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Country Report – Hungary

The ruling, right of centre party of the 2010-2014 governmental cycle, FIDESZ yet again won two-thirds majority in the April parliamentary elections. therefore been enabled to form the new government for the next four years. During the campaign the only thing to be known of the government's strategies for the coming cycle was that they wished to continue the policies they had started four years ago. Although the social crisis has been moderated through serious economic developments, the obvious losers of the previous cycle have been the healthcare and social sectors. The new Labour Code implemented in 2012 clearly favours the employers, as trade union rights have been significantly reduced, and practically made it impossible to go on a strike in the civil services. In case of inadequate operation of the healthcare system, the Government has the right to declare Healthcare Emergency situations, and order the healthcare workers to work anywhere without limitations within Hungary. Although the present government has not implemented such practices, it poses an imminent threat for the removal of trade union activists when organising trade union actions.

All hospitals have been secularised under the funding of a standardised state health insurance. However this financing is extremely inadequate, the hospitals are in debts, their distributors are only willing to deliver for cash and the waiting lists are growing. Amortisation is not included in the funding, so the majority of machines and medical technology are aging or have been broken down. At the same time there have been unexceptional reconstructions of institution buildings with EU funds, meaning roughly two-thirds of Hungarian hospitals have been refurbished especially in more developed regions. A weird duality has developed in the country, while a number of redecorated and modern hospitals operate in the countryside -though their funding is still not settled – in the centre of the country some devastated and antiquated hospitals, sometimes in ruinous conditions serve patients.

More than a thousand and still a growing number of doctors and healthcare workers have been leaving Hungary every year since 2007, and most of them have left for good. Although due to the pay rises of the past two years, migration has been kept just under a thousand in 2013, the governmental propaganda claimed this number (115 less than the year before) a major success. The truth on the other hand is that the lack of doctors has become a nationwide phenomenon. The pay rise means a major surplus only for young non-specialist doctors, since they receive it as a scholarship until they specialise. The question arises, what will happen to them after specialisation when their salaries will decrease by 350 EUR. Specialists' pay rises are at a halt, they can earn 7-10 times more in popular target countries. Because of the reduction of healthcare professionals, those staying are extremely overloaded with work, and according to occasional surveys of patients, there is a growing disagreement of citizens in connection with healthcare.

Although we have strongly opposed the system of gratuity money a number of times, which we also regard as a really disadvantageous form of corruption, there is no actual governmental effort and intention to control it. Those colleagues who are the benefactors of this are hindering our initiatives, turning onto us and making cooperation impossible. It is virtually impossible to mobilise a great number of doctors within trade union actions. We have developed a close cooperation with the trade union of healthcare assistants, which proves to be a useful relationship. This group is not affected by corruption, therefore it is also their interest to force the changes.

The problems of basic health service have further increases. According to our calculations the doubling of funding is essential to maintain continuous service in GPs surgeries, since their funding has not changed for 12 years. However they merely receive a 10 % rise from this April. 40 % of General Practitioners are aged over the pension age, and young specialists are completely in a lack. 50% of young graduates leave the country within five years.

Although according to economic news the GDP is hoped to increase by 2 %, in accordance with leaked news the healthcare budget is not expected to increase, but citizens will probably face a worsened access to healthcare service that will also weaken our country's medium-term economic prospects.

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