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The most important achievement and success since our last meeting is the re-recognition of the Croatian doctors right to negotiate for their profession.

After a full 8 years, HLS became a representative union again in October 2022, and now participates in the negotiations for a collective agreement in the health sector.

Our representativeness is the result of continuous struggle, argumentation and pressure of doctors on the government.

The Law on Representativeness prescribes a minimum number of union members for the right to negotiate, but does not take into account the fact, that there are incomparably fewer doctors than nurses working in the system, and even less doctors than non-health workers.

According to this rule, even theoretically, HLS cannot achieve a sufficient number of members to become representative.

For this reason, we have agreed with the Ministry of Health to resolve the representativeness of the HLS through the *lex specialis* - Law on Health Care.

This solution is strongly opposed by the trade union headquarters, which brings together unions of various professions, and almost none of whom work in the same conditions as doctors (24/7!).

They consider that solving representativeness through *lex specialis* is elitism so they submitted a request to the Constitutional Court for an assessment of the constitutionality of the representativeness of the HLS.

The court process has just started and we will probably have to wait quite a long time for the final decision of the Constitutional Court.

Unfortunately, this move by the trade union headquarters shows that trade union solidarity, as a fundamental principle of trade union activity, in Croatia is actually just a dead letter!

The dissatisfaction of Croatian doctors due to work overload, the huge number of overtime hours, working conditions, salaries and the way of carrying out the residency, which I reported on earlier, continued in the period between 2 GA.

It grew more and more and culminated at the end of September, when a large protest, organized by young doctors, with the support and help of the main medical associations, was held in Zagreb, next to the Ministry of Health.

At the meeting with medical associations held in August 2022, the Minister of Health promised to adopt a new Regulation on doctors' salaries by December 31, 2022, but this did not happen.

For this reason, a survey was conducted among Croatian doctors in February, which showed that 73% of doctors are ready for a public protest, 61% for a strike, and 98% of doctors support the adoption of a special law on the labor-legal status of doctors.

The vast majority of young doctors (93%) want the cancellation of existing "slave ownership" contracts on specializations. Such contracts state that, after passing the specialist exam, they are obliged to work at their institutions for at least twice as long as the duration of the specialization. Otherwise, they are obliged to return the gross amount of salary to their institution for the entire duration of the specialization, even though they work and are on duty the entire time of the specialization.

Based on the results of the survey, the medical associations requested the Ministry of Health and the Government to urgently fulfill the following requirements:

- equalizing the salary of doctors with the same level of education and increasing the salary of medical residents by at least 10% through the Regulation on Doctors' Salaries
- finishing the Law on the Labor and Legal Status of Doctors by the summer of 2023.
- the work of doctors according to the time-staff norms
- abolition of the existing "slave ownership" contracts for medical residents

A whole series of meetings were held in the Ministry of Health on the mentioned problems, but there were no concrete developments.

For this reason, on March 18, 2023, HLS and other medical associations organized the biggest doctor's protest ever in Zagreb, where about 3.000 doctors from all over Croatia gathered and where we once again publicly requested an appointment with the Prime Minister.

Our efforts have started showing the results. The Prime Minister invited us to a meeting, promised to solve the problem within the agreed deadlines, and the first step was taken: a few days ago, the Government made a decision to increase the salary of doctors, which was agreed upon by medical associations in the Ministry of Health.

In parallel with these activities, negotiations for the Branch collective agreement in healthcare are ongoing, in which HLS now participates as a full-fledged negotiator.

We expect to agree on further improvements in working conditions and salaries for doctors through that collective agreement.

The HLS, together with other medical associations and the Ministry of Health, is also drafting the Law on the Labor and Legal Status of Doctors, which should define all the specifics of the work of doctors.

Trade union headquarters also take part in this work, and they are strongly against this law, because they also consider it "elitistic". Despite all the difficulties, we hope to pass this law by this summer.