



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh
Regulating Health +
Social Care Professionals

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Opening Remarks

Ginny Hanrahan, CEO and Registrar, CORU

Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders (HPCB) Network Conference, Dublin

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Good morning,

My name is Ginny Hanrahan and I am the CEO and Registrar of CORU, Ireland's Health and Social Care Professionals Council.

On behalf of my colleagues in CORU and on behalf of Niall Byrne and colleagues in the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland I am delighted to welcome you all to Dublin for the Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders Conference 2019.

Many of you will know that Dublin is famous for its writers, poets, artists and musicians, but it also has a great history in healthcare.

The first voluntary hospital, the Charitable Infirmary, opened in a small house in Cook Street, Dublin, in August 1718, two years before England's first voluntary hospital, the Westminster, was established in London.

In 1745 the Dublin 'Lying In' Hospital became the world's first training maternity hospital. Now known as the Rotunda, and just a short walk from here, it is also the world's longest continuously operating maternity hospital.

Thomas Street is home to Guinness Brewery and apart from brewing a very good stout, it's more interesting for us as healthcare professionals that the Guinness family were ahead of their time when it came to the health of their employees. In 1870 the company broke new ground when it established a medical centre for staff and their families. The Centre employed doctors, nurses, dentists and midwives.

Today, I am pleased to say, our healthcare system is no longer solely reliant on private or voluntary healthcare providers - although they continue to play an important role - but now the majority of funding is provided by central Government, with access to medical care available to all.

Like many healthcare systems throughout the world, the provision of healthcare is not without its challenges as our population both grows and ages.

Despite the challenges in the wider system, health and social care professionals play a critical role in the delivery of healthcare in Ireland and are dedicated professionals who are committed to providing safe, high quality care to their patients and clients.

Recognising the importance of Health and Social Care professionals and responding to developments in EU legislation, in 2005 the then Minister for Health, Mary Harney, introduced statutory regulation for designated health and social care professionals. Prior to



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this most of the professions were either self-regulating or had no regulation at all. In the interests of patient safety and professional standards this could not be allowed to continue.

CORU is Ireland's first and only, multi-profession health and social care regulator. The name CORU originates from an Irish word, 'cóir' which means fair, just and proper.

These are values that resonate deeply within our organisation, and perfectly reflect our commitment to protecting the public by regulating health and social care professionals.

We do this by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training and competence. CORU now regulates more than 15,000 health and social care professionals from 9 professions, and we are on course to double this number in the coming years when all 17 designated professions are regulated.

As regulators of health and social care professions in Ireland, we work alongside our fellow regulators –

- The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
- The Medical Council of Ireland
- The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland
- The Dental Council of Ireland and finally
- The Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council, who regulate ambulance crews.

Between us, we register about 130,000 professionals, who provide services to the public.

As CORU has driven significant change in health and social care regulation, we now have health and social care professions actively seeking statutory regulation. One of our biggest challenges is how we can deliver a regulatory model which is sustainable in the longer term.

I know we are not alone in this challenge and I look forward to all present sharing your experiences today.

We recently conducted a review of regulatory models in other jurisdictions and engaging with you, our colleagues in the Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders network was very beneficial to us as we undertook that work.

I am sure many of you will agree that the informal network created by Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders, and the platform it gives us to share experiences and work practices will become even more important in the months ahead as we all look to enhance public safety in an era of great change within the EU.

The decision of the United Kingdom to leave the EU has potentially very serious implications for the health and social care professionals we regulate, for us as regulators and most importantly, for the safety of the public.



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The theme of today's conference '*Mobile Professionals, Safe Patients*' has never been more appropriate.

At the heart of the Treaty of Rome and the creation of a single market, is the desire to maintain peace through economic and social cohesion. The single market framework is built on the freedom of movement of people, goods and services throughout the European Union. This freedom of movement has benefitted individuals who were able to pursue a better job, a better education or a better way of life. It also benefited countries - bringing skilled labour to markets where there was a shortage, and with this new labour, new and improved work practices as skills were shared, and of course creating more diverse and inclusive societies.

The Professional Qualifications Directive provides a system of recognition of professional qualifications and experience across the EU.

