



FINNISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

HH/SV



Dr. Lembi Aug
President of the Estonian Medical Association

Dear Dr. Aug,

Thank you for bringing to our attention that the Estonian government is planning changes in the licensing system of doctors coming from outside the EU/EEA countries. It is our understanding that such foreign doctors will be granted specialist licenses in Estonia without proper assessment of their knowledge and skills, based only on documents they have presented. Furthermore, if we understand correctly, this practice is planned to be established in the Estonian legislation. Also it appears that a very short specialist training period of 1-2 years is planned to be replaced by work experience in the given speciality.

The EU professional qualifications directive (PQD) was renewed in the end of 2013 (2013/55). This directive regulates the free movement of e.g. doctors. The leading principle behind the renewal was to ensure patient safety for European citizens.

Although the directive does not regulate qualifications of doctors coming from outside the EU/EEA countries, the preamble of PQD mentions that each Member State should make sure that qualifications of non-EU residents or graduates should be recognized only when their competence is not lesser than required of specialists in EU countries.

In many EU countries the licensing of doctors coming from outside the EU/EEA countries is based on necessary training and evaluation of the knowledge and skills of these doctors including language tests. This is also the case in Finland. Doctors coming from outside the EU/EEA countries have to pass three different exams (theoretical clinical medicine, health care legislation and a practical exam in a real clinical setting). They also have to undergo practical training in hospitals and health centers and have necessary language skills before getting a licence in Finland. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is planning to make the language requirements higher than now since communication skills are essential in ensuring patient safety.

It is the view of the Finnish Medical Association (FMA) that each specialist practicing within EU has to conform with basic requirements set by the profession.. Based on this FMA hopes that in order to ensure safe treatment for Estonian patients, the Estonian government will apply the same stringent quality criteria as most other European countries regarding licensing of doctors coming from non-EU/EEA countries and not allow short specialist training be replaced by work experience.

Finnish Medical Association

Tuula Rajaniemi
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