

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN HEALTH SECTOR IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

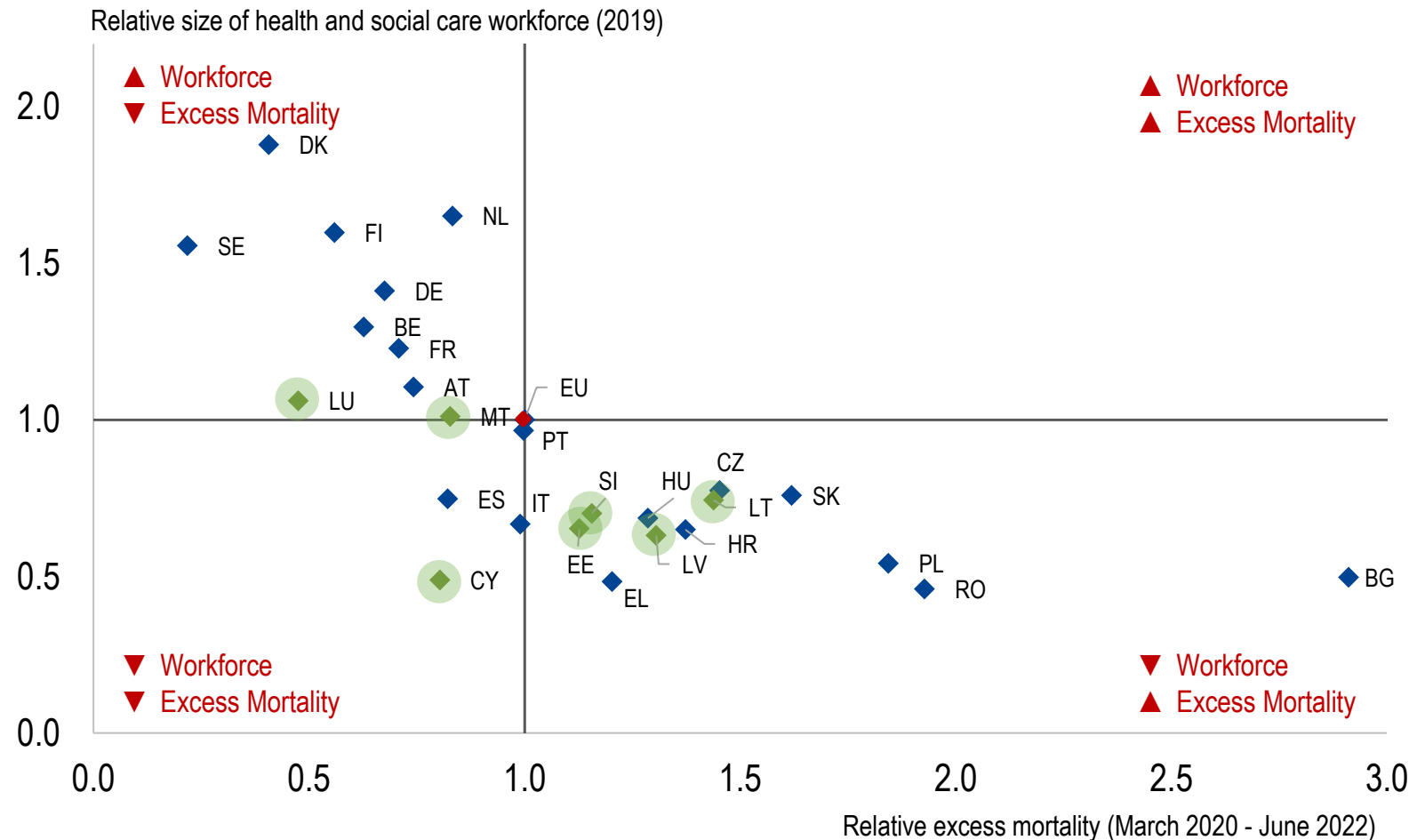
High-level conference

Healthcare human resources crisis: Small countries facing future risks

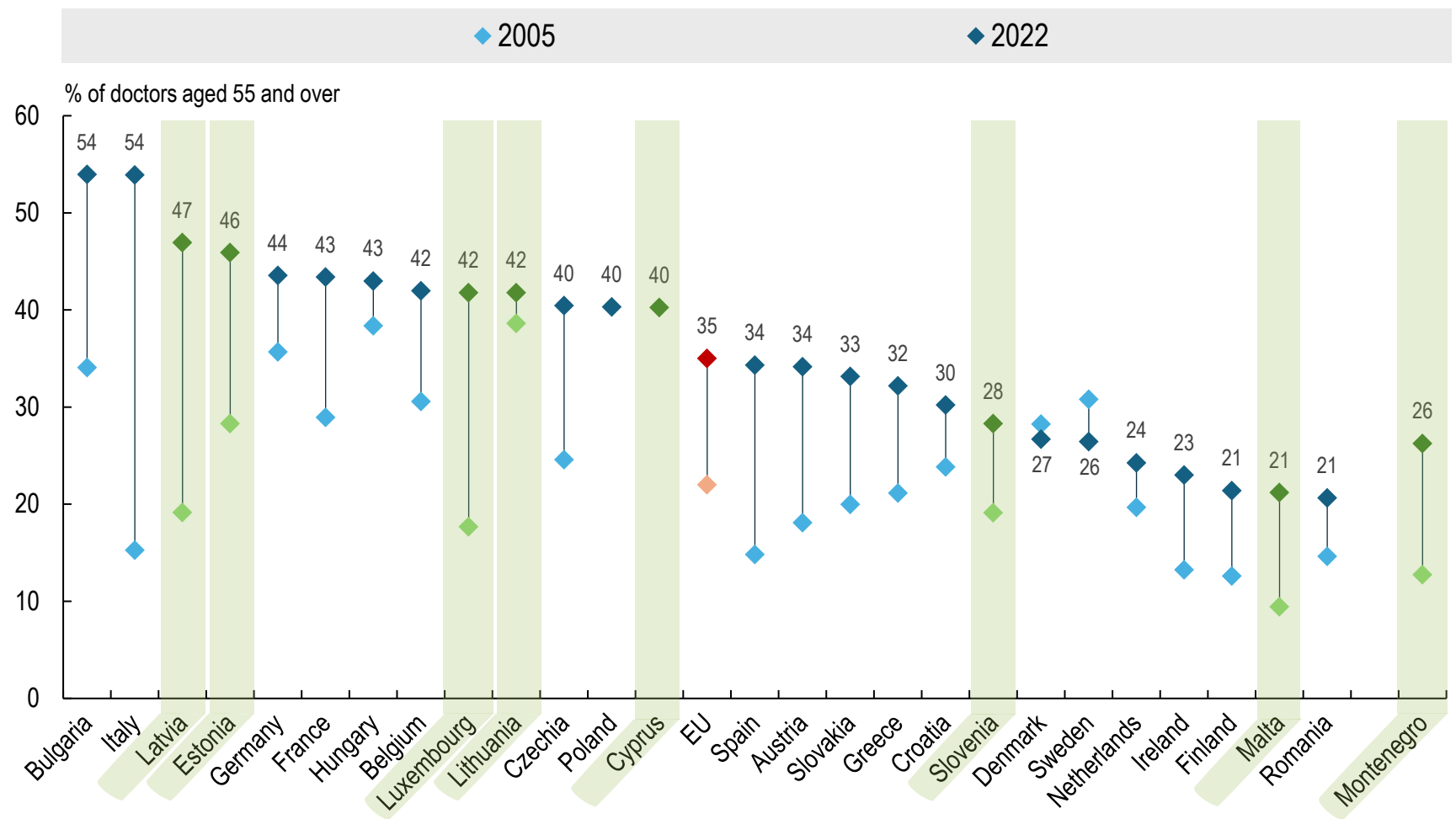
Francesca Colombo
Head, OECD Health Division
11 April 2025



