

Brussels, June 2026

## HOSPEEM Answer Right to Stay Call for Evidence

HOSPEEM represents hospital and healthcare employers across Europe. We welcome the Commission's initiative to strengthen the "Right to Stay" and address the growing territorial disparities highlighted in the Letta and Draghi reports. HOSPEEM supports the development of a European Right to Stay Strategy as a key instrument to strengthen territorial cohesion and ensure that all citizens can genuinely choose to remain in their communities, wherever feasible and in line with evolving service organisation needs. We align with SGI Europe's vision of a comprehensive, cross-sectoral framework recognising services of general interest (SGIs) as fundamental enablers of economic resilience, competitiveness and social inclusion. HOSPEEM is a proud member of the [Freedom to Stay alliance](#).

A key priority is enabling the modernisation of care models. In many regions, evolving demographic trends and workforce capacity are prompting a reconfiguration of specialised hospital services, including in some cases a shift towards more integrated hub-and-spoke models. The centralisation of specialised care allows for the concentration of expertise, improved clinical outcomes and more efficient use of limited human resources. This approach must be accompanied by targeted investment in transport, patient pathways and digital health solutions to ensure accessibility and continuity of care.

At the same time, labour and skills shortages underline the need for adaptable and forward-looking approaches to service delivery. HOSPEEM emphasises that regulatory approaches based on rigid staffing requirements can be counterproductive where workforce supply is insufficient, particularly if they are not accompanied by adequate workforce planning and system support. Such approaches risk creating situations where providers are unable to comply with legal requirements despite best efforts, potentially leading to unintended service reductions, disruptions or closures. We therefore advocate for governance frameworks that prioritise outcomes, such as patient safety, quality of care and accessibility, over fixed staffing ratios, while maintaining high standards of care.

In line with SGI Europe's position, we also stress the need for a strong place-based approach. Healthcare systems must be designed in close interaction with local realities, including demographic trends, labour market conditions and infrastructure gaps. This requires

### European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association (HOSPEEM)

Rue des Deux Eglises, 26, bte 5  
B-1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32 2 229 21 57 / +32 2 229 21 58

[hospem@hospem.eu](mailto:hospem@hospem.eu)  
[www.hospem.org](http://www.hospem.org)

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meaningful involvement of healthcare providers and social partners at local and regional level.

Furthermore, the Strategy should be fully embedded within the EU's broader policy framework. Greater coherence is needed between cohesion policy, social policy, competitiveness strategies and funding instruments to ensure that investments in healthcare infrastructure and workforce development are both effective and sustainable.

Targeted EU support could prioritise:

- Workforce development, including upskilling and specialisation aligned with evolving care needs;
- Digital and physical connectivity to link communities with centres of expertise;
- Innovative service delivery models that improve efficiency and quality of care.

A credible Right to Stay Strategy must balance ambition with realism. Ensuring access to high-quality healthcare does not necessarily mean preserving all existing structures in their current form but rather enabling systems to adapt in ways that safeguard patient safety, improve outcomes and ensure long-term sustainability.

HOSPEEM remains committed to working with EU institutions and stakeholders to achieve these objectives.

**European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association (HOSPEEM)**

Rue des Deux Eglises, 26, bte 5  
B-1000 Brussels  
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[hospeem@hospeem.eu](mailto:hospeem@hospeem.eu)  
[www.hospeem.org](http://www.hospeem.org)

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