



**FEDERATION EUROPEENNE DES MEDECINS SALARIES
EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF SALARIED DOCTORS**

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The President

To

Mr Pedro PASSOS COELHO
Prime Minister of Portugal
gabinete.sepcm@pcm.gov.pt

Strasbourg, July 10, 2012

Dear Prime Minister,

For months, the FEMS (European Federation of Salaried Doctors) is concerned with the poor outcome of the health system in Portugal, due to wrong political decisions.

The global financial crisis has a negative influence on the financing of health systems, patient safety, working conditions and wages of salaried physicians in Europe. The World Health Organization has found it necessary to warn governments, asking them to maintain a high level of services to cope with the deteriorating health caused by the financial crisis. Convened in 2008 in Tallinn, the WHO (Portugal is a member) adopted the Tallinn Charter, which commits governments to invest in health to maintain equal access to care.

In 2020, there will be a shortage of 1 million health professionals in Europe, questioning 18% of the activity of health care. It is a social and political challenge across the continent.

One of the proposed solution during the Ministerial Conference on the EU Workforce for Health Care, in Brussels-La Hulpe (B) on 9-10 September 2010, in presence of the Portuguese Minister for Health, is to create the best possible working environment to attract and retain health professionals (working conditions, wages and balanced personal life/professional life). In 2011 the European Parliament has also called European authorities and EU governments to place healthcare and demography problems of health professionals at the highest level of political priorities. If the financial situation of the Portuguese health system continues to deteriorate, the medical positions will lose their attractiveness and medical shortages will worsen.

Working time is falling in Europe. From an average of 40.5 hours/week average in 1991, it dropped to 37.5 hours in 2010. However, certain professions are exempt from this average. Salaried physicians of Portugal are part of the 9% of European employees who work more than 48 hours per week. They have to work much more but earning less.

FEMS is concerned with the 2.5 million hours of medical services your government has given to external companies for the lowest price. These contracts carry a high risk to patients' safety and some aspects are against the European rules, especially the European Working Time Directive 2003/88.

Since 2011, the European Commission highlights the role of public health as a key factor for competitiveness and economic development in an aging Europe and as a cornerstone of economic success. In 2050, 45% of the European population will be over 75 years.

The program recently proposed by the European Commission "Health for Growth" is indicative of the new role given to health as an important factor in the financial revival of the Union. Health at work and the pivotal role of public funding of public health services and health and social insurance are presented as the determinants of the necessary return for growth.

We solemnly ask you to consider the recommendations of the international authorities mentioned above.

Investing in healthcare and health professionals with good working conditions, decent wages and a better balance between work and family life is an investment in the economic renewal of the EU. Ignoring this is a serious political mistake for which you will be accountable one day to the population of your country.

It will also aim to rebuild, to quickly come to a European social model that will ensure social cohesion, the only guarantee of peace on our continent. Our model of society assumes a continuation of growth and there will be no growth without a healthy population.

Portuguese doctors, especially salaried hospital doctors, will be the last bulwark against the degradation of their patients' health and they have the support of the European Medical Organizations representing the 2 million European physicians.

They will demonstrate this to your government and to the Portuguese population in the coming days.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Cl. WETZEL