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HEALTH CARE REFORM IN LITHUANIA: NOT FOR JUNIOR DOCTORS?

In the middle of 2009 Lithuanian Ministry of Health has announced the beginning of the health care reform in Lithuania.

Lithuanian Junior Doctors Association many times has appealed to the governmental institutions for help. It seems now that the economic crisis is a good excuse for unreasonable decisions, aggravating the future health care of Lithuania.

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In the middle of 2009 Lithuanian Ministry of Health has announced the beginning of the health care reform in Lithuania. Shortly after that, the reform plan was released and the health care specialists, non-governmental organisations and the major health care institutions were asked to participate and to make their comments and suggestions. Social partners (Lithuanian Junior Doctors Association included) have proposed their input into the reform, but as it appears now, the proposal to participate by the Ministry of Health was only a formal gesture and the imitation of the democracy rules.

Lithuanian Junior Doctors Association has always emphasized the importance of the postgraduate training to the Lithuanian health care system and has tried to show to the governmental institutions, that the investments made into junior doctors are the investments into the future health care of Lithuania. Unfortunately, it appears now, that junior doctors or medical postgraduate training are not even mentioned in the proposed reform plan. It seems that to the Lithuanian governmental institutions the junior doctors are not an important part of the future Lithuanian health care system. Why should they be?

After working for two years with governmental institutions, non-governmental organisations and patients, Lithuanian junior doctors finally achieved to be considered as employees with salaries and social guarantees and not just "forever" students. In the last 6 months salaries for the Lithuanian junior doctors were reduced twice (more than 20% in total). During the same time, despite the economic crisis, many managers of the governmental health care institutions had the increase of their pay, making their income 10 to 20 times more important than the junior doctors'.

Few months ago Lithuanian Ministry of Health denied the petition of Lithuanian Junior Doctors Association suggesting to legitimate the working relations and to install salaries for the dentists in training. These young people take care of the patients, work the night shifts, but formally they are still students with no social guarantees or salaries.

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