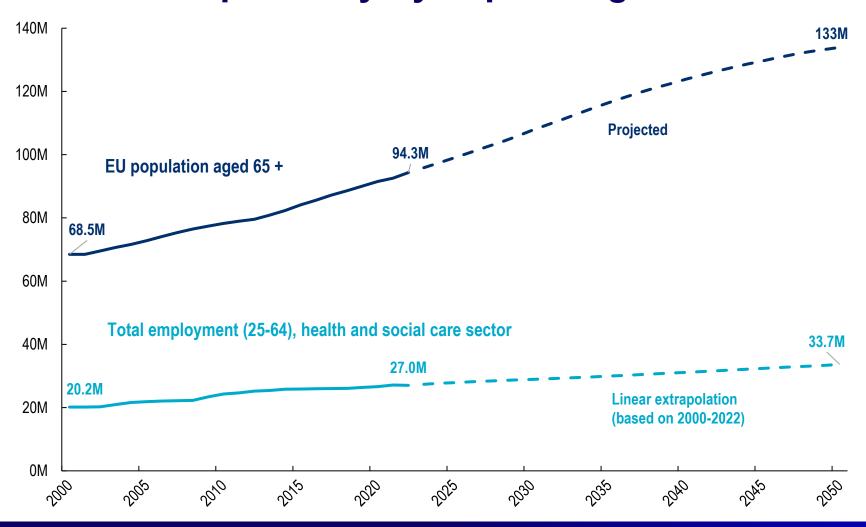
Some countries are "net gainers" of migration patterns while others are "net losers" – Example of Latvia



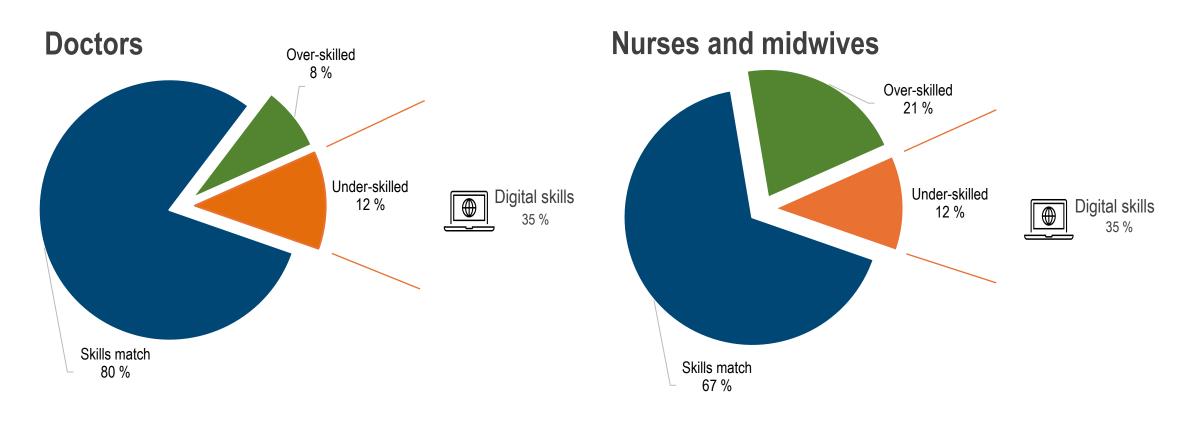
Note for <u>Norway</u> and <u>Israel</u>: Most doctors trained in Latvia are Norwegian and Israeli students who obtained their first medical degree in Latvia and returned to their home countries after.



