Reviewer’s report

Title: Medical migration in Europe: an overview of the current situation.

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Reviewer: George Fryer

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Conscientious and useful descriptive information. A serious effort has been made to integrate credible data, which was not plentiful or readily available. But a bit more troubling is the fact that most was not standardized. The authors were very candid about this, and seemed to operationally define wherever possible. Still, using a mix of country of birth/medical education and physician defined in various ways (to include dentists in the case of Hungary), did distract from the confidence the reader can have in the analysis. For example, there are schools in Europe especially popular with students from the US, a growing segment of the Foreign Medical Graduate pipeline that returns to the US for practice. Classifying by country of birth vs. medical education is complicated in the US case, just as the authors pointed out for Ireland. The year for which data was applicable also varied, although clearly the authors have sought to make the observation period uniform. But this would seem more troubling than usual, given the fact that a policy went into effect at some point in time, and measuring its possible effect was a study objective.

The review of the literature is impressive, but more commentary in the paper regarding the EU matters of interest and the hypothesized changes in physician distribution would have strengthened the case. Some countries have gone on record with policies that guide their behavior toward using physician resources from other countries, especially the most disadvantaged ones. There was little comparison done for purposes of attribution, and the notion of lag in time of effect could not be addressed. But the authors were very straightforward acknowledging the lack of complete data that would have been most useful in conducting statistical tests.

Still, the descriptive data is interesting and informative, though perhaps premature for the type of initial evaluation that was the paper’s stated purpose.