COVID-19 highlighted the need to recruit and retain health workers to improve health system resilience



Ageing in the profession will add to the challenge: over a third of doctors are aged over 55, requiring replacement

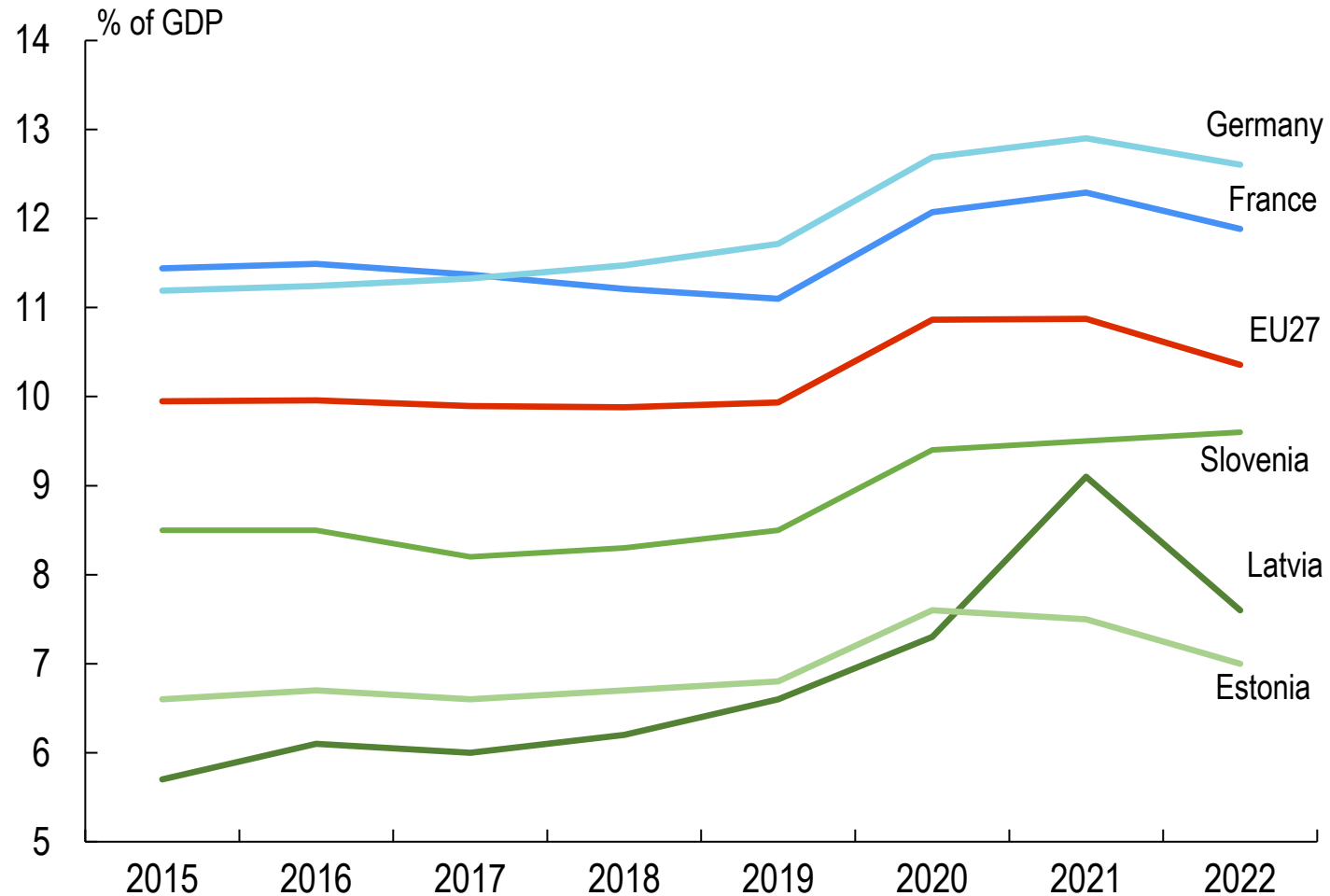


A large share of **nurses** are also aged 55+ :

- 51% in Lithuania
- 39% in Latvia
- 28% in Estonia

Further investments in health workforce are challenged by a tight fiscal context

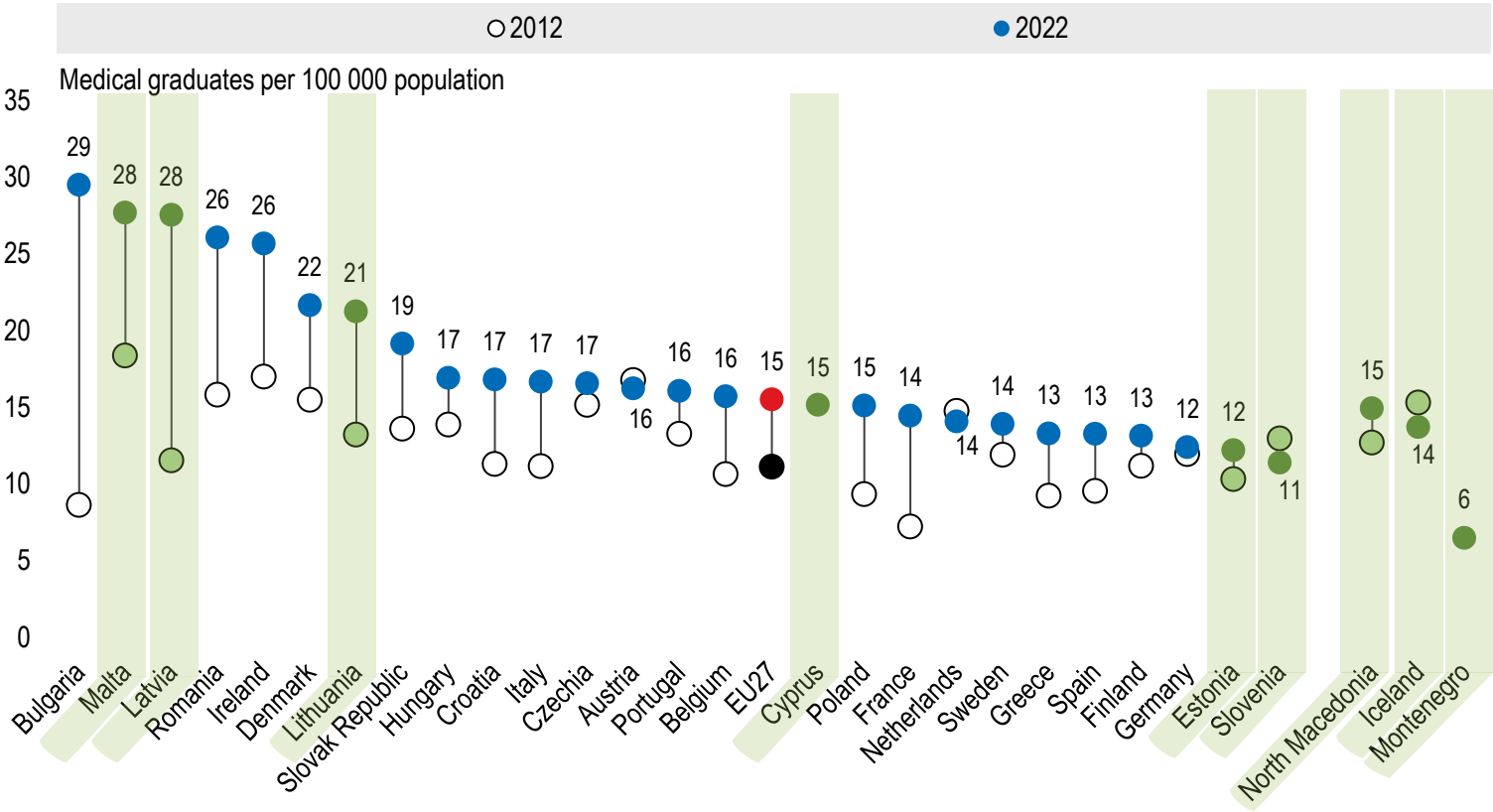
Health expenditure as a share of GDP is generally lower in “small countries” than in other EU countries



