Voka Health Community is an ecosystem of more than 600 welfare and care institutions, businesses, knowledge centres and patient groups. Within the Voka Health Community they work together to create and valorise added value through innovative solutions in (health)care.

Voka Health Community focuses on three major building blocks:

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- Integrated and high-quality care and care delivery that focuses on prevention and health promotion
- Innovative business development around care organisation, technology and digital transformation
- Solidarity-based social security with financing that stimulates doing what is right following the value-based healthcare principles.

A contemporary (health)care system that is adapted to the future needs is possible: a more digital care with a focus on prevention and an alignment of tasks with respect and motivation for the care profession will help us move forward and help us to tackle the challenges in welfare and healthcare.

Staff shortages and demographic challenges

Staff shortages are the number one. The ageing of the population is a triple challenge: with the increasing number of elderly people, our care needs are becoming not only larger, but also more chronic and complex. Our care system must therefore meet both a greater volume and more intense care needs.

The third effect is due to the ever-shrinking active population. In 1991, the care and financing of 1 elderly Belgian was carried by 4 pairs of active shoulders. In 2050 that number will have halved to 2. We will have to bear the greater number of elderly people and their complex care needs with fewer and fewer people. The labour market on fire?

You ain’t seen nothing yet.

Paradox

Therein lies a great paradox: according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Belgium has a quarter more active nurses than the OECD average. Generally, they appear to be better educated than in other countries. The diagnosis: our health personnel lose time with administration, logistics and household tasks while the norms keep the door open for support staff. The shortage of personnel in the healthcare sector is causing major and justifiable headaches.

Digitisation in healthcare

This brings us to digitisation. The care sector is still walking around in the digital 90s. Paper forms have been replaced by exactly the same digital ones. So, a lot of opportunities remain unavailable. A digital transformation goes further: besides collecting data, you also have to analyse and evaluate them and adapt your way of working. Digitalisation must support healthcare staff in organising and coordinating care efficiently, instead of frustrating them – and their patients – endlessly.

Regulation and implementation of technology

The key to achieve a digital transformation in health is not to develop the necessary technology. Smartphones, apps, mobile sensors: the technology is already there. The challenge lies in regulating and implementing that technology so that it supports the goals around quality and affordability. Europe is leading the way here with the European Open Data Area. In Belgium, hospitals and home care institutions are already working to make their data not only available but also FAIR: findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable. With some investment in capacity and digital competences, this will receive an enormous boost. With Voka Health Community we will commit to implementing technology and innovation in the health and care sector.

Prevention budget

Besides digitalisation, focusing on self-care and prevention is a no brainer. Today, Belgium spends 1.6% of its health budget on prevention, while the World Health Organisation’s target is 5%. Investing in prevention prevents up to 80% of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, and up to 40% of cancers. People who do not fall ill, fall ill less or fall ill later, need less care.

Within the Voka Health Community, we set to work together. We use the evolutions in science, innovative ideas and the experiences of our members to move forward. You can find information about Voka Health Community, our activities and our publications on www.voka.be/healthcommunity.

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