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## PORTUGAL SITUATION MAY 2022 FEMS REPORT

COVID-19 pandemic numbers seem to be at a plateau in Portugal. Presently, Portugal ranks 7<sup>th</sup>, regarding the rate of new infections in Europe. Until today we have had a total of 3.99 million cases of COVID-19 and 22.500 related deaths. Nevertheless, deaths per million inhabitants are stable at approximately 2,3 and are not expected to decrease soon. Data regarding the impact on health professionals are still lacking, and official numbers remain unknown.

In the last few weeks, Portugal uplifted most measures regarding general population, such as mandatory mask-wearing in most places. However, masks are still mandatory in healthcare facilities, elder residencies, and public transportation.

Although COVID-19 pandemic still weighs significantly in our National Health Service (NHS) directly and indirectly, the political focus has shifted to the recovery of “non-COVID-19” activity that suffered from pandemics. After a severe impact on GDP, until the 1<sup>st</sup> trimester of 2021, Portuguese GDP keeps recovering above European average and generalized expectations. Though the effects of war in Ukraine can already be felt but are still largely unmeasured and uncertain.

During the pandemic, 2,500 doctors and nurses left the Portuguese NHS, due to deteriorating working conditions for health professionals. Government has not announced further measures to keep health professional in the NHS, so doctors continue to emigrate or just leave to the private sector, looking for better working conditions.

The stampede of NHS doctors results in great losses to citizens health living in Portugal, especially in primary health care, as more than one million citizens (10% of the population) remain without a family doctor. At hospital level, the permanent lack of human and material resources, associated with excessive hierarchy and bureaucracy, incompetent and opaque leadership in general, culminates in disorganization and inefficiency of services, increased in waiting lists and failure to comply with maximum response times guaranteed in surgery, in areas such as oncology. The need for NHS outsourcing, by hiring temporary companies that supply these resources keeps permanently on the rise.

The political context has changed significantly as the Socialist party, after early elections in March 2022, has now an absolute majority in Parliament. The Minister of Health was re-conducted and has finally met with both medical doctor’s unions. However, the very needed Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiation is still to be initiated.

Portuguese Medical Unions and the Portuguese Medical Board continue to defend our NHS, demanding better medical careers and improvement of their working and pay conditions, for the best interest of the population living in Portugal.

12<sup>nd</sup> of May 2022

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