



**Fédération Européenne
des Médecins Salariés**
European Federation
of Salaried Doctors

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AUTUMN REPORT AUSTRIA - FEMS/ EJD

1. NATIONAL SURVEY AMONG HOSPITAL PHYSICIANS – CONDUCTED BY THE AUSTRIAN FEDERAL BODY OF EMPLOYED DOCTORS

For the fourth time since 2003, the *Austrian Federal Body of Employed Doctors* has conducted an anonymous telephone survey among 2000 hospital doctors in cooperation with the Austrian polling firm IFES.

Results reveal that administrative duties are still rising; at the moment, medical activity takes up only 57% of the working time of an average hospital doctor. Although average working hours have slightly fallen to 54 hours per week, the majority of Austrian hospital physicians feel overburdened; 64% of all respondents think it rather or very unlikely that they will be able to stay in their current job until the age of 65.

2. EVALUATION OF MEDICAL TRAINING – SURVEY ABOUT TRAINING SITUATION

The project was initiated by the *Austrian Federal Body of Employed Doctors* in August 2011 and will run until autumn 2014.

Numerous doctors in training have been invited to take part in the online survey; participation in the survey so far has been very high, which reflects a strong interest of doctors in training in their training situation.

Participants may rate the quality of the training as well as the resulting learning achievement by allocating scores ranging from 1 to 5 (i.e. by means of school rates).

3. HEALTH CARE REFORM

In April this year, the Austrian Parliament adopted a health care reform, which was sharply criticised not only by the Austrian Medical Chamber but also by the Court of Auditors. Although the reform will have major impact on medical practice, it was planned by the federal government and the provinces without consulting and involving patients and the medical chamber.

It focuses mainly on fiscal objectives and the reduction of resources. Savings are expected by introducing a federal budget for health, joint planning, financing and management of the health system. The Austrian Medical Chamber has expressed great concern about the fact that spending on health will be bound to the average growth of the GDP, since it does not take into account the individual patient's needs and the future development of medicine.

The Austrian Medical Chamber, for its part, has developed a health policy program. This reform concept stipulates among other key points the strengthening of the health care system on behalf of the patients, as well as better coordination between general practitioners

and specialists in free practice to guarantee better treatment of patients. The basis of an optimal primary care is the repositioning of the GP as a trust doctor as a first contact point to the health care system. Outpatient and inpatient care are to be funded from two different sources.

With the upcoming Austrian parliamentary elections (elections to the Nationalrat) in late September, we will see how developments will proceed in the future.

4. FEMALE PHYSICIANS IN AUSTRIA

For many years the proportion of female physicians of the Austrian employed doctors has been increasing, at the same time, however, working conditions remain an area of necessary improvement. As a consequence most female doctors aren't likely to work in the hospital sector in the future.

According to a current survey conducted by the Institute of Empirical Social Research (IFES) and involving 952 female physicians, the main problems that should be addressed, are: inflexible working conditions, lack of childcare facilities, excessively long working hours. Specific arrangements in order to make it easier for staff to reconcile professional and family lives as well as more flexible working time models are therefore urgently needed.

5. REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME

The Austrian Federal Body of employed doctors reiterates its call for a limitation of working hours to a maximum of 25 h/hospital shift.

Better working conditions are a necessary means to ensure that the medical profession continues to enjoy recognition and to guarantee that hospitals remain attractive to a new generation of medical doctors.

Permanent stress and pressure caused by long duty hours leads to demotivation among medical doctors and, as a consequence, to a shortage of physicians.

The Austrian Medical Chamber therefore is in favor of reduction of working hours to a maximum of 25 h/hospital shift.

The Austrian Federal Body of employed doctors calls for:

- Maximum of 25 hours continuous duty
- Strict compliance with recovery periods
- Occupational medical monitoring, in order to prevent health care problems
- Flexible working time models, that respect life realities of medical doctors