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CROATIAN MEDICAL UNION
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National Report Croatia
(May 2011 – September 2011)

Croatia has completed the negotiations regarding the access of Croatia to the European Union that started on 3 October 2005. On 17 September, 2011, the Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in his capacity of the Chairman of the European Union handed over to the Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor a draft of the Agreement on the access of Croatia to the European Union. Croatia shall become the 28th member state of the European Union. The anticipated date of the Croatian membership in the European Union, as proposed by the EU Commission, is 1 July, 2013. Of course, prior to that, Croatian citizens have to vote for or against it in a public referendum that shall be announced after the regular parliamentary elections in December this year.

Within the negotiations with the EU, our national legislation has been harmonized with the legal regulation of the EU. In this regard, the Act on the health-care protection was amended in the sense that a revised directive 2003/88/CE was inserted into it regarding the maximum working week of 48 hours with an opt-out clause that refers to the work on duty. The Employer is obliged to obtain a consent of medical doctors if their working week has more than 48 working hours. The “on call” duty is not limited, and to this type of work the directive on the working time does not refer and the employer is not obliged to obtain a medical doctor's consent for it.

All the unions of employees employed in the public sector signed in May 2009 an agreement with the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the amount of the basis salary for the calculation of salaries in public services. The negotiations on the revision of that agreement are going on. The members expect the medical unions to be persistent in the perseverance of the already contracted rights.

The Croatian Medical Union has been negotiating with the Croatian Government for two years with no success on the improvement of the Collective agreement for the health-care sector. Of course that the economic crisis and the lack of financial means additionally burden these negotiations. But the main reason for the poor outcome of the negotiations are the trade unions that represent other employees in

the health-care sector. Their requests are too excessive and unreasonable and are to the detriment of medical doctors.

They are also opposing the Croatian Medical Union for years to sign with the Government its own professional collective agreement that would include all the medical doctors employed in the public sector of the Republic of Croatia, which would be the best solution according to our own evaluation. The Government has rejected the proposed professional collective agreement for medical doctors, several times, fearing of the domino effect due to similar requests by other professions.

In September this year, new Rules on specializations of medical doctors have been adopted, brought into accordance with the European standards.

The Republic of Croatia is still confronted with several basic problems: the lack of financial means, the increasing deficit of medical doctors, the high average age of actively working medical doctors resulting in longer waiting lists for patients waiting for medical examinations and services. With the access of Croatia to the European Union, we are awaiting a great emigration of medical doctors from Croatia which shall make the situation for our patients even worse.

In Zagreb, 20 September, 2011

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