



European Medical Organizations (EMOs) Statement: Statutory changes of the Portugal Medical Association threaten the autonomy of the medical profession

On June 15, 2023, the Portuguese Government approved legislation that modifies the statutes of public professional associations, which include the Portuguese Medical Association (Ordem dos Médicos) and awaits ratification by the Portuguese Parliament.¹ According to the government, the aim is to “eliminate restrictions of access to professions and improve the conditions for competition”.²

But beyond that goal the Government increases significantly its oversight over the Portuguese Medical Association by creating disciplinary and supervisory bodies which would include non-physicians.

The proposed supervisory body, where 60% of members would be comprised of non-physicians, would have broad competences which would include exerting control concerning the regulation of the medical profession, proposing a non-physician ombudsman of service recipients, reporting misconduct to the disciplinary council making decisions on appeals of decisions emanating from the Association’s bodies, assessing the existence of conflicts of interest in members of the Association’s bodies and providing binding recommendations regarding the creation, composition and competences of specialty colleges.

The regional disciplinary bodies would retain their current roles but include at least a third of non-physician members.

The national disciplinary body, which decides on appeals of the regional disciplinary bodies and standardizes their performances, would also include at least one third of non-physician members.

These changes constitute a clear and present danger to the ability of the Portuguese Medical Association to regulate the medical profession and to uphold the highest possible standards of medical care.

These are unprecedented times in the history of the Portuguese Medical Association.

The European Medical Organizations stand with our colleagues in Portugal in the much-needed fight to defend Medicine, physicians and patients, and maintain the autonomy of the medical profession. They strongly support the request made by the Portuguese Medical Association to the Portuguese Government and Parliament to change this proposal.

1 – Lei nº 12/2023 de 28 de março:

<https://files.dre.pt/1s/2023/03/06200/0000200013.pdf> (accessed on June 15, 2023).

2 – Comunicado do Conselho de Ministros de 15 de Junho de 2023:

<https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc23/governo/comunicado-de-conselho-de-ministros?i=556> (accessed on June 15, 2023).

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European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS)

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