

Statement of the Slovak Republic
156th Session of the Executive Board

Agenda Item 24.3 Global strategies and action plans that are scheduled to expire within one year –
Global strategic directions for nursing and midwifery 2021-2025
29 January 2025

Madam Chair, esteemed members of the Executive Board,

The Slovak Republic aligns with the statements of the European Union and its Member States. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 2021–2025. We commend the Director-General’s comprehensive report and welcome the proposal to extend the strategy to 2030, ensuring continuity and alignment with the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030.

Slovakia recognizes the critical role of nurses and midwives in achieving universal health coverage and improving population health. However, we acknowledge the persistent challenges highlighted in the report, including global workforce shortages, inequitable distribution, and systemic barriers in education, employment, and leadership.

*The Slovak Republic emphasizes the importance of addressing the following **key priority areas** to advance the strategic directions for nursing and midwifery:*

- 1. **Workforce Retention and Equity** - Global shortages of 6 million nurses and midwives, disproportionately affecting low-income regions, underline the need for urgent action. Slovakia supports the principles of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. It emphasizes the importance of **regulated workforce migration** to prevent the depletion of health capacities in smaller and vulnerable countries. Slovakia has taken steps to stabilize its workforce by introducing **tiered salary scales based on years of practice**, which contribute to workforce retention and could serve as a model for other nations.*
- 2. **Education and Capacity Building** - Improving the quality and accessibility of nursing and midwifery education is paramount. Slovakia supports initiatives to **scale up domestic production of healthcare workers** and advocates for **competency-based curricula** and strengthened accreditation mechanisms. Leveraging digital technologies for training and certification can further enhance capacity building.*
- 3. **Leadership and Policy Integration** - Strengthening leadership roles within nursing and midwifery is critical for integrating workforce planning into broader health policies. Slovakia calls for the establishment of **senior nursing and midwifery roles** within national health governance and supports the expansion of leadership development programs.*
- 4. **Gender Equality and Safe Work Environments** - Addressing gender disparities is essential for creating equitable workplaces. Slovakia urges actions to close the 24% gender pay gap in the health and care sector and supports initiatives to ensure **safe and healthy working conditions free from violence and discrimination**.*

*To address the persistent challenges and opportunities in nursing and midwifery, Slovakia emphasizes the need for coordinated **action across global, regional, and national levels**. The following proposals outline key strategies for advancing the implementation of the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery:*

Global Level

At the global level, Slovakia underscores the importance of sustained leadership and collaboration to ensure consistency and momentum in addressing workforce challenges.

- **Extension of the Strategic Directions to 2030:** Slovakia strongly supports the extension of the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery to 2030. This extension will align with the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health, providing the continuity necessary for Member States to fully implement key priorities and achieve long-term objectives.
- **Technical Assistance and Data Sharing:** WHO's role in enhancing data collection and analysis is critical. Slovakia calls for increased support from WHO to facilitate **informed decision-making and cross-country comparisons**, helping Member States identify gaps and tailor their workforce strategies effectively.
- **Global Leadership and Advocacy:** Slovakia recognizes the value of WHO's global nursing and midwifery forums in catalysing action and fostering collaboration among Member States. We urge the continuation and expansion of these forums to maintain momentum and encourage innovative solutions.

Regional Level

At the regional level, Slovakia highlights the importance of context-specific adaptations and platforms for cooperation.

- **Regional Adaptation and Implementation:** It is essential to develop **region-specific frameworks**, such as the European Region's roadmap, to ensure the global strategic directions are adapted to local needs and challenges.
- **Knowledge Sharing Platforms:** Strengthening regional platforms to exchange **best practices** in workforce planning, education, and retention strategies is crucial for addressing region-specific barriers and opportunities.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Slovakia calls for the development of **regional contingency plans** to address workforce challenges during health emergencies. These plans should prioritize the resilience of nursing and midwifery capacities to respond effectively to crises.

National Level

At the national level, Slovakia underscores the importance of tailored strategies and targeted support to meet the specific needs of Member States.

- **Integrated Workforce Strategies:** Slovakia urges WHO to provide **technical support** for developing comprehensive national workforce strategies, particularly for smaller countries with limited resources. These strategies should integrate health workforce planning into broader national health policies.
- **Competency-Based Education Models:** Facilitating the adoption of **evidence-based curricula** and robust accreditation systems will improve the quality of nursing and midwifery education. These models should be tailored to meet the specific needs of individual Member States.
- **Workforce Planning and Monitoring:** Slovakia advocates using **health labor market analyses** to guide policy decisions and investments in the health and care workforce. By aligning workforce supply with demand, Member States can ensure sustainable health system development.

Response to Guiding Questions

Q1: What policies and investment decisions can countries share that have proven most successful in optimizing the education, employment, and retention of the health and care workforce?

Slovakia highlights its **tiered salary system**, which aligns compensation with years of practice to stabilize the workforce. Investments in **residency programs** for general practitioners and midwives, coupled with targeted incentives for underserved areas, have improved workforce distribution. Enhanced collaboration across sectors has facilitated the integration of education and employment policies, ensuring alignment with national health needs.

Q2: How can the Secretariat help Member States to advance capabilities and competencies in data, policy dialogue, and investment decisions on the health and care workforce?
Slovakia calls on WHO to:

- Provide technical assistance for **building national workforce registries**, enabling comprehensive tracking of workforce trends and gaps.
- Facilitate **policy dialogue platforms** that bring together Member States, academia, and civil society to exchange strategies and solutions.
- Support **innovative financing models** to sustain workforce investments and foster equitable access to education and employment opportunities.

In conclusion, Slovak Republic reaffirms its commitment to advancing the global nursing and midwifery agenda through collaboration with WHO and Member States. By addressing systemic barriers, fostering leadership, and promoting gender equity, we can collectively build a resilient, well-distributed, and empowered workforce to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Slovakia stands ready to share its experiences and contribute to global progress.

Thank you for your attention.