



## Joint 5th Joint AEMH-FEMS General Assembly 10-11 May 2024, Berlin, Germany

### Members reports

#### HLS – Croatia

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Please name 3 main current concerns of the healthcare system in your country :

- Collective agreement for healthcare
- Shortage of doctors
- Lack of time and personnel standards

#### Full report

##### 1. Collective Agreement for Healthcare

Negotiations for a new Collective Agreement for the health sector were interrupted due to the adoption of a new Law on salaries in public and state services. The new Law on salaries prescribes new rules, according to which wage supplements and other material rights can no longer be agreed in the collective agreement, because they are partly regulated by this new Law.

At the moment we do not know when the negotiations will continue, because Parliamentary elections were held in Croatia in March and we are waiting for the formation of a new government, with which the negotiations will continue.

The work of a doctor is specific and cannot be compared with work in any other public service, so HLS will continue to insist on contracting supplements specific to the medical profession, and further improving the already agreed rights at the negotiations for the collective agreement.

##### 2. Shortage of doctors

The problem of shortage of doctors in Croatia continues. Due to a shortage of doctors and going to work abroad, Croatian doctors work a huge number of overtime hours and are overloaded with an excessive number of patients.

Last year (2023), the most doctors left Croatia so far (158), and in the first 4 months of 2024, another 11 left. The situation is particularly difficult among family doctors, 38% of whom are

over 60 years old. It is predicted that in 2-3 years about 1 million Croatians will be without their family doctor.

Although the salary of family doctors has grown the most among doctors in the last year, (by 50%), young doctor's interest in family medicine is insufficient, and the functioning of the system is maintained thanks to the work of a very large number of retired doctors.

HLS and other medical associations, through continuous pressure and joint efforts, managed to change the so-called slave contracts of residents, which obliged them to return enormous amount of money, if they left the institution for which they specialized before the agreed deadline. The abolition of such unfavorable contracts for residents was achieved through amendments to the Law on Health Care at the end of February 2024.

HLS is continuously advocating for the improvement of working conditions and salaries of doctors, trying to keep doctors in the Republic of Croatia. In recent months, HLS had exhausting and difficult negotiations with the Government, and we have managed an increase in salaries that we have never achieved before - in the last year, doctors' salaries have increased by 35-50%.

### **3. Lack of time and personnel standards**

As I reported at our last session, medical associations asked the Minister of Health to adopt time-staff norms. The existence of such an act is necessary in order to regulate the enormous number of overtime hours, but also to protect doctors from possible professional mistakes due to work overload, which is a consequence of the shortage of doctors. Solving this problem also awaits the formation of a new Government.