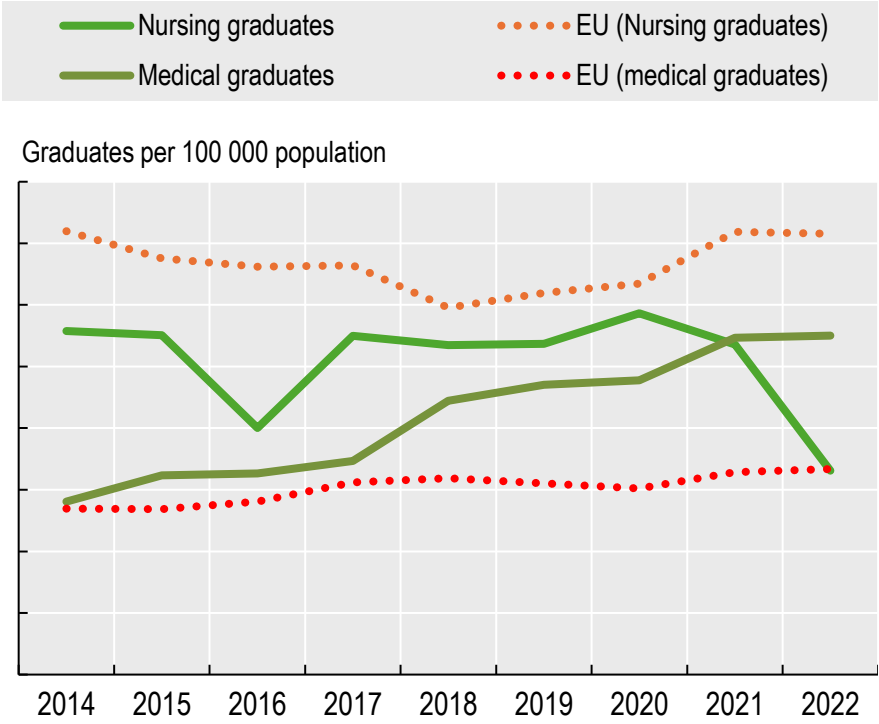
SOLUTION 1 : TRAINING AND RECRUITING HEALTH WORKERS



Most countries have recognised the need to train more doctors, but the training of nurses has lagged behind in some countries

