



ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS DES HÔPITAUX
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR HOSPITAL PHYSICIANS
EUROPÄISCHE VEREINIGUNG DER LEITENDEN KRANKENHAUSÄRZTE
EUROPESE VERENIGING VAN STAFARTSEN
DEN EUROPÆISKE OVERLÆGEFORENING
ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟΣ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ ΝΟΣΟΚΟΜΕΙΑΚΩΝ ΙΑΤΡΩΝ ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΩΝ
ASSOCIAZIONE EUROPEA DEI MEDICI OSPEDALIERI
DEN EUROPEISKE OVERLEGEFORENING
ASSOCIAÇÃO EUROPEIA DOS MÉDICOS HOSPITALARES
ASOCIACIÓN EUROPEA DE MÉDICOS DE HOSPITALES
EUROPEISKA ÖVERLÄKARFÖRENINGEN
EVROPSKO ZDRŽENJE BOLNIŠNIČNIH ZDRAVINIKOV
EUROPSKA ASOCIACIA NEMOCNICNÝCH LEKAROV
EUROPSKA UDRUGA BOLNIČKIH LIJEČNIKA
ΕΒΡΟΠΕΪΣΚΑ ΑΣΟCΙΑCΙΑ ΝΑ CΤΑΡCΗΤΕ ΒΟΛΝΗCΗΝΗ ΛΕΚΑΡΗ
ASOCIATIA EUROPEANA A MEDICILOR DIN SPITALE

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CZECH MEDICAL CHAMBER

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Prague, 6 January 2011

Request of the Czech Medical Chamber for support of hospital doctors in the Czech Republic

Distinguished Colleagues, Dear Friends,

Allow me to inform you briefly about the campaign "Thanks, We Are Leaving", which is a legitimate expression of dissatisfaction of Czech doctors, and at the same time let me ask you for your help and support for my colleagues.

Czech Doctors Trade Union, the largest and practically the only trade union organisation of Czech doctors, announced in March last year a campaign "Thanks, We Are Leaving", which is now reaching its culminating point. Its essence are massive employment termination notices of hospital doctors in protest against poor working conditions, low wages and complete disruption of education system. The Czech Medical Chamber supports the campaign, because it is a completely legitimate demand of the great majority of its members. Another reason for the support is that The Czech Medical Chamber as a supervisor of the high quality of medical care for the past several years is not able to guarantee this care to the citizens, due to the devastation of medical personnel in the Czech Republic. The necessary changes are not coming in spite of years-long debates and appeals to politicians, who are responsible for this situation and have the power to change it.

Distinguished colleagues,

For twenty years the Czech doctors waited in vain for dignified appreciation of their work. And for twenty years politicians were promising them to implement reforms, the results of which among others would be an improvement of professional and economic conditions of doctors. In reality, however, the situation of most hospital doctors worsened.

Our health care is chronically underfunded as expenditures on health care represent only 7,0 - 7,5 % of GDP. Fair European level of the Czech health care and good access to health care for the voters (our patients) is secured by the politicians at the expense of doctors and other health care professionals whose income remain low and working conditions poor. As the professional and working conditions are not improving in the Czech Republic, more and more of our colleagues are seeking emigration as solution of their economic problems. Gradually, due to that comes to a personnel decomposition of hospital medical care in the Czech Republic. The gradual devastation of the hospital care due to the shortage of medical personnel is the consequence of such a situation.

The Labour Code and European Working Time Directive (EWTD) are violated in most hospitals, and overworked doctors represent potential danger to patients. Reports on working hours are falsified and the number of doctors in the statistics is increased against the reality..... A qualified doctor must work monthly about fifty percent hours over time to obtain the average income of ca. CZK 45.000, - (about 1800 Euro). Such a salary is indicated in the statistics and it corresponds to less than double of the average income in the Czech Republic.

