



**Fédération Européenne
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ROMANIA

COUNTRY REPORT

April 2021

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Romanian authorities have taken some unique decisions in the European Union and the world. These decisions have had controversial consequences for both patients and health care workers.

Not trusting the health system's ability to manage the pandemic and expecting a large number of infected, it was decided to transform large hospitals into hospitals for the exclusive treatment of patients with "Covid".

To this end, in the first weeks of 2020, all hospitalizations for chronic patients were restricted, chronic interventions were postponed indefinitely, chronic patients were discharged. After the first two months, several hospitals were identified (2-3 in each large city) that transferred all patients to other health facilities and were declared hospitals only for "covid" patients.

Doctors in these hospitals, regardless of specialty, have been ordered to treat patients "covid", being guided by a specialist in infectious diseases, pneumology, or anesthesia.

Because in the first weeks the number of infected patients was not large and the hospitals were emptied of chronic patients, the decision was made to "forced" hospitalization of all asymptomatic patients, who had a positive "PCR" test.

In this way, in the first 4-5 months of 2020, the "covid" hospitals were full of patients with a positive test but asymptomatic, who within 2-3 weeks received only treatment with mild anti-inflammatory drugs, waiting for a test "PCR" negative to be discharged.

However, after the holiday period of 2020, patients began to be admitted in serious condition, so that all "covid" hospitals discharged asymptomatic patients (they received permission to be treated at home), and the hospitals "covid" have become too small for patients in medium and severe condition.

In the autumn of 2020, the issue of insufficient places in intensive care was raised, this issue becoming a topic of discussion and debate at the national level.

Because the intensive care units were overloaded and the employees and patients were not sufficiently trained in the handling and use of oxygen sources, accidents began to occur in the intensive care units, some of them extremely serious.

In this regard, we recall only the fires in two large hospitals which resulted in the death of many intubated patients (10 in the first case and 15 in the second) but also suffered the employees of these intensive care units.

Seeing that the situation is becoming more and more desperate and the number of cases of serious patients is increasing, it was decided to transform other hospitals into "covid" hospitals.

In this sense, several hospitals for chronically ill people who had to be evacuated were again identified.

In the case of the largest orthopedic hospital "FOISOR" in Bucharest, doctors, administration, and patients opposed this decision but were forced to obey the order. The press was called to

the hospital gate and the transfer of patients turned into a national scandal, with the presence of relatives of patients, the press, police, gendarmes, and political forces (who came into conflict with the authorities right at the hospital gate).

Doctors in these hospitals raised the issue of malpractice because in case of death the relatives of the patients could go to court and hold doctors of other specialties accountable, who treated the patients "covid".

To justify and resolve this situation, the ministry took a "historic" decision to exempt doctors from "covid" hospitals from legal responsibility. This was done by an urgent decision of the government so that today doctors in "covid" hospitals work without being held accountable. This surprising decision was also supported by the Romanian medical college.

Following several irregularities in the health system, in March 2021 the Minister of Health was dismissed (only 4 months after installation).

Vaccination was started in December 2020,

The Ministry of National Defense (Army) is in charge of vaccination in Romania.

In the first stage, the employees from the health system were vaccinated, in the second stage, the people considered important (politicians, military, policemen, ministers), and only in the third phase, the vaccination of chronic patients started.

At present, Romania has reached a percentage of 22% of vaccinated patients with both doses (on average). In urban areas, vaccination works much better, but in rural areas, there are still problems with accessibility to vaccination centers.

Protective equipment currently exists in all health institutions (even if there are regular discussions about their quality), salaries are paid without any problem.

Recently, there has been a discussion about reducing bonuses for all budget employees, which would bring a reduction in the income of employees in the "first line" specialties - anesthetists, infectious disease specialists, pulmonologists. The share of increases in the incomes of these categories of employees is sometimes over 40%.

No decision has been made yet, but employees are concerned about the possibility.

We issued a statement, showing that such a decision would repeat past mistakes and stimulate the resumption of the "exodus" of doctors and nurses, in the face of an alarming shortage of staff.

CFSMR President

Dr. Victor Eșanu