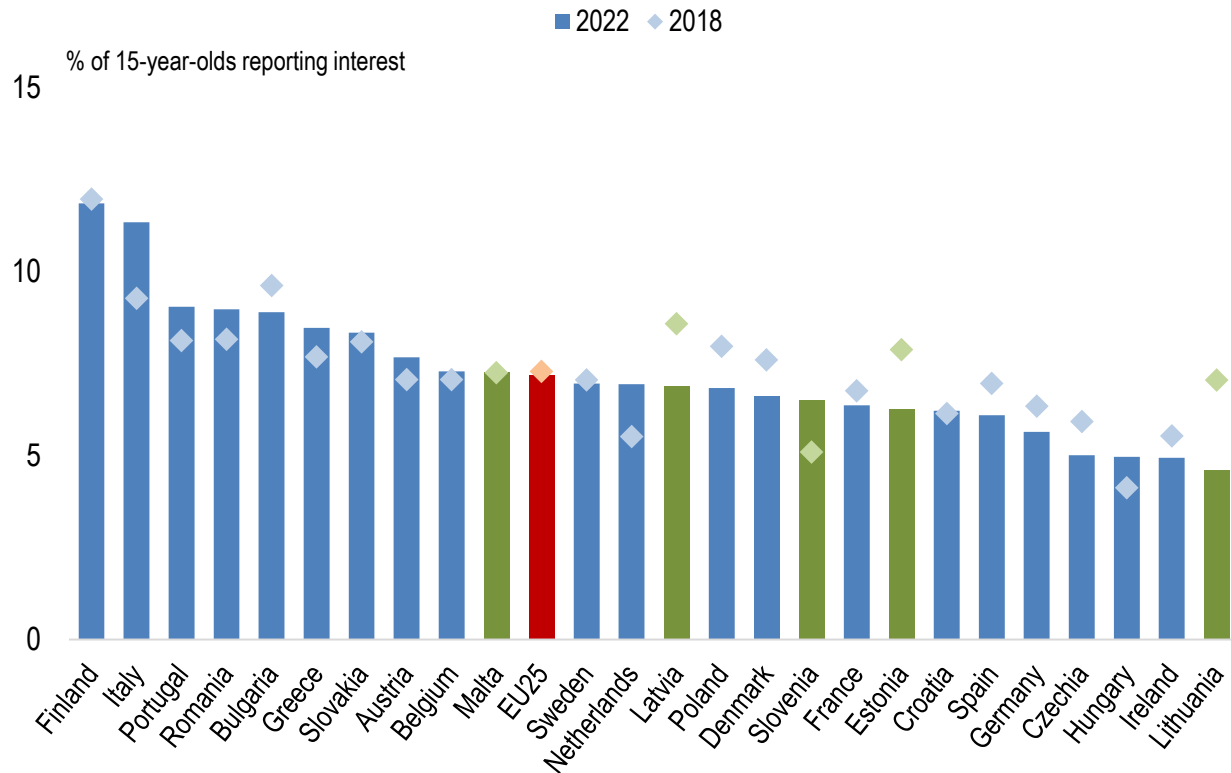


Latvia

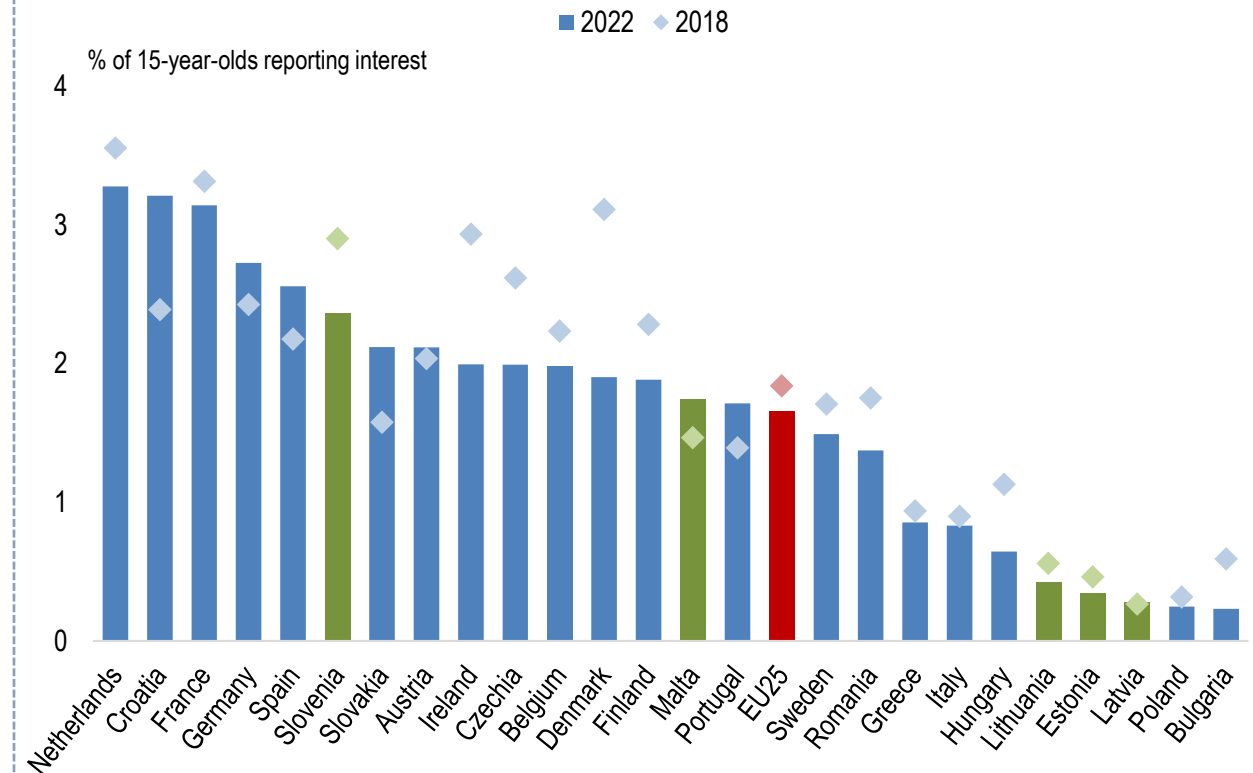


Reduced student interest might leave countries unable to fill training places, particularly in nursing

Student interest in medicine



Student interest in nursing

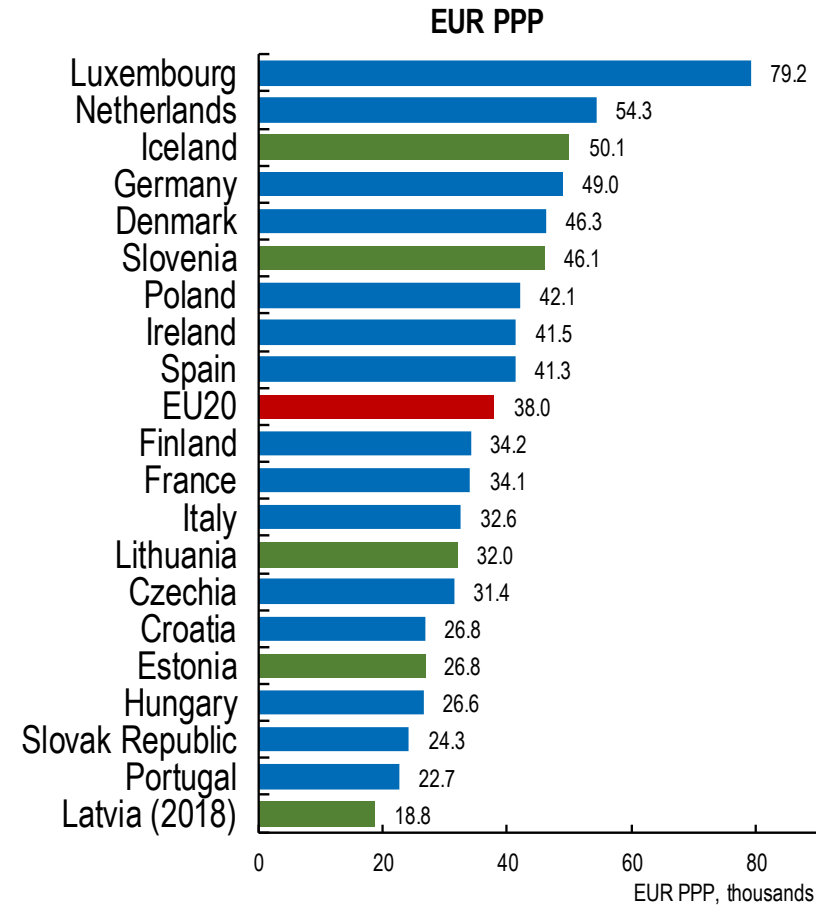
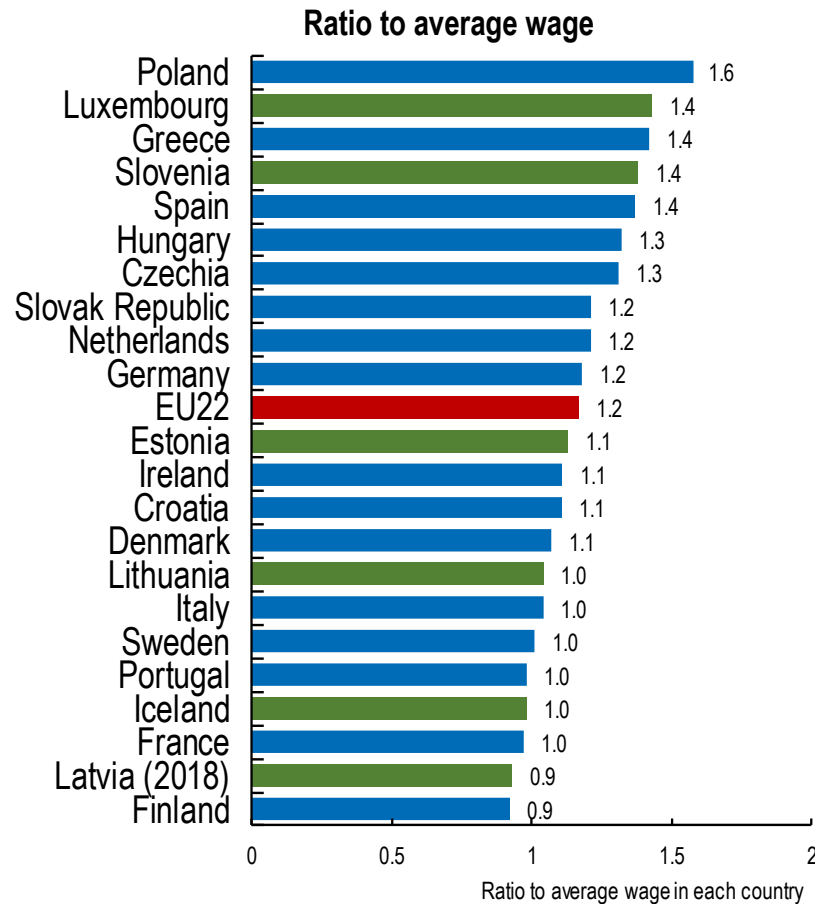


