Reviewer's report

Title: Trends of Cross-border mobility of physicians and nurses between Portugal and Spain

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Reviewer: Ronald Batenburg

Reviewer's report:

This is a very relevant and interesting paper, that contributes to the policy and research debate on health migration in Europe. I appreciate the design of interviewing health care units at both sides of the Spanish-Portuguese border, to achieve specific insight in the labor flows between these two ‘case’ countries. A strong point is the collection of information from both the health worker as the health employer perspective, and that both physicians and nurses as workforces are addressed.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Some conclusions in the paper are somewhat ‘puzzling’ and needs specification and more depth, in my opinion.

First, it is concluded in the abstract that mobility trends between Spain and Portugal need to be explored *further*. This reads rather odd, as the paper rightly describes these trends in as much detail as possible, and goes into the push and pull factors behind it. So what is meant with ‘exploring further’, in particular as this suggestion for further research (?) is not elaborated in the discussion or conclusion section of the paper? This point should be clarified.

Secondly, the paper ends with the intriguing sentence: “the answer is as much political as it is technical”. This really needs be explained. The authors actually (in my opinion rightly) advocate that migration and labor market policies should becoming more developed, and that some planning is necessary. So why is this a “question” and why is the “answer” political? Because of policy resistance, lack of assets, priorities? And why is the answer “technical”? Because of legal regulations, or data omission to base policy decisions on?

Minor Essential Revisions

Titles and labels in the tables and figures are missing. It cannot be retrieved what is Table 1, 2 et cetera, also the ‘*’ in the tables is not explained. Connected to this point, I suggest to divide the subsection ‘The medical and nursing workforce in Portugal and Spain’ clearly into a part about (1) Portugal and (2) Spain. Now, the text is hard to read and numbers tend to be mixed up between the countries. Only at a later stage it becomes clear that for Spain numbers are not available.

What can be said about the 9 Spanish organization that did not cooperate? Are
they larger, more specialized than other hospitals? In other words, are the four participating Spanish organization ‘representative’ for the 13 Spanish-Portuguese border health organizations selected?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests