



**Fédération Européenne
des Médecins Salariés**
European Federation
of Salaried Doctors

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FEMS REPORT - COVID 19

COVID-19 pandemic continues to grow and has become an overwhelming healthcare problem in Portugal.

Current pandemic status and statistics

- After some early “not so bad” results, intitled as the “Portuguese miracle”, the situation has now completely overturned in our country.
- The number of cases spiked since the New Year, even temporarily gaining Portugal the quite unenviable position of country with most infections by SARS Cov2, per capita, in the world.
- The numbers keep rising, and we are yet to find a plateau.
- The explanation for such a rise is still incomplete, but the relaxation of measures during Christmas season, and some lack of compliance to the confinement in place, seems to explain, at least in part, this escalation.

- Until today (28/01/2021) we have a total of 685.383 diagnosed cases of COVID 19 and 11.608 deceased (approximately 850 deaths per million inhabitants). There were 16.432 new cases and 303 deaths on the last day.
- We have insufficient data regarding the impact on health professionals. The latest numbers talk about 22.000 infected, 3000 of them being medical doctors.
- The Portuguese Medical Association counts 6 (six) recorded fatalities amongst doctors.

Country economic status

- This is a serious situation that keeps pushing the country's resources beyond its limits, in economic terms.
- The GBP fell 5.7% in the last quarter of 2020.
- Hope lies in the EU plan of recovery but is soon to talk about the implementation.

Government and health authorities measures

- New measures are being announced almost each day.
- Masks are mandatory in all public places,
- Telework is mandatory
- Students are now at home, and will face a new period of online classes, after the initial return to their classrooms in last September.
- There are stricter rules limiting gatherings and agglomerations
- Restaurants and most other non-essential establishments are now closed
- The shopping malls are closed, and supermarkets limited to supplying first necessity items
- There are limitations to circulations between regions, but public transportations are still working.
- People are asked to stay at home except for authorized reasons

-Yesterday government announced border control and flight limitations, also Portuguese citizens are not allowed to leave the country except for essential reasons.

Health professional reward/compensations

A reward for health professionals "who have performed, in a continuous and relevant manner, acts directly related to suspects and patients infected with Covid-19" were decreed. But only for those who performed such acts during a very short time frame during first wave of pandemics.

The reward consisted of a single extraordinary payment corresponding to 50% of regular salary and one vacation extra-day for every 80 hours worked with Covid patients.

This means that criteria are so strict, that only a minority of healthcare providers benefited from this.

Today the government announced a 50% increase of supplemental hours.

Regarding the difficulties that doctor and health services are going through in this pandemic

Not even the extraordinary effort of doctors and other professionals can keep pace with such a volume

- The National Health Service has surpassed the resources, and the hospitals are full, with the need for campaign hospitals.

- Situation in nursing homes remain extremely worrying with several outspreads of the disease.

As expected, the focus of investment was solely in more ventilators and SARS Cov2 testing capacity, and DID NOT prepare the country for the worst case scenario, that we are living now.

- Treatment of "non-COVID" patients are extremely compromised. Family and hospital doctors struggle to keep the minimum assistance to their patients at the same time they are mobilized to keep track of the non-hospitalized patients with Covid 19, or suspected.

Unchanged base conditions:

- There's still any increase of medical doctors in NHS, which is not a surprise since there have been no improvement in working conditions, which were already quite poor even before COVID pandemics.

- It's impossible to maintain the current work rhythm, and it is imperative to attract more doctors to Portuguese NHS.

- Portuguese Health Minister continues to refuse to meet with Medical Unions.

Vaccination

The effort of vaccination started with the healthcare professionals, but it far from achieving main goals. Portugal received 377.000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and 57000 healthcare workers are already vaccinated (in a total of about 140.000 in public sector). In the private sector, more than 90% of the workers aren't vaccinated at this point.

Government keeps the compromise of vaccinating 100.000 healthcare workers until the end of February. The vaccination process as some worrying imperfections, that led Portuguese

medical representatives to join in a statement asking for more transparency.

Portuguese doctors are and will keep doing their best, but unfortunately it's proving insufficient to fully respond to this calamitous situation.

Both Portuguese Medical Unions and the Portuguese Medical Board continue to demand the resources necessary for the best possible outcome in this complicated pandemic situation.

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