It has enabled Regulators across the EU/EEA to recognise professional qualifications in a timely way, minimising delays and ensuring that important health and social care services are provided in a safe way to EU citizens. This is particularly important where patient care may be compromised because of a shortage of relevant skills in one country and this shortage can only be met by workers from other EU countries.

The decision of the United Kingdom to leave the EU means that all EU primary and secondary law will cease to apply to the UK on the 29 March 2019 if no agreement is in place. This is causing some concern among UK qualified professionals and students who are currently studying in the UK.

As a Regulator, we have seen a sharp increase in the number of applications for the recognition of international qualifications from British based applicants seeking recognition in advance of Brexit.

Each country must now decide how it will recognise professionals with qualifications from the UK in a post Brexit regime. This presents challenges in terms of ensuring public safety is not compromised while at the same time not impeding the mobility of much needed health and social care professionals across the EU. I look forward to hearing the views of our first two speakers, Mairead McGuinness, MEP and Vice President of the European Parliament, who will look at the 'Impact of Brexit on Professional Mobility' and Paul Buckley, Director of Strategy & Policy with the General Medical Council in the UK, who will discuss 'Brexit and the future of EEA doctors working in the UK'.

One of the benefits of EU membership from a regulatory standpoint has been the co-operation among member states to develop common policies and procedures. The complexity of regulation and what EU member states have achieved in this regard cannot be underestimated.

Introduced just three years ago the EPC, or European Professional Card, and the Alert Mechanism are major achievements in the modernisation of the Professional Qualifications Directive. It is the first EU-wide fully online procedure for the recognition of qualifications. The online procedure, while not replacing 'traditional' recognition procedures, seeks to make it simpler and faster for professionals to apply for recognition.



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The European Commission has stated that an expansion of the EPC to other professions will be considered in the future. I look forward to any insights Konstantinos Tomaras the European Commission's DG GROW, might be able to provide in his address to us after our first coffee break.

As Regulators, we know that the desire for speed and ease of recognition, driven by the desire to ensure the mobility of professionals, must be balanced against our primary concern - patient safety.

In this regard, the Alert Mechanism has been a very welcome development in helping to protect patients and consumers across the EU. Countries are now required to warn each other through the Internal Market Information System about professionals working in the fields of health or education of minors who have been prohibited or restricted from practice in one EU country, or who have used falsified documents in support of their application for the recognition of their qualification.

Despite initial teething problems this alert mechanism is one of the strongest tools in our armoury as we seek to protect our citizens. I believe it will continue to be, even after the UK leaves the European Union.

It will however be crucial that we find a mechanism that allows the EU and UK to continue to share this vital information in light of the new GDPR requirements.

Meanwhile some professionals are already working together on introducing common platforms to simplify and speed up the recognition process for eligible persons.

This is an important step and will be a very significant achievement by the participating Member States. I believe it will have a positive impact on our work protecting the public.

Some of the biggest challenges for us as Regulators are:

- How do we balance the good intent of the European project to enable professionals to move freely across Borders with the absolute need to protect the public?
- How do we respond to the demands from healthcare systems who, in trying to meet staff shortages, believe qualification checks could and should be done more quickly?
- What is the future of the professional qualifications framework?
- What role will technology play in our work in the years ahead?

We will attempt to address these issues in our sessions throughout the day.

Our keynote speech after lunch is from Dr. Eszter Kovacs from the SEPEN project, Semmelweis University, Hungary.

Dr. Kovacs will address us on 'Trends and Future expectations of health professionals' cross-border mobility.



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We will also hear a keynote from Maria Filina-Kossatsova from the Estonian Health Board who will share with us examples of best practise from Estonia and how that country is taking eHealth into the 21st Century, while our panel discussions will look at future regulatory challenges in eHealth, the future of the professional qualifications framework and a discussion on 'Developing the Health Workforce'.

We are entering uncharted territory in the next few weeks and there will be challenges to be met. Today's conference is about helping us to be better prepared to meet those challenges.

I have no doubt that Regulators across Europe and those of us in this very valuable network, will continue to lead and to work together to maintain the highest levels of patient safety and consumer protections.

That is, and always has been our focus and will continue to be in the future.

Thank you.

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