2. RETAINING TALENT

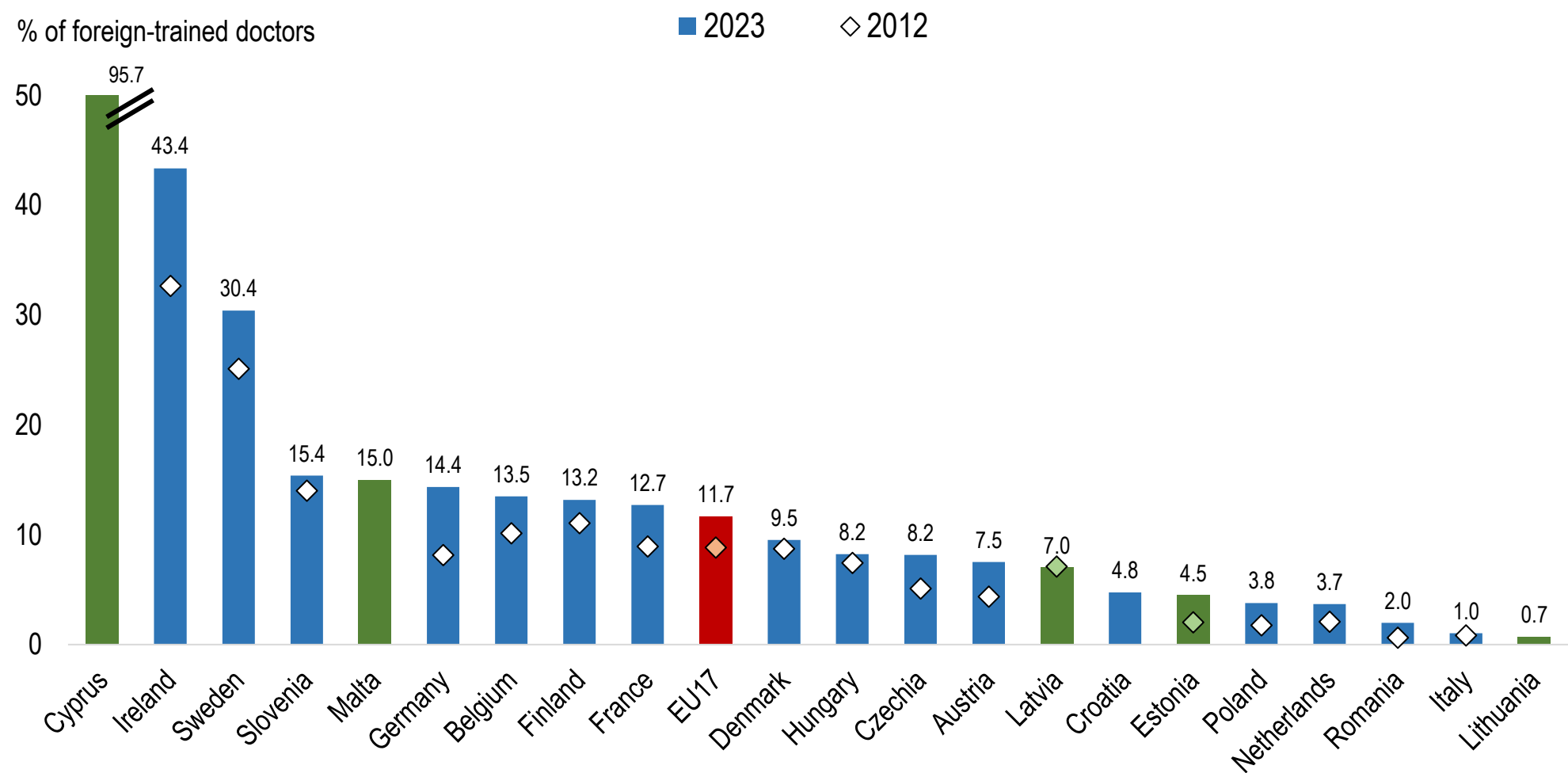


Remuneration of nurses in many countries is not greater or even lower than the average wage in the economy

Remuneration of hospital nurses, 2022 (or nearest year)

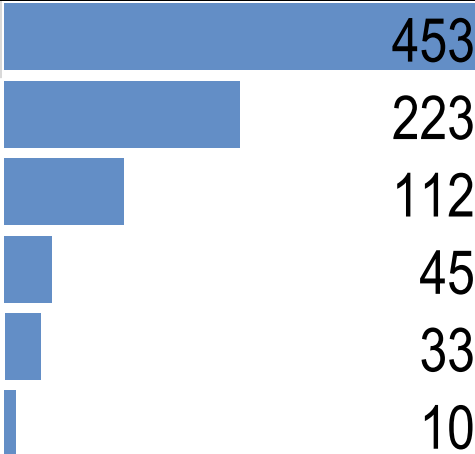
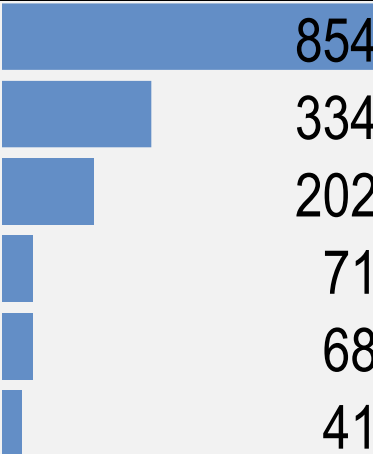


Growing reliance on recruiting of foreign doctors: but is this a long-term solution?



Note: In Luxembourg, 100% of doctors are foreign trained because there was no medical school until recently.
Source: OECD.

Some countries are “net gainers” of migration patterns while others are “net losers” – Example of Latvia

