

Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders

PRIT

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Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders is an information network of regulators (commonly referred to as 'competent authorities') and registering bodies working to develop an agreement on sharing information proactively about healthcare professionals moving across Europe. The increasing mobility of health professionals and patients in Europe makes it vital that regulatory bodies, patients and the public are confident that all health professionals are fit and safe to practise.

FORE is a member of this Crossing Borders network and representative organisations have attended meetings since its inception.

Portugal Agreement

The Portugal Agreement is a voluntary agreement between regulators and registering bodies across Europe. This Agreement (click here to download), sets out a voluntary framework for cooperation and the development of professional healthcare regulation in Europe throughout 2008 and 2009.

FORE has already voiced its support for the previous Crossing Borders agreement (Edinburgh 2005) which focused on improving information exchange between competent authorities, such as the through the use of Certificates of Current Professional Status. Whilst building on this theme, the Portugal Agreement proposes further areas of regulatory collaboration between competent authorities and registering bodies, including:

Identifying shared principles of regulation: e.g. patient safety of over-riding importance, pursuit of safe and high quality practice.

Transparent and accessible healthcare: e.g. searchable lists of registered professionals, notices of disciplinary hearings and decisions (where possible).

Competence assurance of European healthcare professionals: e.g. continuing professional development, ensure registrants aware of professional standards, public access to standards, codes & guidance.

A number of these proposals are being followed by FORE in its current work programme.

Certificates of Current Professional Status

An important piece of work for HPCB is the development and use of Certificates of Current Professional Status for relevant bodies to register professionals from other European Economic Area countries. All participants in the Crossing Borders project (including some FORE organisations) have agreed to use and exchange the Certificates of Current Professional Status, as appropriate.

The Finnish National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs and the UK's General Osteopathic Council, for example, are already piloting its use for osteopaths moving from one State to another. This exchange has also begun with relevant authorities in France following regulation in 2007. For further details of the certificate, contact the FORE Secretariat.

Memorandum of Understanding

Regulatory bodies may need additional information when considering an application for registration. To meet this need Crossing Borders has developed a Memorandum of Understanding on Case by Case and Proactive Information Exchange (click here to download a copy), which sets out guiding principles for sharing information, in particular proactive exchange of information following serious disciplinary cases.

Working group

As practitioners move increasingly across borders to work, information exchange between registering bodies, even for regulated professions with mutual recognition of qualifications, can be difficult. This work is even more challenging with professions, like osteopathy, which are not widely regulated across Europe.

As FORE members have expressed support for the Crossing Borders project, a subgroup has been established to explore what practical steps member organisations can make to implement these initiatives. The group will start its work this summer.

Further information

For further details about Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders, visit: <http://www.hpcb.eu>

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