



Ms Iveta Radičová
Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky
Námestie slobody 1
813 70 Bratislava Slovakia

Brussels, 22 November 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) represents National Medical Associations of 27 European countries, including the Slovenská lekárska komora, the Slovak Medical Chamber.

It was through the Slovak Medical Chamber that our attention was drawn to recent developments in the healthcare sector in Slovakia, which cause much concern to CPME due to their potential harm to quality of healthcare and patient safety.

CPME was most concerned to learn of the untoward working conditions which Slovak doctors are subjected to, caused in particular by the inadequate implementation of the Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, as well as the insufficiencies as regards doctors' salaries.

It is highly regrettable that the prohibitive working conditions in the Slovak Republic are causing doctors to seek employment in other Member States solely in order to find adequate remuneration and working conditions.

CPME strongly supports the free movement of doctors between EU Member States to the benefit of the profession and patients in Europe. However, forced mobility caused by economic necessity is not tolerable. A mass emigration of doctors from the Slovak Republic would amplify the existing problems of shortages in medical specialists and access to healthcare for patients, thus endangering the entire Slovak healthcare system, as well as distorting the systems in other Member States.

CPME therefore calls on the Slovak government to take rapid and effective action to firstly enforce the full implementation of national and EU legislation on working time and secondly ensure sufficient resources so as to guarantee that doctors are remunerated adequately within the working time permitted by this legislation.



A second development which is observed with great worry is the legislation adopted recently which foresees the transformation of public hospitals into limited companies. CPME agrees with the Slovak Medical Chamber that this trend, combined with the lack of resources in healthcare funding, has the potential to lead to a decrease in the access to healthcare services for patients, a further deterioration of doctors' remuneration, and the economisation of healthcare beyond control.

CPME recalls that healthcare services cannot be equated with services delivered in a purely economic context. It is in the direct public interest to guarantee that quality of and access to healthcare is secured for all patients. CPME therefore calls for action to reverse the effects of this legislation and ensure that healthcare is protected against commercial market forces.

CPME strongly encourages the Slovak Medical Chamber in its campaign for reasonable and appropriate working conditions and equitable high quality healthcare in accordance with the law.

We are looking forward to hearing from you as to how appropriate action is to be taken by the Slovak government in order to improve the current situation in order to safeguard the future of healthcare in the Slovak Republic.

Yours sincerely,

Konstanty Radziwill
CPME President

Birgit Beger
CPME Secretary General