Fédération Européenne
des Médecins Salariés
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NATIONAL REPORT

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1. Workforce Remuneration and Systemic Challenges

Dr. Nikolay Branzalov, Chairman of the Bulgarian Medical Association (BMA), expressed support for the protests organized by young doctors, recognizing their legitimate demands for fair pay, career development, and opportunities for specialisation. Young doctors have been protesting since Spring 2025, demanding that starting salaries be set at 150% of the national average for doctors (approximately 3,834 BGN) and 125% for nurses. They estimate that the reform would cost only 240 million BGN annually, or about 2.5% of the NHIF budget. Despite several legislative proposals, no consensus has been reached. The parliamentary working group has extended its deadline to October 31—a move the opposition warns could prevent the inclusion of the pay increases in the 2026 state budget.

However, Bulgarian Medical Association reiterates that the challenges facing Bulgaria's healthcare system extend far beyond salaries. They are rooted in chronic underfunding, low health insurance contribution rates, and the insufficient share of GDP allocated to healthcare. The push for uniform, centrally determined wages risks reverting to outdated budget-based healthcare models. Instead, the BMA advocates for sustainable reforms—such as increasing health insurance contributions, ensuring full state payments, expanding the pool of contributors, and adopting a long-term national strategy to guarantee both higher incomes and improved working conditions.

BMA notes that while young doctors deserve targeted support—such as subsidies for residents and reduced administrative burdens—the remuneration model must reflect competence, demand, and workload rather than rely on fixed, centralized pay scales. The BMA has already developed a methodology for valuing physicians' labour in line with European standards, but the Ministry of Health has been resistant and unresponsive. Despite the fact that the methodology has been publicly presented and submitted to the Ministry of Health and the Council of Ministers, no action by the competent institutions has been taken to discuss, adjust, or implement it.

BMA stresses that the Association represents all 34,000 doctors in Bulgaria, not only the younger generation, and warns against rushed political solutions. Lasting reform requires political will, strategic vision, and stable financing—without which Bulgaria risks continued workforce shortages, outdated infrastructure, and further emigration of medical professionals.

2. Violence Against Medical Professionals

At the same time, the Bulgarian Medical Association continues its campaign to address the growing violence against healthcare professionals. A national survey commissioned by the BMA reported that two-thirds of physicians have experienced aggression from patients or their

relatives—56% reported verbal abuse, and 7% reported physical assaults. More than 1.1 million Bulgarians have witnessed verbal aggression, and 385,000 have witnessed physical violence against medical workers.

During the high-level forum **“Doctors Under Attack: How to Heal Broken Trust?”**, the Ministry of the Interior reported 96 registered crimes against medical professionals in 2023, 99 in 2024, and 75 by September 2025.

As part of its **#OvercomeTheAnger** national campaign, the BMA launches a new educational initiative in which physicians will visit schools across the country to promote respect for the medical profession, encourage dialogue, and help prevent aggression through greater public understanding and awareness.