

Deputy Health Minister Josef Pavlovic
Deputy Health Minister Jakub Dvořáček
Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament
of the Czech Republic
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Dear Deputy Health Minister, dear Mr. Pavlovic,

Thank you for the constructive meeting 11 July. It was much appreciated that you took the time to listen to our concerns about EU health policy and discuss the work the Czech government is doing. We were pleased we agreed on some issues like on being careful regarding extending health competences in the EU Treaty as discussed in the Future of Europe Conference. We need an EU that works well to respond to health emergencies and many of the institutions to do this are set up. We do not need to go beyond, and as the citizens have underlined opening up the health sector to more competition and internal market is not what they want.

I appreciated that you underlined that some issues are addressed by Deputy Health Minister Jakub Dvořáček especially regarding the EU and CZ presidency priorities. One of those issues was regarding the shortages of staff in health and in social services and our proposal how the CZ presidency could assist. I will continue to directly address this to your colleague. The problem of staff shortages will be even more visible in the Autumn when we see the increase cases of COVID and related to infections.

Dear Deputy Health Minister, dear Mr. Dvořáček,

Let me introduce EPSU briefly. We are the European Federation of Public Services Unions., representing 8 million workers across the continent with the vast majority of them in the health and social care sector. The CZ health and social workers union is one of our members. (www.epsu.org). We organise workers in all forms of health and social care (public, non-profit, private) in the EU and beyond. EPSU is a recognised social partner and part of the European social dialogues of health and of social services.

As you are aware, one of the biggest issues confronting health and social care is regarding the systemic lack of staff across the EU. Existing before the pandemic, the pandemic has underlined this and made it worse. A briefing for the WHO-Europe says there are issues of “low numbers of health workers; lower staff productivity due to exhaustion and burnout.” Your French colleague had to roll-out a three months plan and a package of 41 measures to address the urgency of the lack of staff for emergency units. The European Parliament addressed it in its contribution to the European Care Strategy, foreseen publication on 7 September.

There is surprisingly little urgency though on the EU level. These staff shortages do not play a role in the EU and CZ presidency priorities. I proposed to your colleague a way in which the CZ presidency could play a role to draw more attention to this and he referred me to you.

The European Social Partners for the Health and Hospital sector (EPSU for the trade union and HOSPEEM for the employers' side) recently concluded an agreement on recruitment and retention. We understand as trade unions and employers we can assist, but we cannot solve the shortages though. For this government actions are needed, and we list a few.

Dear Deputy Health Minister, dear Mr. Dvořáček,

Considering that your time is very restricted due to the CZ and EU agenda's, we propose the following. To organise a brief event with you, or if you prefer the minister, in which we hand-over a copy of the agreement to you as Council Presidency. We expect this to attract media and help in promoting the actions. This can be accompanied by a short statement of yourself, and a quote from the employers' and unions' side. We expect this will assist in putting the item higher on the Commission agenda and to support the implementation of the measures by the social partners and the Member States, our main aim to ensure social partners and government address the issue and find solutions. I am sure we will be able to find the 15-20 minutes for this during a visit to Brussels? We can work with your services to prepare the statement. We could liaise with the employers.

Dear Deputy Health Minister, dear Mr. Dvořáček,

We look forward to work with you on this and are available for any further discussion

Yours sincerely,



Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary