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1. Political Context

Portugal is currently facing political instability, with early legislative elections scheduled for 18 May 2025. The government collapsed after losing a vote of confidence, following allegations of conflicts of interest involving the Prime Minister. In response, the President of the Republic dissolved Parliament and called for new elections. Polls indicate that no single party is likely to secure an absolute majority, suggesting that political uncertainty is expected to persist.

2. State of the National Health Service (NHS)

Portuguese NHS is facing a severe crisis characterized by:

- **Closure of Emergency Services:** some emergency departments particularly in maternal and child health, have been closed or are operating with limited capacity due to medical doctors' shortage.
- **Shortage of Family Doctors:** over 1.5 million citizens remain without an assigned family doctor, highlighting persistent gaps in primary healthcare access.
- **Healthcare Workforce Exodus:** the lack of effective policies to retain medical professionals has resulted in a continuous outflow of doctors to the private sector and abroad, exacerbating the workforce crisis within the NHS.
- **Resignations in Health Administration:** several Local Health Units and Portuguese Oncology have experienced resignations among their administrative boards, reflecting instability in hospital management. These resignations have been followed by political appointments, raising concerns about the influence of politics in healthcare leadership.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** there was a government's initiative to transfer the management of public hospitals to private entities and charitable organizations.

3. Professional and Union Activities

Sindicato Independente dos Médicos (SIM)

SIM as signed a new agreement with the current government in December 2024. This landmark agreement not only secures substantial salary increases but also introduces key measures to improve working conditions for medical professionals, including reduction of working hours to 36 hours per week, expansion of the new full dedication regime to other areas of health, equalization between individual employment contracts and public service contracts, progressive reduction of working time in emergency services and enhanced rest

days and compensatory rest. Notably, the agreement also provides the possibility of a reduction of the normal working period of between one and two hours per day for pregnant doctors. SIM is pleased with the agreement's outcomes and stands ready to negotiate with the incoming government.

Federação Nacional dos Médicos (FNAM)

FNAM expresses deep concern over the Minister of Health's explicit refusal to negotiate with the union that represents the majority of doctors in the NHS. The average effective salary increase—excluding the general public administration adjustment—is only 1.4% per year until 2027 —insufficient to recover the 20% loss in purchasing power experienced over the past decade. Moreover, no meaningful improvements have been made to working conditions. The 35-hour workweek without a loss of salary has not been reinstated; the exclusive dedication regime, properly increased and optional, is refused; medical residents continue to be excluded from the medical career structure; vacation days lost during the austerity period have not been restored; and parental leave policies remain inadequate for doctors. FNAM calls for serious negotiations with the next government to implement concrete measures capable of retaining doctors within the NHS and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

Ordem dos Médicos (OM, Portuguese Medical Association)

Ordem dos Médicos strongly opposed the new law criminalizing so-called “obstetric violence,” enacted in March 2025 and effective from 1 April. The Association argued that the terminology used is inappropriate for the Portuguese context, where obstetric care is of high quality, and cautioned that the law could erode trust between patients and healthcare providers, leading to defensive medical practices that compromise clinical autonomy.

Additionally, the Association rejected the Ministry of Health's proposal to allow pharmacies to prescribe and dispense medications that typically require a doctor's prescription without medical oversight. Ordem dos Médicos labelled the measure as an “unacceptable affront” to patient safety and the quality of care, emphasizing that prescribing medications necessitates accurate diagnosis and continuous monitoring.

There will be elections for all bodies of OM because of the amendment of the Statutes imposed by previous government of António Costa. This amendment imposes rules such as integration of non-doctors in its bodies and the non-payment for doctors working for the OM from NHS services.

Portuguese medical unions and the medical board continue demanding effective change in health policies, implementation of structural measures to support the NHS, and better health care delivery, which include improvement of medical careers, working and pay conditions.

Porto, 15th of May 2025
Federação Nacional dos Médicos
Sindicato Independente dos Médicos
Ordem dos Médicos