



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

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The attached declarations were drafted at a meeting of representatives of doctors' trade unions from member states of the Visegrád Group (*).

(*) The **Visegrád Group**, also called the **Visegrád Four** or **V4**, is an alliance of four Central European states – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – for the purposes of cooperation and furthering their European integration. The Group originated in a summit meeting of the heads of state or government of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland held in the Hungarian castle town of Visegrád on 15 February 1991.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia became members after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993.

All four members of the Visegrád Group became part of the European Union on 1 May 2004. (Wikipedia)

The Visegrád Charta

Representatives of doctors' trade unions from: Hungary-MOSZ, Czech Republic-LOK-SCL, Slovakia-LOZ and Poland-OZZL, gathered at the meeting in Visegrád declare what follows:

Being former communist colonies, our countries share a similar historical background, where healthcare was treated as a non-profit type of business and the medical staff, including doctors, belonged to the worst remunerated group of employees. Unfortunately, this situation is regarded as an advantageous one also today by our democratic authorities, who believe that low public expenditure for healthcare and low doctors' salaries allow to "save" public money for other goals. As a consequence doctors go abroad to earn more, leaving their countries in short supply for medical staff. What is more, insufficient public expenditure for healthcare reduce its accessibility.

The on-going financial crisis is being used by the governments as an excuse not to change this situation. Instead, the authorities are trying to place the responsibility for it on the shoulders of physicians, generating conflicts between them and the rest of the society. The authorities are also making attempts at limiting the rights of physicians' trade unions.

Because of the above detailed problems the doctors' trade unions of the Visegrád countries wish to create a new way of professional advocacy. From now on they are making an effort to cooperate in their activities to protect rights and interests of the workers they are representing, in order to be able to make pressure on their governments more effectively.

We want to emphasise for the citizens of our countries that our fight is meant to ensure the safety of their health treatment, because if the capacity of services is reduced at this rate and if migration is growing, their healthcare treatment is endangered.

Our common goals are the following:

The **minimum salary of junior (not specialist) doctors should be 1.5 times** the national average on a 40 hour/week basis, without on-call duty, ; the minimum salary of **specialist doctors should be 3 times** the national average on a 40 hour/week basis without on - call duty .**The rules of overtime work should be formulated according to the European Work Time Directive.** Shortage of staff should not be solved by increasing the workload, but rather by better adjustment to the system and by revealing irrational moves.

Activities that are meant to protect the rights and interests of healthcare workers should not be hindered. **The trade unionists rights based on ILO agreements should not be questioned.**

Any changes to the healthcare system, including privatisation of hospitals or out- patient clinics must not result in such a reduction of medical staff that would endanger the safety of patients. **Binding employment standards for doctors** at particular hospital wards should be introduced. .

Regardless of their forms of ownership, the hospitals and out-patient clinics must be treated equally with respect to their rights and obligations towards the public payer, patients and medical staff.

The amounts paid to hospitals and other medical facilities by the public payer for medical services **must correspond to their real costs.** Otherwise, the medical personnel will be irrationally reduced, its remuneration will be lowered and finally the hospitals will collapse.

In order to achieve the above mentioned goals, the trade unions of the Visegrád countries will closely cooperate and undertake the following actions:

1. **The *quit and leave* action.** Such an action organized by the Czech doctors in 2010 and a similar initiative conducted in certain hospitals in Poland in 2007 succeeded. At present - Slovakian and Hungarian colleagues follow in these footsteps. If needed the *quit and leave* action will be undertaken in all four countries simultaneously.
2. **Organizing Work Through Rule actions (WTR):** There are a number of regulations in practice in our countries that are neglected due to a need of continuous and uninterrupted treatment procedures, such as only a limited number of patients is financed in specialist care. Had we kept these regulations, our capacity to care for patients would be extremely reduced. To be able to make pressure we suggest applying these regulations in a very minute, *organized and complex* way.
3. **The doctors' strike** Although going on strike is not regarded as a prime method to achieve our goals in healthcare, we are not rejecting its application if necessary, taking into account how we can do it together the most effectively.
4. **Joint activities on the legal field** including running legal office. Consequently, in case of injustices we have a better chance to solve legal problems in view of the European Union and the European Court.

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Visegrád, 2011. november 5.

The Statement of The Trade Unions of Doctors from countries of V4

The Trade Unions of Doctors in Poland- OZZL, Hungary- MOSZ and the Czech Republic- LOK-SČL note with deep concern the developments in Slovakia regarding healthcare. Long-term unsolved problems in health care are very similar in the whole Central European region. Steps taken by the Ministry of Health in the Slovak Republic do not solve these problems, but in fact, make them worse. It is essential that health insurance companies pay the real price of health care to providers for care given, including salaries of health care workers.

The proposed transformation of all public hospitals, including the faculty and the university ones, into joint-stock companies governed by the Commercial Code has no equivalent in the EU countries and creates a dangerous precedent for the whole region and Europe as well. This process directly threatens public health and its availability to the general population. This dangerous precedent also allows direct connection of private financial groups with public financial resources and threatens the very nature and function of the State, as the Ministry of Health is relinquishing direct responsibility for providing health care. We will do everything possible to prevent the similar attempts of politicians in any country of V4.

All Trade Unions of Doctors from countries of V4 fully support all 4 requirements of Medical Association Trade Union /LOZ/ that creates possibility for the stabilization of health care in Slovakia.

We are shocked with the attitude of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic towards doctors who gave their notices in action of LOZ “Save Public Health!” Instead of constructive dialogue and seeking solutions government officials decided to resort to threats and coercion. By underestimating the situation and ignoring the legitimate claims of Slovak doctors , politicians in Slovakia threaten the citizens of their own country. We closely monitor situation in Slovakia and are confident that the Slovak doctors will be successful in their action.

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