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Greek doctors share their personal experiences of the European health workforce crisis

Doctors from across Greece have shared personal and powerful snapshots from the frontline of Europe's health workforce crisis in short videos [published](#) on the occasion of the General Assembly of the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) taking place in Athens from 24–25 October and hosted by the Panhellenic Medical Association during its 100th anniversary year.

The testimonies highlight excessive working hours, understaffing, financial challenges, exhaustion and effects on mental health, including burnout. The doctors highlighted that the working conditions affect their well-being and personal relationships, and urged policymakers to listen to their voices and provide "protection and respect".

The videos were provided as part of the #DoctorsVoice campaign, in which CPME asked doctors from across Europe to make short videos on their phones, sharing their real experiences. The videos are shared at a critical point as MEPs are working on a report proposing an EU health workforce crisis plan addressing the sustainability of healthcare systems and working conditions in the health sector.

President of the Panhellenic Medical Association Dr Athanasios Exadaktylos said "As we strengthen our cooperation by hosting colleagues from across Europe, we also face the shared and urgent challenge to sustain an adequately supported health workforce. In Greece, as in many parts of Europe, our doctors and healthcare professionals continue to serve with dedication despite limited resources and increasing demands."

CPME President Dr Ole Johan Bakke added "The challenges shared by our Greek colleagues are faced by healthcare professionals all across Europe. Their stories are symptoms of a Europe-wide crisis that can only be tackled in solidarity through a coordinated European health workforce strategy. We urge European policymakers to listen to the doctors' voices."

Selected quotes from the videos shared by Greek doctors:

Dr Demiri Charikleia, a paediatric surgeon from Thessaloniki, highlighted working hours far exceeding the maximum of 48 hours allowed by the European Working Time Directive:

- *"I barely remember a week during my residency which lasted 8 years that I worked less than 83 hours weekly, apart from holidays. These working circumstances affect our well-being and personal relationships, we need protection and respect."*

Dr Tzima Korina, a dermatologist from Athens, pointed out the dangers of excessive working hours:

- *"The failure to adhere to the designated working hours leads to continuous overtime, forcing doctors to work under exhausting and hazardous conditions that endanger both their own health and a safe practice of medicine."*

Dr Chochliourou Elpis, a paediatrician from Thessaloniki, shared her concern that young doctors may emigrate:

- *"Having spent 25 years working in the national health system, I can say that human resources are it's backbone. We need to be able to make the field attractive, and keep our young doctors in our country."*

Dr Koulas Charalampos, an ophthalmologist from Athens, called for politicians to take action:

- *"Healthcare professionals experience a high burnout due to high workloads and extended working times. Health workers in Greece are underpaid, overworked and physically and emotionally stressed. It's time for governments to invest in the healthcare sector and its workers."*

Finally, Dr Katsigiannopoulos Constantinos, a psychiatrist from Lemnos, shared his hope for doctors to fulfil their passion for medicine:

- *"Understaffing, exhausting over time and on call shifts. Long hours of continuous work, usually without adequate support. The standard of living is disproportionate to the effort of medical studies and the burden of the medical profession. Listen to our voice. Let us practice the medicine we dream of and that our passions deserve."*

The CPME General Assembly is kindly hosted by the Panhellenic Medical Association, with the agenda including a conference in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Health, a policy on the optimisation of medical services and a discussion on the mental health of healthcare professionals.

Beyond the workforce, the agenda includes debates on confidentiality and safety in digital health, in particular the doctors' needs regarding Electronic Health Records, as well as on the EU Tobacco Taxation Directive, and the proposed EU Biotech Act.

Notes to editors

The Panhellenic Medical Association, headquartered in Athens, is the central coordinating body and the supervisory organisation of all Medical Associations and doctors in the country. It is the highest institutional body of doctors and an advisory body to the state on health and social security issues.

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) represents national medical associations across Europe. We are committed to contributing the medical profession's point of view to EU and European policy-making through pro-active cooperation on a wide range of health and healthcare related issues.