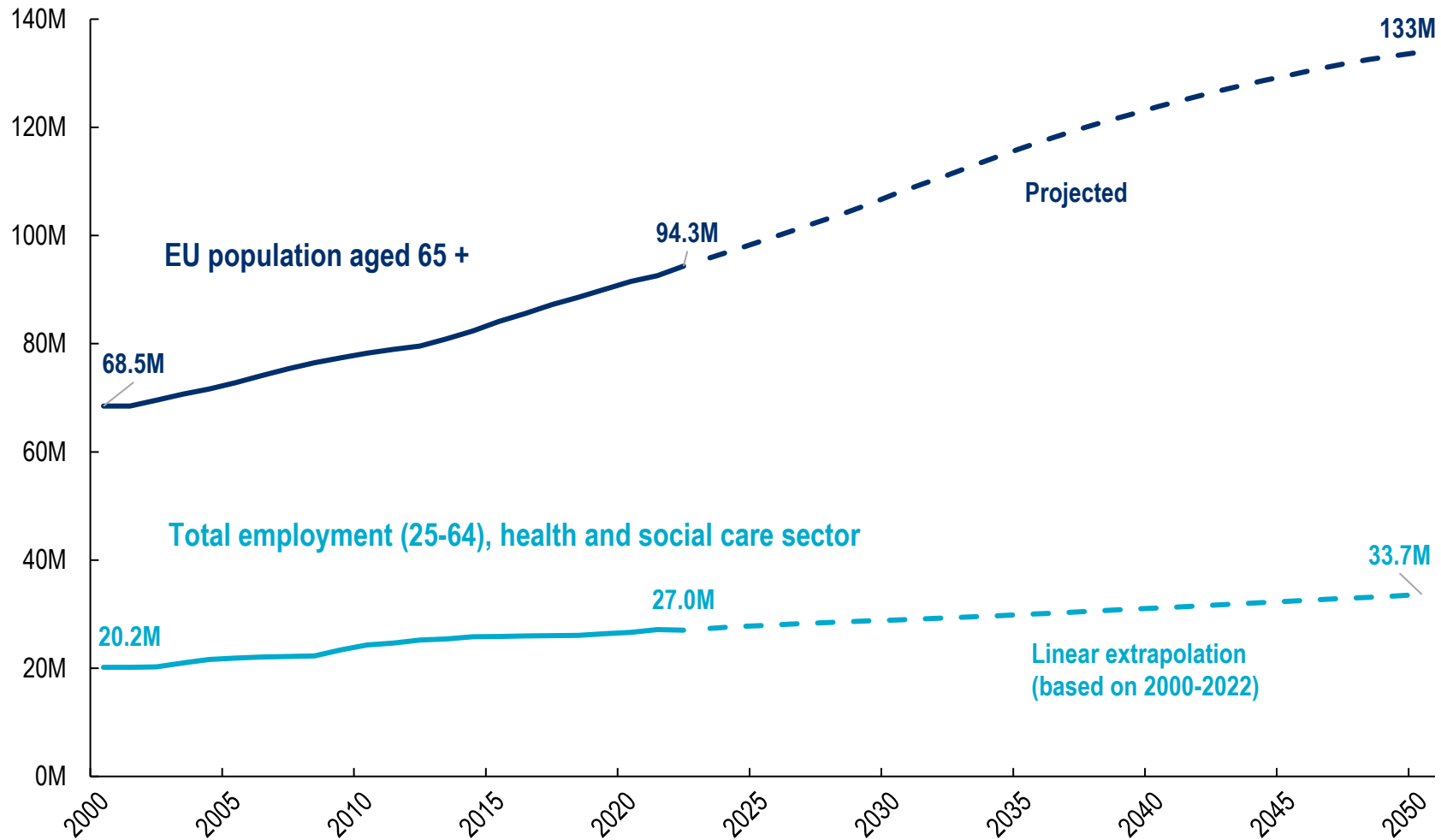
Immigration of foreign-trained doctors to Latvia		Emigration of trained doctors from Latvia	
Main countries of origin		Main countries of destination	
Total	 453	Total	 854
Russia	223	Germany	334
Ukraine	112	Norway	202
Estonia	45	Israel	71
Belarus	33	Ireland	68
Lithuania	10	France	41

Note for Norway and Israel: Most doctors trained in Latvia are Norwegian and Israeli students who obtained their first medical degree in Latvia and returned to their home countries after.

3. PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION

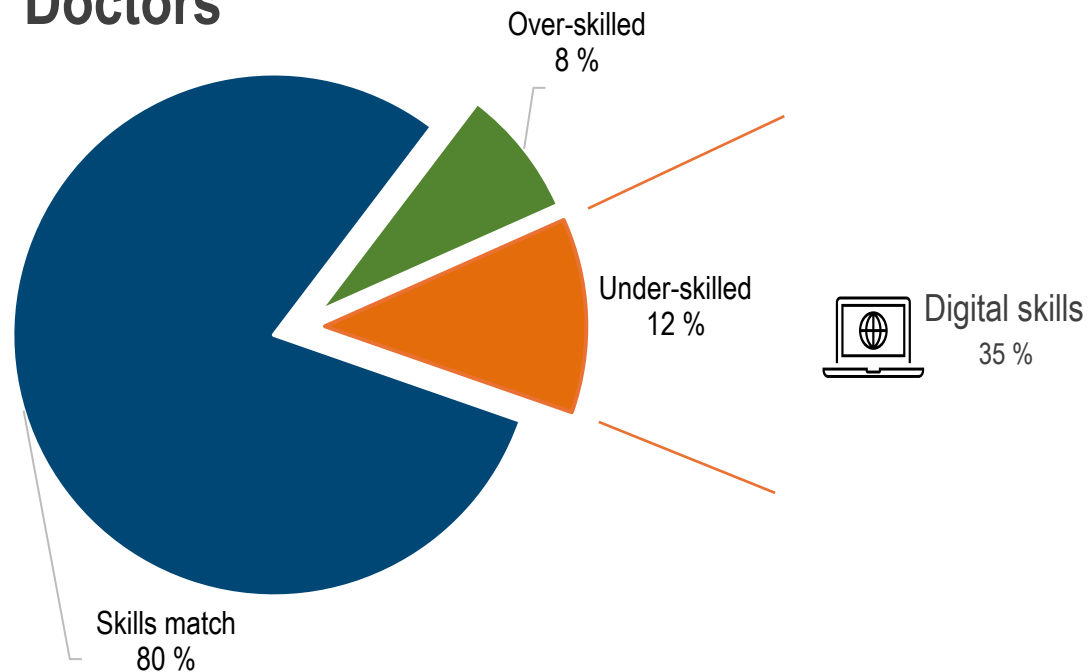


Population ageing will make it unfeasible to meet increasing demands for healthcare in Europe solely by expanding the health workforce

