



European Junior Doctors

PRESS RELEASE

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EJD calls for a European shock-plan addressing recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals in rural, remote and underserved areas.

The current health workforce crisis in Europe is producing severe problems that demand immediate attention. This shortage jeopardizes the quality and accessibility of healthcare services across the region. Junior doctors and postgraduate medical training systems are particularly vulnerable to poor workforce planning. As a transient workforce at the front line of acute health care, junior doctors are relied on to plug gaps in the understaffed and overstretched services left by poor workforce planning.

EJD General Assembly was held in Riga, Latvia for two days (26th and 27th of May). During the meeting the topic of recruitment and retention of junior doctors in medical deserts was addressed in a panel debate with representatives of the European Commission, Latvian Ministry of Health and national Junior Doctors' representatives. Shortages of doctors and other health and care workers have reached a critical level in Europe. EJD has repeatedly warned about the impending consequences of the shortage of doctors in the continent. We have stressed the urgency of addressing this issue and have advocated for proactive measures to attract and retain talented medical professionals. Unfortunately, our concerns have largely gone unheeded, resulting in the worsening situation we face today.

"We are deeply concerned by the fact that no national government has implemented a comprehensive long-term plan to address recruitment and retention in rural and remote areas. EJD will be actively working on the topic, and we will provide with recommendations of best and worst practices from junior doctor's eyes". Mathias Körner, EJD President.

The anticipated shrinking of the workforce across all professions, precisely when the demand for healthcare services is on the rise, calls for urgent action and collaborative efforts from all stakeholders involved. By coming together and embracing innovation, we can ensure access to quality healthcare for all, even in the most geographically isolated regions. To ameliorate the problem, it is crucial to implement positive initiatives that address the recruitment and retention challenges faced by junior doctors in rural and remote areas. This includes improving working conditions, ensuring competitive salaries and benefits, providing adequate resources and support, and creating opportunities for professional development and career progression. Furthermore, investing in comprehensive mentorship programs and fostering a supportive work environment will help attract and retain junior doctors, ensuring a sustainable healthcare workforce.

However, certain actions should be avoided in tackling this crisis. Short-term fixes or stopgap measures, such as excessive reliance on locum staff, mandatory postings during or after PGT or a disregard for the well-being of junior doctors, will only exacerbate the problem in the long run. Additionally, overlooking the need for systemic reforms, including improvements in medical education and training programs, will hinder the establishment of a resilient and competent workforce.

We call upon the European institutions, national governments, and other relevant stakeholders to take immediate action to address the recruitment and retention crisis of junior doctors in Europe. It is imperative to allocate adequate resources and develop comprehensive strategies that prioritize the well-being of health and care professionals and ensure high-quality healthcare for all European citizens. Collaboration among governments, healthcare organizations, educational institutions, and professional bodies is essential to implement sustainable solutions, monitor progress, and create an environment that attracts, retains, and nurtures the next generation of medical professionals.

The European Junior Doctors Association (EJD) represents more than 300 000 junior doctors in Europe. We advocate for Junior Doctors' rights, the improvement of training systems and optimal patient care.

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