

**Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital Sector  
10-year anniversary of the EPSU-HOSPEEM Code of Conduct on Ethical Cross-Border Recruitment and Retention in the Hospital Sector  
Media Release**

A decade ago, the EU-level Sectoral Social Partners for the Hospital Sector, the European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association ([HOSPEEM](#)) and the European Federation of Public Service Unions ([EPSU](#)) identified **ethical cross-border recruitment and effective retention measures for health professionals to guarantee an adequate health service provision** as one of the key priorities within the European Economic Area.

By addressing ethical cross-border recruitment and the retention of health professionals and signing the '[EPSU-HOSPEEM](#) Code of Conduct on Ethical Cross-Border Recruitment and Retention in the Hospital Sector' (CoC)<sup>1</sup> EPSU and HOSPEEM supported the creation of a level playing field across all European Union Member States and Norway as well as fair and decent employment and working conditions. To date, this can be considered as one of the **major achievements of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital Sector by contributing to equal opportunity for the health workforce and minimising unnecessary burdens on healthcare systems** caused by unethical recruitment practices.

EPSU General Secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan welcomed the constructive dialogue with the European employers since the launch of the Code of Conduct. *"We sought to ensure decent working conditions for all, to prevent the exploitation of migrant workers and to make sure public health systems are not undermined by unfair recruitment practices. Our Code was and is a significant contribution to achieve sustainable quality care for all."*

The CoC can be considered as a **crucial instrument to support free movement of workers** – being a fundamental principle of the [Treaty of Lisbon \(2007/C 306/01\)](#)<sup>2</sup> and well established as one of the three categories within the [European Pillar for Social Rights \(EPSR\)](#)<sup>3</sup> – while preventing unethical competition between Member States and employers in terms of cross-country recruitment process, fair and transparent contracting and the induction of migrant workers at the new workplace. This also holds for

their equal and non-discriminatory treatment regarding labour law, social protection provisions and the access to training and career progression and the freedom of association.

**The CoC also creates transparency: It was elaborated through a bottom-up approach, by equally involving the national Trade Unions and Employers' associations** from the Hospital and Healthcare sector throughout the process. It was inspired by social partner-based or public policy tools already in use in different EU MS. This approach created a notion of **ownership among the national Social Partners** that supported an effective adoption and implementation of the principles within the EU MS.

<sup>1</sup> See page <https://www.epsu.org/fi/node/8074> on the EPSU website for text of the CoC in 13 languages and background information and page <https://hospeem.org/activities/hospeem-epsu-code-of-conduct/> on the HOSPEEM website.

<sup>2</sup> For the full text in all official EU languages see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12007L%2FTEXT>

<sup>3</sup> For the full text in all official EU languages see [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-booklet\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en) (ref: chapter II: Fair working conditions; section 5. Secure and adaptable employment; section 6. Wages; section 7. Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals; section 9. Work-life balance; section 10. Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection)

Even though the CoC is of non-regulatory nature, it has been well received by the international community and inspired similar initiatives at the global level. Two years following the signing of the CoC, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) at the [63<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly](#) on 21 May 2010 adopted and set into practice their own Code, [the Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel](#)<sup>4</sup>.

HOSPEEM Secretary General Tjitte Alkema reflected on the impact of the Code of Conduct. *“10 years ago, our Code of Conduct was an inspiration for the work of the World Health Organisation. Nowadays, given the migration flows to and within the European Member States, it is still very relevant.”*

In the past years, national Social Partners have been actively making use of and promoting the CoC. This shows once again the ownership they have of the CoC and their commitment to the 12 key principles set out there, namely:

1. High-quality health care, accessible for all people in the EU
2. Registration and data collection
3. Workforce planning
4. Equal access to training and career development
5. Open and transparent information about hospital vacancies across the EU
6. Fair and transparent contracting
7. Registration, permits and recognition of qualifications
8. Proper Induction, Housing and standards of living
9. Equal rights and non-discrimination
10. Promoting ethical recruitment practices
11. Freedom of association
12. Implementation, Monitoring and Follow-up

In 2012, [HOSPEEM](#) and [EPSU](#) elaborated a report on the use and implementation of the CoC<sup>5</sup>. It illustrated good practice examples from different EU MS on how the 12 key principles of the CoC have been incorporated either in legislation, in collective agreements and/or in enterprise-based agreements.

The European Sectoral Social Partners for the Hospital and Healthcare Sector underline their **full commitment to promote ethical recruitment and retention practices** at European, national, regional and local level in the upcoming years, in their own work and in the context of initiatives of the EPSR.

#### EPSU and HOSPEEM



Jan Willem GOUDRIAAN  
General Secretary of EPSU



Tjitte ALKEMA  
Secretary General of HOSPEEM

<sup>4</sup> The Global Code of Practice (available in AR, CN, EN, FR, RU, ES) can be accessed on the [WHO website](#)

<sup>5</sup> Also uploaded to page <https://www.epsu.org/fi/node/8074> on the EPSU website and page [https://www.hospeem.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Report-Use\\_Implementation-EPSU-HOSPEEM-CoCECBR\\_R-adopted-05-09-12.pdf](https://www.hospeem.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Report-Use_Implementation-EPSU-HOSPEEM-CoCECBR_R-adopted-05-09-12.pdf) on the HOSPEEM website