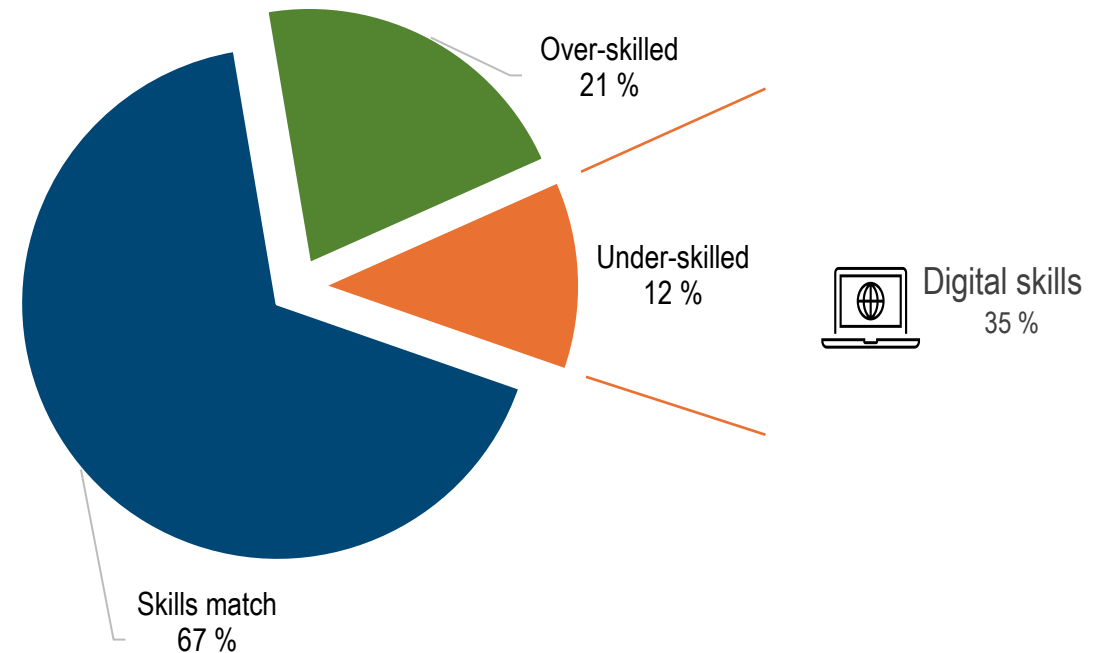


Improving productivity: addressing skill mismatches

Doctors



Nurses and midwives

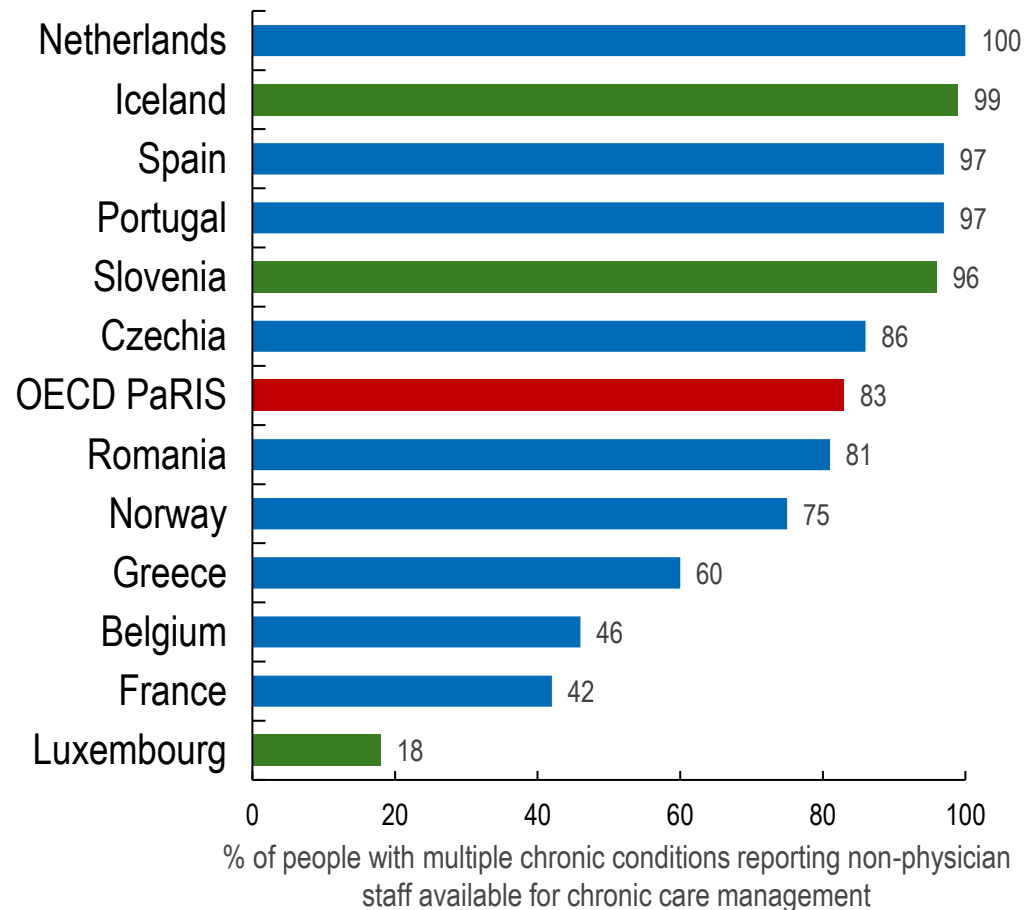


Skills mismatch: Participants were asked the question: “Overall, which of the following statements best describes your skills in relation to what is required to do your job? My skills are higher/matched/lower than what is required.

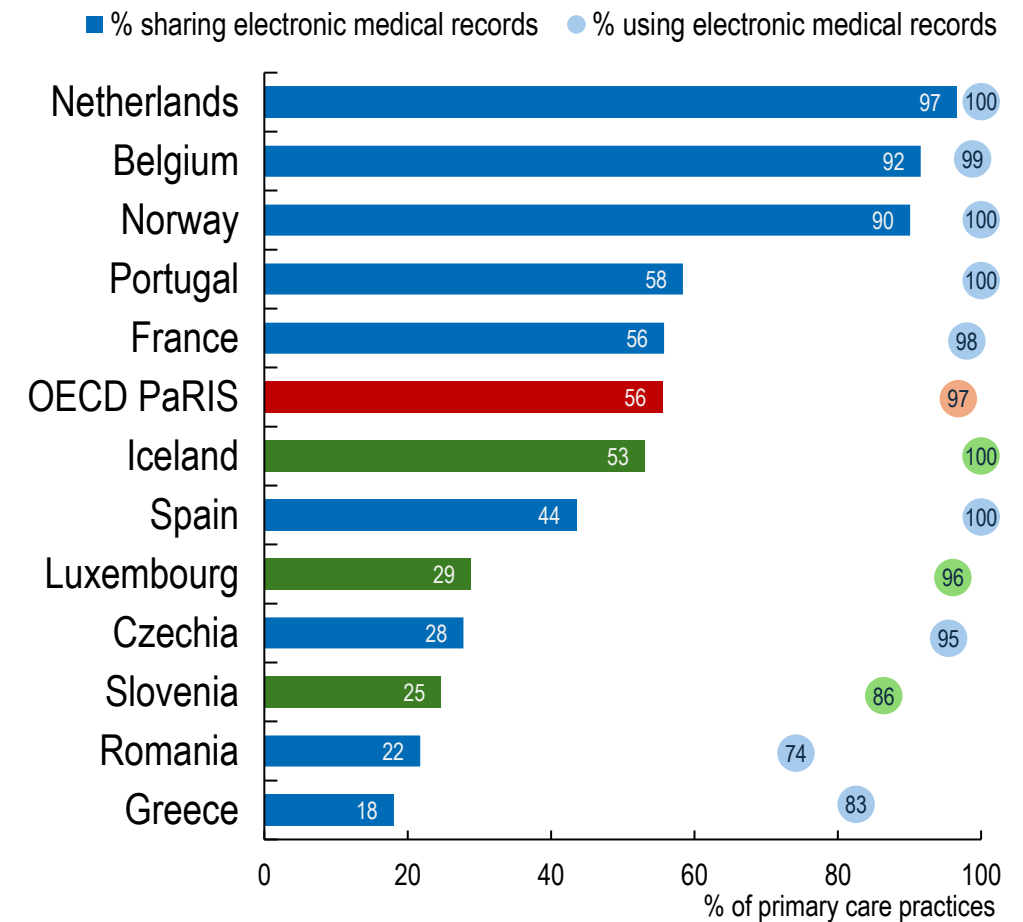
Under-skilling in digital skills: Participants were asked which skills they were thinking that they were under-skilled in. Digital skills refer to computer and software use.

