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HLS – CROATIAN MEDICAL UNION

Report for the Fems Meeting May, 2008

At the end of the year 2007, a new parliament and a new government was elected in Croatia in the regular parliamentary elections. The negotiations with the European Union for the entry of the Republic of Croatia into the European Union are going on.

The new Health Minister of the Republic of Croatia has a more difficult task than the previous one, because the economical indebtedness of the Republic of Croatia is still growing. Every year, debts in the health sector increase for about 7-14%. The debts piled up are being covered partly from the budget and are partly being reprogrammed. The same as all the previous ministers, the actual minister has announced a new reform of the health sector right after his appointment.

In the context of the above explained, the Croatian Medical Union (HLS) and other medical unions must act «down to the ground» taking into account the existing economic situation. As we reported in the year 2006, the Croatian Medical Union signed together with other syndicates in public services the Collective agreement and contractually agreed the successive increase of salaries for medical doctors at the annual rate of 6% during a 3-year period.

Opening of Europe towards East European countries is a real benefit for many individual doctors of medicine, who have emigrated attracted to higher salaries filling up the deficit of medical doctors in different EU states. They came to the working environment with better working conditions and for less working hours they got an incomparably higher income. The patients in those states benefited as well, because the medical services became faster and the waiting lists shorter. The very big and incomparable benefit for the health-sector of these states is the fact that they got qualified professionals without any investments.

On the other hand, for many East European states (and for the Republic of Croatia as well) – from which thousands of medical doctors and nurses left, new problems arose. In these states, a great deficit of medical doctors emerged, which oppresses the work of medical doctors that remained. The state administration must find more money in the budget for additional stimulation and education of new personnel.

HLS has been, since it joined Fems in the year 1996, exerting real efforts that these problems get considered on the level of responsible institutions of Europe and that practical solutions are found not only for the health-sector and for medical doctors of the West European states but for the health sector in the East-European states as well. Up to now, only the East European states and their patients have benefited from the migration of medical doctors.

Since our Roma report until now, the deficit of medical doctors in the Republic of Croatia has increased according to the last data of the Croatian Medical Chamber from 4,000 to 5,000 medical doctors, which surpasses 1/3 of necessary medical doctors in the Republic of Croatia.

HLS is supporting the actions of Fems and of other European medical unions that through EU Commission and EU Parliament make all possible efforts for the improvement of the working conditions of medical doctors, and for the harmonization of criteria and standards of medical treatments in all European states. We are aware that the situation in the health-sector and with medical doctors in the East European states is getting harder and harder, for which they are partly responsible themselves, but according to the already written laws of the EU, the EU should not allow that this discrimination regarding the scope and the criteria of medical treatment crosses a certain border to the detriment of ill citizens of any part of Europe. The parliament of the enlarged EU has to take into account all those problems and our obligations at Fems are to discuss it and to offer acceptable proposals.

In Zagreb, May 2008

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