

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002607/25
to the Commission**

Raffaele Topo (S&D), Alessandra Moretti (S&D), Elisabetta Gualmini (S&D), Brando Benifei (S&D), Pina Picierno (S&D), Pierfrancesco Maran (S&D), Stefano Bonaccini (S&D), Antonio Decaro (S&D), Giuseppe Lupo (S&D), Romana Jerković (S&D), Estelle Ceulemans (S&D), Dario Tamburrano (The Left), Kateřina Konečná (NI), Branislav Ondruš (NI), Diana Iovanovici Șoșoacă (NI), Flavio Tosi (PPE), Sebastian Everding (The Left), Aurelijus Veryga (ECR)
(27 June 2025)

Subject: Working conditions of doctors in Europe

In a report published in 2016 ⁽¹⁾, the Commission defined arduous work as follows:

‘Occupations involving the exposure of the worker over a period of time to one or several factors leading to professional situations susceptible to leave long-lasting and irreversible effects on his/her health; these factors are related to physical constraints, psychosocial risks, an aggressive physical environment, working organisation and working rhythms, including shift work’.

According to a recent study conducted by the European Federation of Salaried Doctors (FEMS), the working conditions of doctors meet all of these criteria, particularly in the more demanding medical specialisations. Furthermore, the current shortage of doctors has further deteriorated their working conditions, increasing the physical and psychological demands of their profession ⁽²⁾.

In light of the above:

1. Does the Commission intend to promote an EU initiative to define common criteria for fair remuneration, safe working hours, and the recognition of the physical and psychological risks faced by doctors as arduous or hazardous work?
2. Does the Commission plan to initiate a dialogue with the Member States and social partners with a view to harmonising the implementation of national legislative standards on this issue?

Submitted: 27.6.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(14 August 2025)

1. Directive 2003/88/EC ⁽¹⁾ limits weekly working time and sets minimum daily and weekly rest and paid annual leave. It covers all workers in the EU including doctors in an employment relationship (i.e. not those who are self-employed).

Concerning safety and health at work, Council Directive 89/391/EEC ⁽²⁾ lays down obligations on the employer, including assessment of all risks to which workers are or can be exposed and resulting preventive and protective measures. The directive covers physical and psychosocial risks and applies to all sectors, both public and private, including doctors. The Commission does not intend to define common criteria for the recognition of such risks faced by workers, including doctors, as hazardous work.

Article 153(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) excludes pay from the areas in which the EU can adopt legislation, thereby preventing the EU from directly setting or regulating remuneration, including for professions such as doctors.

¹ European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Applica, Liser, Ose, Spasova, S. et al., *Retirement regimes for workers in arduous or hazardous jobs in Europe — A study of national policies 2016*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2016, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/978434>.

² European Federation of Salaried Doctors (FEMS), *European Doctors Working Conditions — A FEMS White Book*, 2024.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2003/88/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ Council Directive 89/391/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, OJ L 183, 29.6.1989, p. 1-8 — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1989/391/oj/eng>.

2. Article 153(2)(a) of the TFEU prohibits the EU from any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States, so harmonisation of national legislative standards on doctors' working conditions is not possible.

The Commission supports Member States addressing health workforce challenges. A forthcoming survey of health professionals under EU4Health ⁽³⁾ led by World Health Organisation (WHO) Europe, will provide feedback on national policies on factors influencing mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Working conditions for nurses are addressed through an EU4Health funded Nursing Action ⁽⁴⁾ led by WHO Europe in partnership with European nursing associations and social partners. The Commission also supports social dialogue at EU level in the hospitals and healthcare sector.

⁽³⁾ WHO/Europe launches first-of-its-kind survey on mental health of healthcare professionals <https://www.who.int/europe/news-room/events/item/2024/10/22/default-calendar/who-europe-launches-first-of-its-kind-survey-on-mental-health-of-healthcare-professionals>.

⁽⁴⁾ Launch of the first EU action to address nurse shortages shows positive impact of European Health Union https://health.ec.europa.eu/latest-updates/launch-first-eu-action-address-nurse-shortages-shows-positive-impact-european-health-union-2025-01-17_en.