

STATEMENT ON WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

UEMS Section of occupational medicine makes the following opinion on the proposed Working Time Directive:

1. Health professionals (doctors) have to, due to a broader social interest carry out their work over the full-time, at nights, on weekends and holidays. The most exposed are young doctors during their specializations, who, due to the educational process, often work an enormous number of hours over the regular working time.
2. The main task of occupational medicine specialists is to protect workers' health from the harmful effects of work and workplaces. Starting from this preposition, the task of occupational medicine is also to protect health of the health professionals and the doctors among them.
3. Working at night increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal, metabolic and mental diseases.
4. Working at night was recognised as a carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (Group 2A) in 2007. Working "on call" and "being prepared at home" is largely carried out during the night time hence this kind of work is potentially dangerous to health of the health workers and doctors as well.
5. In addition to the direct adverse effects of working overtime on health one must also take into account the negative impacts on family and social life of the health workers, that indirectly leads to the deterioration of his (her) mental and eventually his (her) physical wellbeing.
6. Working Time Directive should precisely define what belongs within working hours. Members of the UEMS Section of occupational medicine believe that working "on call" and "being prepared at home" should be included into the working time.
7. The number of total working hours should not exceed forty-eight hours per week unless in the case when individual health professional (doctor) provides written consent to work over time.
8. After a twenty-four-hour work health professionals are entitled to at least twelve hours of rest.

Occupational medicine specialists, members of the UEMS Section of Occupational Medicine, understand and are aware that working overtime is necessary for sustainability of health systems in countries of the European Union. However, it is also important to take into account the adverse effects of such work on the health of workers and the latter's protection. We therefore consider it necessary to impose the maximum permissible limit of working hours per week, which could be exceeded only by individual informed consent. The work in health organizations should be organised optimally to provide continuous health care for EU citizens and not allow harmful consequences on the health workers' health.