

News bulletin on the 'CC4HCA' study

July 7, 2015

Start of the study

The study '*Support for the definition of core competences for healthcare assistants*' (CC4HCA) aims to explore the interest among all EU Member States of the European Union in developing a common position on the core skills, knowledge and competences of health care assistants (HCAs) in Europe. The study officially started on the 13rd of March with a kick-off meeting between the European Commission and the research consortium led by NVEL. Since then, various activities have taken place: the Inception Report has been delivered and approved, the 2 questionnaires have been developed and sent to the national informants, and the website has been launched to update interested stakeholders.

The Inception Report

After the kick-off meeting on the 26th of March, the goals, approach and planning of the CC4HCA study, as well as the Work Packages, were specified in the Inception Report. Additional actions and attention points were agreed to elaborate the different steps of the study. This included, among others, the strategy to approach country informants to ensure a 100% response rate to the questionnaire and the approach of the Delphi rounds that directly follows the country mapping. A point of discussion concerned the balance between the exploration of a common position on the skills, knowledge and competences of HCAs in Europe that can be turned into a proposal for a Common Training Framework (CTF), and the acknowledgement of each countries' autonomy in training, recognizing and employing HCAs given that countries differ in their health care system, health workforce structure and health workforce policy. The Commission stressed the need for an open, transparent, objective and constructive approach of this study on the feasibility of a CTF for HCAs in Europe. The CC4HCA Inception Report was approved in June 2015.

Development of questionnaires

During the first phase of the CC4HCA study two questionnaires have been developed:

1. A questionnaire to map the current situation of health care assistants in the 14 Member States of the EU that were not included in the Contec study (2009),
2. A questionnaire to identify the representative national organizations (or competent authorities) in all 28 Member States as well as stakeholders interested in working on a suggestion for a CTF for HCA.

Questionnaire 1 contains detailed questions on the definitions and job description of HCAs, their education, regulation and registration and employment and labour market. This questionnaire was based on the survey developed by the Contec study that also initiated the pilot Network of Nurse

Educators and Regulators ('Creating a Pilot Network of Nurse Educators and Regulators' (SANCO/1/2009). A number of additional questions were included to get more specific insight in the national definition of HCAs, their core skills, knowledge and competences, as well as the national occupational, educational and registration system of HCAs. Questionnaire 2 contains a number of questions to identify the representative national organizations (or competent authorities) as stakeholders interested in working on a suggestion for a CTF for HCA. In addition, the identified organizations were asked to sign a Letter of commitment or a letter or an Expression of Interest, to secure their involvement in the next steps of the CC4HCA study.

Data collection on Questionnaire 1, the current situation of HCAs

At the beginning of June, the national informants of 14 European countries¹ (pre-contracted by the CC4HCA consortium) have been approached to complete questionnaire 1. Based on the information collected by the informants and collected (grey) literature, the project consortium is currently preparing a report on the current state of healthcare assistants in Europe. As of the 22nd of June, nearly all the national informants approach completed Questionnaire 1, which is very positive given the length and details of the survey. The quality of the data collected is sufficient for further analysis. In case of unclear or missing answers, the informants were re-approached.

Data collection on Questionnaire 2, the representative national professional organizations (or competent authorities)

Also at the beginning of June, all EU Member States stakeholders have been approached to complete Questionnaire 2, to identify the stakeholders interested in working on a suggestion for a common training framework for HCA. This questionnaire was combined with questionnaire 1 for the 14 Member States that were not included in the previous Contec study (see above). For the other 14 Member States, multiple persons were approached to complete Questionnaire 2. First of all, the contact persons who participated in the previous Contec study were asked to complete Questionnaire 2, and to indicate if the information they provided in 2009 for the Contec study were still up to date and accurate. Secondly, additional contact persons for these 14 Member States were approached, e.g. Chief Nursing Officers. The professional and personal network of the CC4HCA consortium is used for this data collection, in order to identify multiple organisations per country, if applicable. The response on Questionnaire 2 is still pending as of the 22nd of June.

Preparation of Work Package 2

The next step of the CC4HCA study will be the invitation of the stakeholders identified by Questionnaire 2 to participate in a Delphi study. Input for the Delphi will be the design or outline of a minimum set of skills, knowledge and competences of HCAs that can be part of a proposal for a CTF for HCAs in Europe. This outline will be designed by taking the 2005/36/EC Directive into account on the one hand, and common denominators of the country information collected by Questionnaire 1

¹ Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden

on the other. The preparation of the Delphi rounds, invitations and materials will start in August 2015 and the execution of this Work Package will take place during the fall of 2015.

Communication and website

The CC4HCA launched an information website in April 2015: <https://www.nivel.nl/en/cc4hca>. The basic information about the goals, steps and consortium of the CC4HCA study is presented on this site, as well as a link to the previous Contec study. Contact details and names are presented as well, including our email address, cc4hca@nivel.nl.