



October 29, 2021

LETTER OF SUPPORT

Concerning the changes in the Lithuanian healthcare system.

The Latvian Junior Doctors association extends its support to the Lithuanian Junior Doctors Association in the effort to prevent the introduction of legislation and regulations mandating any period of work in Lithuania for young doctors after completing training in state-funded residency programs.

The proposal by the Lithuanian parliamentary Healthcare Committee which would compel young doctors of Lithuania to work for 4 years in Lithuania after finishing government-funded residency is inconsistent with the core values of the European Union (EU), such as freedom of movement of workers. The EU regulation No 492/2011 intends the abolition of any limitations of freedom of movement of workers, including “limitations justified on grounds of public policy, public security or public health”. Leaders of 27 EU states pledged in the Rome Declaration in 2017 to work towards a social Europe, “a Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent”. The importance of adhering to these values has been reaffirmed by the European Junior Doctors Association in 2018 in their Statement on Free Movement of Junior Doctors in EU/EAA, supporting the principle of free movement, and expressing the belief that junior doctor’s professional migration should not “be prohibited by unjust contractual obligations”.

Work mandates after completion of state-funded residency programs or penalties in case of failure to comply or failure to graduate is a reality for Latvian junior doctors today and is regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia regulation Nr 685. Despite this in 2016 the State Audit Office of the Republic of Latvia concluded that between 2009 and 2015 13% of trainees in residency programs (a total of 124 trainees) did not finish residency. Of those young doctors, who completed their training, 49% had not fully complied to the imposed work mandates after the end of state-funded residency, including 14% who had not begun work in the Latvian healthcare system at all. Furthermore, polling of our members shows that 12-15% of graduates of faculties of medicine emigrate before ever beginning residency, in large part to avoid the contractual obligations imposed by the state.

The measures proposed by the Lithuanian parliamentary Healthcare Committee will serve as a disincentive to improve working conditions and wages for doctors because of a guaranteed, contractually bound workforce. This strategy succeeds only in the prevention of stable development of the healthcare system in the long term and robs young doctors of a hope for a better future.

We believe that work mandates after finishing government-funded residency programs are an ineffectual method of preventing the brain-drain in the healthcare system and is inconsistent with the spirit of the EU. Work mandates for young doctors in Latvia and Croatia have clearly failed to solve the shortage of doctors in both the short- and long-term. We believe that



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improved working conditions and higher wages are cornerstones in the prevention of emigration of young doctors.

The Latvian Junior Doctors Association supports the plea of the Lithuanian Junior Doctors Association to abandon the proposal of the Lithuanian parliamentary Healthcare Committee obliging young doctors to work for any amount of time in any specific workplace in Lithuania.

Latvian Junior Doctors association

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