The doctors demand an increase of their salary for the basic working time to the level of 1,5 - 3 times higher than is the average salary income in the country, depending on their qualification and length of service. Such a salary level is quite common in countries to which the doctors from the Czech Republic are leaving. This requirement represents an increase in hourly wages of doctors from the current 100 - 200 CZK (about 4-8 EUR) to 200 - 400 CZK (about 8-16 EUR). The fulfilment of this demand requires only 3 billion CZK per year, which is approximately only 1 % of all the money spent in our health care.

Distinguished colleagues,

The aim of the action „Thanks, We Are Leaving” is not to drive the doctors into exile, but to improve their working conditions in Czech hospitals and in such a way to remove the reasons for their departure and the consequent personal devastation of Czech health care system. This is the main reason why Czech Medical Chamber fully supports the actions of doctor's trade unions. Enclosed I am sending 13 reasons that lead Czech hospital doctors to proclamation of the campaign „Thanks, We Are Leaving” and that was formulated by Czech Doctors Trade Union. These 13 reasons describe the motives of doctors and the causes of the whole problem.

In spite of the fact that employed doctors announced their intention to leave the hospitals in March 2010, political representation did nothing to avert their decision. Up to the December 31 2010, 3850 doctors handed in their notices of leaving the employment. Unless the government accepts their demands, then after the two month notice period these colleagues will not come to work on March 1, 2011. Doctors from the whole Czech Republic, from various hospitals and departments are involved. The notice of leaving the employment was handed in by the third of the total number of 12.000 doctors working in hospitals. In some hospitals and in some regions the notice was handed in by more than 80% of doctors, but there are departments where the notice was handed in by all doctors.

It is difficult to label the position of Czech government by something else than a hazardous play with the health and lives of citizens when instead of constructive negotiations with doctors and search for a rational solution, government concentrated on threatening doctors by declaring “emergency situation” which would allow to order the doctors to work similarly as is the case during natural catastrophes. Without doctors it is not possible to provide medical care and there is nobody who can replace doctors.

Distinguished colleagues,

For several weeks the Czech Medical Chamber has very actively negotiated with the representatives of all parliamentary political parties to find an acceptable solution to the current situation. Although the Czech health care is chronically underfunded, only 1 % of the funds that flow into the Czech health care are sufficient to meet the justified demands of hospital doctors. The money needed can be obtained by control of expenditures for the overpriced pharmaceuticals, by establishing an order in the completely chaotic investment policy, in the purchases of medical equipment and by reducing corruption. The Government of the Czech Republic has „the fight against corruption“ as a main slogan, but in reality is rejecting all economic measures proposed by the Czech Medical Chamber and is trying to intimidate the protesting doctors.

Distinguished colleagues,

The Czech Medical Chamber would be happy to provide you on your request with additional and more detailed information on the largest protest campaign of doctors in the modern history of our country.

The prestige and dignity of the whole medical profession is involved in the ongoing struggle and therefore we cannot afford to lose this battle. The campaign „Thanks, We Are Leaving“ proclaimed by the Czech Doctors Trade Union and supported by the Czech Medical Chamber represents a unique, and regretfully even an unrepeatable opportunity after 20 years of patiently but in vain waiting for a better professional and economic status of all doctors in

the Czech Republic. Any defeat, however, would bring disastrous consequences for all doctors.

Distinguished colleagues,

Not only on behalf of the Czech Medical Chamber, but also on behalf of all doctors from the Czech Republic, I appeal to you for any kind of help, for any kind of statement of support and solidarity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kubek', with a stylized, flowing script.

Dr. Milan Kubek
President of the
Czech Medical Chamber



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Prague, 10 January 2011

Dear Colleagues, Dear Friends,

Some of you started reacting to our request for support which, in the name of Czech doctors, I have forwarded to you a few days ago together with the information about the chaotic situation in the Czech health care namely in working, professional and economical conditions of hospital doctors in the Czech Republic.

On the basis of information on the reasons which lead so far 3 800 doctors from the total of 12 000 doctors employed in hospitals to resign from employment, some of you already expressed commitment to help the Czech doctors in their difficult struggle against the state bureaucracy, which instead of seeking a rational solution of the crisis puts brutal pressure on the protesting Czech doctors with the support of friendly journalists. Once more, in the name of Czech doctors, accept my thanks for all the expressions of support and solidarity, which we really need now.

