



## Statement on discrimination of doctors in Slovakia

At its General Assembly, held on 11/05/2013 in Prague, the European Junior Doctors (EJD) discussed the future of healthcare in Europe. Among other topics, the unusual and alarming development in Slovakia, where the proposals set out to change §38 and §63 of Act 587/2004 will result in discrimination of doctors and healthcare workers, was discussed.

We have decided to address you because we have become aware that there is an effort to unjustly criminalize the actions or potential actions of health professionals in Slovakia's Criminal Code. The EJD firmly believes that the intentions of doctors in Slovakia are to improve conditions for workers in the health sector, and therefore to improve the quality of patient care and the wider health sector in Slovakia. Besides a plethora of objections to the law, which has no parallel in democratic Europe, we are convinced that changes to Act no. 578/2004 Z. z. (and other amending laws, citing laws/printing no. 371) on health care providers, health workers and professional organizations representing health care workers, does not respect the independence of professionals, which is in the overall interests of patients. It would be wholly unacceptable for the Ministry of Health to have the power to exclude health care professionals from the medical profession by the imposition of unilaterally imposed fines for breach of work duty, without court proceedings.

The experiences gained during previous situations in Slovakia convinces us that the intention of the proposed amendments is contrary to Article 1 of the ILO Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labour number 105 of 1957, under which forced labour cannot and must not be used to enforce labour discipline. Realization of the right to the free performance of the medical profession cannot justify the declaration of emergency. Right to freedom of movement for workers, as one of the four pillars of the freedoms of European citizens would become an illusion if it depended only on the authority of the government, who through these current proposals would have the power to limit the free movement of people.

We remind you that at EU level the right to strike is enshrined in Article 28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (entitled 'Right of collective bargaining and action'). Workers and employers, or their respective organisations, have, in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices, the right to negotiate and conclude collective agreements at the appropriate levels and, in cases of conflicts of interest, to take collective action to defend their interests, including strike action.

The Slovak government's attempts to utilise the proposed law inappropriately has caused widespread alarm across the medical professional community in Europe. To threaten the medical profession with criminal sanctions threatens the independence of the medical profession, threatens workers' rights across Slovakia and will ultimately damage both the patients and citizens of Slovakia.

The European Junior Doctors believe that the introduction of the proposed legislative changes has no place in modern Europe and must be strongly rejected. It is our intention to further discuss the situation in Slovakia with all of our members, relevant European Institutions and MEPs.

European Junior Doctors  
Prague, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2013