Population ageing will make it unfeasible to meet increasing demands for healthcare in Europe solely by expanding the health workforce



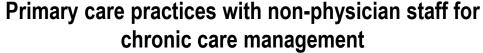
Improving productivity: addressing skill mismatches

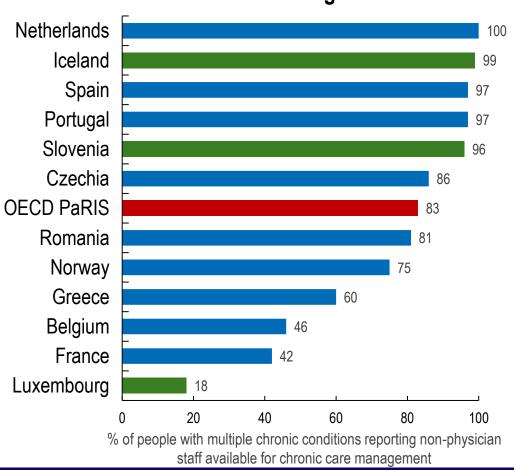


Skills mismatch: Participants were asked the question: "Overall, which of the following statements best describes your skills in relation to what is required to do your job? My skills are higher/matched/lower than what is required.

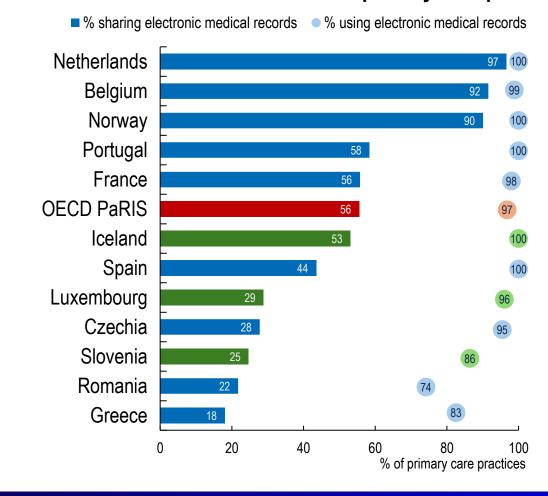
Under-skilling in digital skills: Participants were asked which skills they were thinking that they were under-skilled in. Digital skills refer to computer and software use.

Improving productivity: the PaRIS survey highlights a growing use of non-physician staff and digital tools in primary care





Use of electronic medical records in primary care practices



Improving productivity: a more efficient use of Al and digital tools

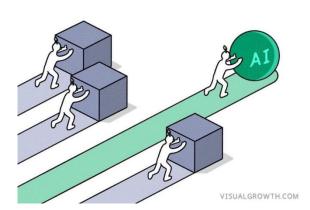
Up to 30% of all administrative tasks could be automated by 2030.

Recent OECD survey found that doctors are not worried about Al replacing their jobs and see many potential benefits.

But doctors are worried about Al being designed and implemented without them.

Develop Novel Treatments (Better treatments)





Improve Productivity (Better help professionals)

Short-term

Medium-term

Improve Accuracy

(Better diagnostics)

Long-term

OECDpublishing

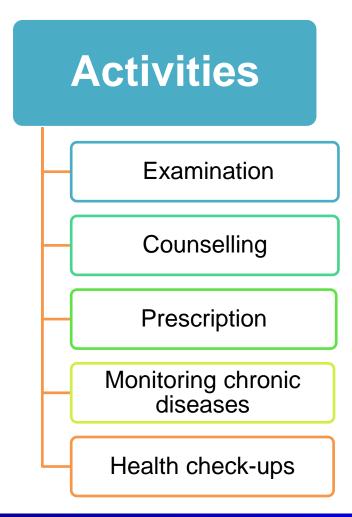
COLLECTIVE ACTION





Improving productivity: Innovations in work organisation

- Example of growing role of **family nurses** in **Estonia**:
 - 2009: GPs were incentivised to employ at least one family nurse
 - 2013: GPs were incentivised to employ a second family nurse
 - 2018: Creation of family care centers
- Current situation:
 - Practices without nurse 2
 - Practices with one nurse 105
 - Practices with at least two nurses 682
- About 4 million patient appointments with nurses in 2023



In sum: Strategies to address health workforce shortages

Training more health workers, but need to increase attractiveness of health sector jobs, particularly for less prestigious/less paid jobs



Improving job quality to increase retention, but any pay raise will involve more public spending



Innovating to make more effective use of different categories of health workers and new technologies



For more information

Health at a Glance: Europe | OECD iLibrary

https://ec.europa.eu/health/state/glance_en

Email me: francesca.colombo@oecd.org