As one of the possible ways how to help us, allow me to propose sending an open letter to the Prime Minister of the Government of the Czech Republic and to the Minister of Health of the Czech Republic, which would contain for example the following thoughts:

- We are deeply concerned about poor working conditions of doctors in the Czech Republic.
 - We are concerned by the fact that doctors in the Czech Republic achieve reasonable living standard only thanks to money for overtime work. We regret that the valid law in the Czech Republic as well as the European Working Time Directive (EWTD) are not observed, and as a consequence of it, the overworked doctors present potential danger for their patients.
 - We are concerned about the unsatisfactory system of postgraduate training for young doctors.
- The Czech doctors are well known all over the world as highly qualified specialists, whose work helps the patients wherever they work.

- The Czech doctors are welcome to take employment in our country under one condition only: they would not work for a lower salary and under worse working conditions than our doctors.
- Our organization will under no circumstances lay any obstacles to doctors, who left the Czech Republic to work in our country.

- We support our colleagues in the Czech Republic in their fight for respectable professional and working conditions.
 - We support the Czech Medical Chamber, which as an independent self-governing professional body guarantees the quality of medical care and doctors' autonomy in their independent decision making about the best way to treat the patients.

- The doctors from our country will not act against the Czech protesting doctors by taking employment vacated by their Czech colleagues. Doctors in whole Europe share mutual respect and would not betray the interest of their Czech colleagues.

In case you decide to follow my request, kindly send the letters to PM and the Minister of Health to the following addresses and in copy to our e-mail president@clkcr.cz :

Addresses:

Prime Minister
RNDr. Petr Nečas
Government of the Czech Republic
nábřeží Edvarda Beneše 4
CZ-118 01 Prague 1

Minister
Doc. MUDr. Leoš Heger, CSc.
Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic
Palackého náměstí č. 4
CZ-128 01 Prague 2

Your early reaction would be highly appreciated.

Thank you most sincerely for your kind support.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Milan Kubek
President of the
Czech Medical Chamber

13 Reasons for the Exodus

1. **Czech health care has been underfunded on a long-term basis.** The share of GDP has oscillated around 7 %, while the average in EU is 10 %. From the monitored OECD countries, behind us are only Poland, Mexico and Korea.
2. **The low pay contribution of the state for the state insurant** that does not match the volume of funding that these „public patients” consume. **Absence of commercial insurance.** The government’s contribution for citizens without income is much lower than their real spending.
3. **Large reserves in the internal functioning of the health care** – the biggest item is the chaotic drug policy, where hundreds millions of Euros are wasted.
4. **Strange economy in hospitals – overpriced contracts** (construction, purchase of equipment and medicine, etc.). Salaries of health care professionals are the only item for which commission cannot be obtained.
5. **Low salaries for doctors** which do not correspond with the intensity of this profession, the necessary education and prestige.
6. **Completely destructed system of education** is one of the reasons for the departure of young doctors abroad.
7. **Departure of doctors abroad due to better working conditions.** The remaining doctors are burdened with more responsibilities than correspond to their qualification. More overtime work is needed.
8. **The Labour Code is not observed**, more over time is required from doctors and as a consequence of it potential medical errors, followed by legal proceedings may occur.
9. In 2013, the exemption from the **European Directive on Overtime Work** will no longer apply and hospitals will need more doctors.
10. Due to lack of staff, poor organisation and irrational use of funds, **deterioration of patient care** threatens, for which doctors do not want to take responsibility.
11. **Unfulfilled promises of politicians** - since 1989, the doctors have been told that first the system must change and then their salaries will be improved. So far, this has not happened.
12. Health care became the object of an **ideological war** between political parties. The profound changes of the system require an agreement across all political parties, as it happens in other countries.
13. The Ministry of Health experience among all the ministries the **most frequent changes of ministers**, all of them with their own ideas how to change the system. There are constantly some elections taking place, whether they are regular or premature. Under such circumstances, doctors have no guarantee that the necessary changes will take place.