Improving productivity: the PaRIS survey highlights a growing use of non-physician staff and digital tools in primary care

Primary care practices with non-physician staff for chronic care management



Use of electronic medical records in primary care practices



Improving productivity: a more efficient use of AI and digital tools

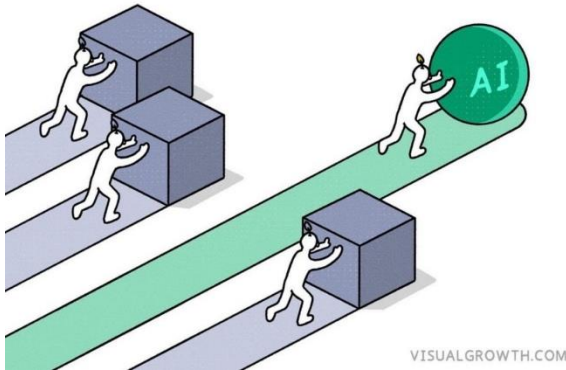
Up to **30%** of all administrative tasks could be automated by 2030.

Recent OECD survey found that **doctors are not worried about AI replacing their jobs and see many potential benefits.**

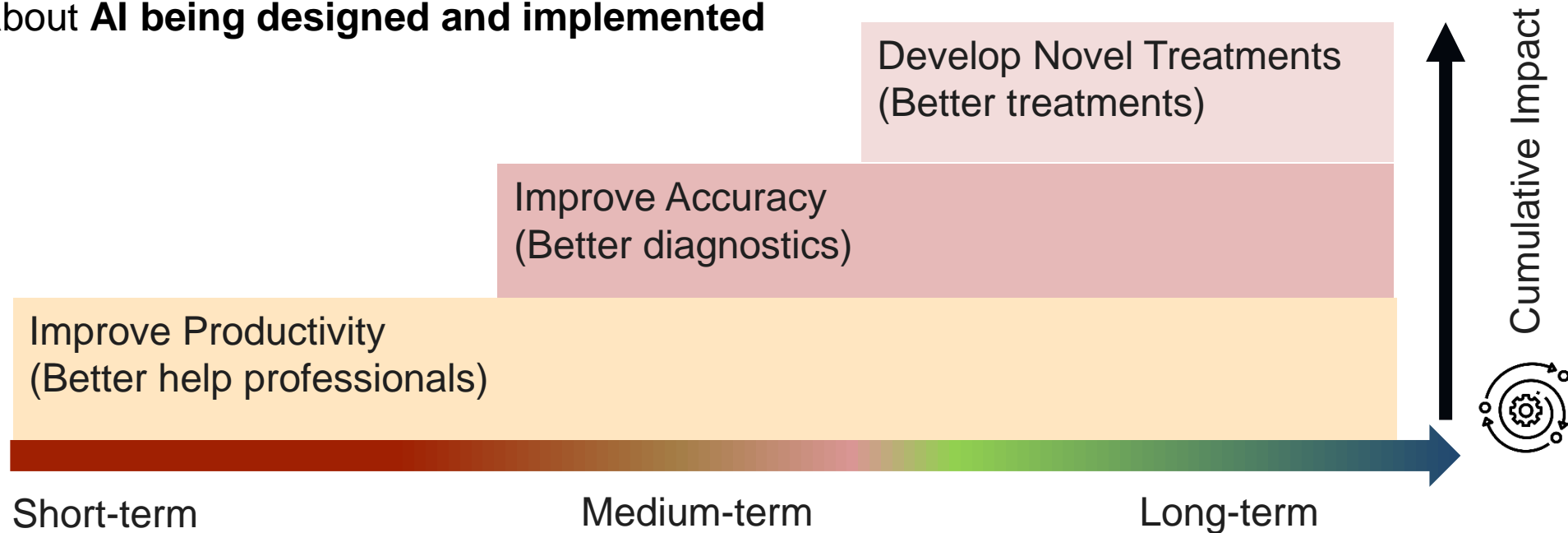
But doctors are worried about **AI being designed and implemented without them.**



AI WON'T REPLACE YOU,
PEOPLE USING AI WILL

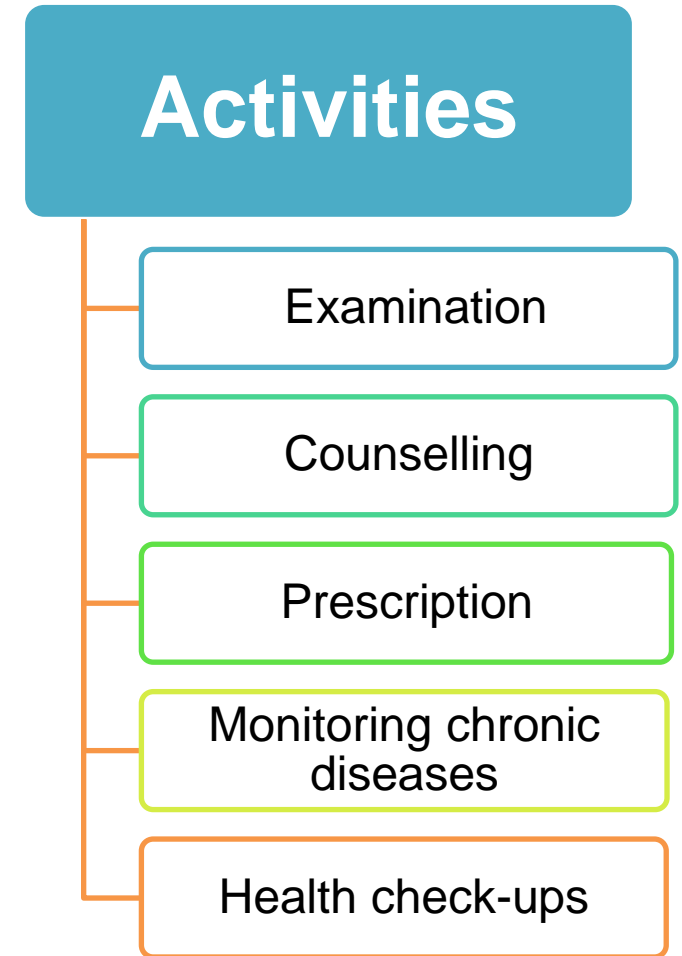


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Improving productivity: Innovations in work organisation

- Example of growing role of **family nurses** in **Estonia**:
 - 2009: GPs were incentivised to employ at least one family nurse
 - 2013: GPs were incentivised to employ a second family nurse
 - 2018: Creation of family care centers
- Current situation:
 - Practices without nurse – **2**
 - Practices with one nurse – **105**
 - Practices with at least two nurses – **682**
- About 4 million patient appointments with nurses in 2023



In sum: Strategies to address health workforce shortages

1

Training more health workers, but need to increase attractiveness of health sector jobs, particularly for less prestigious/less paid jobs



2

Improving job quality to increase retention, but any pay raise will involve more public spending



3

Innovating to make more effective use of different categories of health workers and new technologies



For more information

[Health at a Glance: Europe | OECD iLibrary](https://ec.europa.eu/health/state/glance_en)

https://ec.europa.eu/health/state/glance_en

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