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### **Report on Hungarian Healthcare**

Between 2002 and 2010 the neo-liberal government withdrew 2 billion Euros from the budget of Hungarian healthcare. Due to this withdrawal we have fallen behind with the changes of technical equipment, moreover, viewing the average Hungarian standard of wages healthcare is way behind all sectors. There has been a decline in the number of patients treated and in the quality of treatment, plus a human resources crises has developed. Also, waiting lists have increased. Hungary is the first in the world in the number of deaths due to tumours and cardiovascular diseases. There is no well-functioning screening programme in healthcare, and infant mortality rate has significantly declined. Roughly 3 million people live on the verge of serious poverty and their treatment is poorly organised. Tension in society has augmented, and racism is intensified owing to the appearance of the extreme right in politics which led to further diminishing trust between the agents of healthcare. Attacks on healthcare workers, doctors and paramedics are on a daily basis.

In 2010 FIDESZ (centre-right conservative party) after having been in opposition for eight years succeeded overwhelmingly in the parliamentary and local governmental elections. A significant part of their program was constituted by improving healthcare finance, enhancing salaries of healthcare workers and developing a promising career program. Out of these promises none have been realised so far, saying that the 2600 billion HUF interest redemption is due in 2011 which is a consequence to the public debt reaching 80% of our GDP, therefore healthcare budget has not increased, but in real terms decreased. The entire debt of hospitals to suppliers is reaching the total of 70 Billion HUF, while their financing based on DRG is regulated, plus rises in energy prices led to increased expenditure. Healthcare wages dropped owing to the introduction of progressive taxation, consequently those whose salaries were low receive a lower pay in real terms. Migration of doctors has increased, over 3000 physicians left the country in the past two years, and this number is still growing. Fewer than 50 % of graduate doctors start to work in Hungary, most of them try to make a living abroad, since the starting salary of a young doctor is 82,000 HUF (less than 300EUR). A specialist's pay is 1.1 times that of a bus driver's. Our disappointment and desperation is enormous and a great number of our colleagues are contemplating to emigrate. There have not been any steps taken to work out a life career model and the leaders of the sector have proclaimed not having enough money to pay rises. The average salary of a specialist is under 1000 EUR and after tax it is about 6-700 EUR. Due to ignominious wages, corruption is flourishing, and forcing patients to donate a sort of gratuity to doctors is a common practice. This phenomenon extremely divides doctors. Those areas of healthcare where this gratuity cannot be expected are facing extinction, for instance the number of pathologists, radiologists, anaesthetists, laboratory doctors or psychiatrists are seriously dropped. Many positions for basic treatment are not held by anyone for years, and numerous General Practitioners go abroad, moreover this area of healthcare is extremely ageing, consequently approximately 4-5000 GPs are over 60 or soon to be reaching this age.

Previously there used to be a Ministry of Healthcare, today the Ministry of National Resources is supervising healthcare, education, culture and social politics. Therefore, this sector is monitored by the State Secretariat with State Secretary Miklós Szócska leading it. He used to be the Dean of the Management Faculty at Budapest Medical University, thus never having worked in medical attendance. Amongst the members of this State Secretariat there are no registered professionals who are politicians and experts at the same time, since Prime Minister, Mr.Orbán has removed everyone from the way of the present State Secretary, thus giving him full power. So far, they have outlined the plan of a four-level healthcare programme, so called Semmelweis Plan, which explicates its goals only roughly, but virtually lacks resources and actual action plans. It is probable, that they are in favour of centralisation, thus closing small hospitals, and formulating 9 large regional health centres capable of overall healthcare services. The problem is that emigration of doctors has reached such scales that there will be no physicians to cure in these centres.

The EWTD has appeared in national law, but unfortunately employers do not keep them, saying there is a lack of healthcare professionals, thus overburdening them, plus they are not paid after on call-duty. Doctors put up with these injustices as the management ignores their machinations concerning gratuity money and tacitly tolerating these behaviours. This fact, however, leads to worsening social respect of doctors which further deepens this ethical crisis. At the beginning of this year we started to work together with the lawyers of the Health State Secretariat, to stop the practice of illegal on-call duty pay-off. Our progress was steady, but unfortunately about a month ago this common venture ceased to prosper and to be honest, not on our side. It appeared that the so called Hospital League, representing hospital managements started lobbying against our moves. This League welcomed the revision of the European Work Time Directive. Unfortunately, the government does not regard doctors as a strategic power, contrary to teachers whose life career model is about to be introduced soon, thus, according to the plans improving their standard of living.

The Euro Demonstration of 9<sup>th</sup> April meant a great opportunity to emphasise the potential of our trade union. The press conference held by the president and vice-president of FEMS and the president of MOSZ (Trade Union of Hungarian Doctors) had a great impact on Hungarian media, the event is constantly touched upon in the press. The meeting with the State Secretary of Hungarian Health Care was also successful. I have met the leader of the survey on European migration of doctors several times. He can cooperate with us during the next GA session.

Unfortunately, the attitude of the government has not changed in a positive way. We learnt that another 120 billion HUF (400 million EUR) is missing from the healthcare budget and support on purchasing medicine is also shortened. Unluckily, the sum they are saving this way is not spent on bringing up doctors' salaries to European standards, but on reducing our country's debt. Due to a medical job fair organised at the time of the Euro-demonstration in Budapest, more than a thousand doctors will start to work abroad in the second half of the year. In the majority of hospitals lack of physicians has reached such a scale that medical care is inadequate. Most of our colleagues are already focusing on their careers abroad, therefore they cannot be relied on in promoting healthcare inland. To make matters worse another thousand of doctors might be attracted away by the opening job market of the German speaking countries by 1<sup>st</sup> May. Merely 30% of young graduate doctors start working in Hungary, the rest tries to manage abroad. There came a suggestion to organise a demonstration somewhat similar to the one in The Czech Republic, but I have serious doubts concerning the number of participants. The situation of our wages is so much behind that not even a sudden governmental intervention could improve it. There is practically no chance of such an intervention, since the government has claimed it several times over the past few weeks that only they are willing to deal with healthcare wages after a severe reduction of the public debt. Only of course if there is anyone at all whose wages they can deal with..../

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