



Joint 5th Joint AEMH-FEMS General Assembly 10-11 May 2024, Berlin, Germany

Members reports

Please name 3 main current concerns of the healthcare system in your country :

- Evaluation of medical training started on 4 march 2024
- National Council has decided to introduce specialization in general medicine
- Drug safety in Euope – EU must be able to supply itself with medicines

Full report

1. Evaluation of medical training starting on 4 March 2024

In 2023, the evaluation of medical training took place in Austria, which was carried out by the Austrian Medical Chamber (*Österreichische Ärztekammer – ÖÄK*) as the representative body for physicians, in cooperation with the ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich). This year, the evaluation project is being repeated, indicating its importance and ongoing commitment to ensuring the quality of medical training.

The evaluation from 2023 ended with a high response rate of 44%. Dr. Harald Mayer, Vice-President of the Austrian Medical Chamber and Chairman of the Curia of Employed Physicians, appeals to all eligible doctors to participate in this year's survey and demonstrate a serious commitment to training.

The training evaluation has been ongoing since the beginning of March 2024. The survey is directed to doctors in training (*Turnusärzte*). Anonymized questionnaires have been sent to the departments and are being distributed to doctors in training. The purpose of the survey is to evaluate the quality of training and the level of satisfaction among the doctors

The representatives of the Austrian Medical Chamber point out that training is an important career factor. Young doctors are willing to relocate to another country—especially Switzerland or Germany—if the training and career opportunities are better there.

The results of the evaluation from 2023 showed that the satisfaction of junior doctors with regard to fulfilling their training within contractually fixed working hours was rated at 3.67 on a scale ranging from 1 to 6. Furthermore, the balance between private life and the medical profession, as well as the availability of working part-time and childcare facilities, was described as inadequate. According to Dr. Mayer, hospitals should offer flexible working time

models, better career planning, the creation of childcare places close to the hospital, and improved planning of working hours. The results of last year's survey are available on the website of the Austrian Medical Chamber at the following link: <https://www.aerztekammer.at/ausbildungsevaluierung>

The basic questions on training remain the same as in 2023, i.e., global rating of the training centre; professional competence; learning culture; leadership culture; error culture and patient safety; decision-making culture; operational culture; evidence-based medicine. This makes it possible to compare developments in the individual departments. The results of the current survey will be presented to the public in autumn 2024.

2. National Council has decided to introduce specialization in general medicine

On 28 February 2024, the National Council (lower house of the Austrian Parliament) unanimously approved the introduction of specialization in general medicine and family medicine. Until now, there had been no specialized training for general medicine in Austria.

The new specialty training program for doctors is planned to last for a total of five years, starting from 1 June 2026, at the earliest. The basic specialisation training shall last 33 months, including a.o. general medicine and family medicine for at least six months and internal medicine for at least six months, the advanced specialisation training shall last 18 months. The training precedes a postgraduate clinical training of a minimum of nine months. Doctors also have the option to either complete all training started before 1 June 2026 under the present law or transfer to the new specialist training programme.

The representatives of all parliamentary groups in the National Council agreed that this was an important step towards strengthening the profession and primary care in Austria in general. Johannes Rauch, Federal Minister for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection of Austria, announced that an accompanying regulation would be issued by the summer.

The ÖÄK also welcomes the introduction of a specialist in general practice and family medicine. "This means that a long-standing demand of the Austrian Medical Chamber has now been realised. This is a highly welcome step towards securing medical care for the future," said Dr. Johannes Steinhart, President of the Austrian Medical Chamber, in a press release dated 29 February 2024. Furthermore, it must be discussed in Austria how to equate general practitioners with other specialists in hospitals (especially in terms of salary).

3. Drug safety in Europe - EU must be able to supply itself with medicines

The EU pharmaceutical law is currently being revised by the European Commission. The reform of pharmaceutical law announced in April 2023 comprises a comprehensive set of measures intended to enhance supply security and combat medicine shortages, with a focus not only on crisis situations but also on long-term improvement. The reform aims to achieve multiple objectives: facilitating timely access to innovative medicines for patients, bolstering the competitiveness of the European pharmaceutical sector, and progressing in the battle against antimicrobial resistance.

In December 2023, the European Commission, together with the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the heads of medicinal agencies in the member states, published the first Union list of critical medicines. It plays an important role in the EU's efforts to ensure that patients

receive necessary medications by strengthening supply security and preventing shortages. It is also part of the EU's efforts towards greater resilience and strategic autonomy in the face of geopolitical and unforeseen challenges.

The Austrian Medical Chamber and the German Medical Association (*Bundesärztekammer*) highlighted the importance of drug safety in Europe, as well as its independence from suppliers and production facilities of active ingredients from third countries, in a joint resolution. They issued an appeal to the European Union and its member states, as well as to the pharmaceutical industry, urging them to take decisive and concerted action against drug supply shortages.

In a joint press release dated 27 January 2024, Vice President of the German Medical Association, Dr. Ellen Lundershausen expressed concern that patients, doctors, and all other professional groups involved in supplying medicines in European countries are equally affected by the current supply bottlenecks. She emphasized the need to examine whether there are currently enough production sites for medicines in Europe. Dr. Lundershausen pointed out that almost 70 % of the production sites for active ingredients destined for the market in Germany and other European countries are located in Asia. This situation poses a threat to the security of supply in European countries due to insufficient alternative options in the event of quality defects or supply problems. Europe should increase its internal production in order to fulfill a larger proportion of its needs. Furthermore, Dr. Lundershausen stressed the importance of sustainably improving the framework conditions for diversifying supply chains, promoting production in Europe and ensuring sufficient stockpiling.

ÖÄK-Vice President Dr. Mayer called on politicians to take action, as the responsibility for the supply of medicines lies with them. This includes a willingness to invest in the European production of supply-relevant medicines. Dr. Mayer emphasized that Europe must finally become autonomous and independent of other markets when it comes to the supply of medicines.

It is worth mentioning that Austria is home to the only European penicillin production site. The Sandoz facility in Kundl, Tyrol, is the only major remaining vertically integrated production network for penicillin in Europe, where everything from the active ingredient to the tablet is manufactured at one location. Penicillins are the world's leading category of antibiotics, with the generics manufacturer Sandoz holding a 60 % share of the global market. A total of 4,000 tonnes of active ingredients are processed into life-saving medicines in Kundl every year.

Antibiotics have been produced in Kundl for 75 years. In March 2024, Sandoz opened there a new production facility to serve more patients with affordable life-saving drugs produced entirely in Europe.

The new facility and automated production lines will increase production capacity by 20% compared to the current capacity of 200 million packages per year. Additional manufacturing area of 3,000m² means Kundl can now manufacture 240 million packages per year

The Austrian Medical Chamber supports the investment and opening of the new production plant for the manufacture of penicillins in Kundl as an example of best practice for the whole of Europe and emphasises that medical products and medicines for the EU must be produced in the EU in order to minimise the risk of dependency.