



European Medical Students' Association

Association Européenne des Étudiants en Médecine

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Statement on the Midterm progress report on the Action Plan to Improve Public Health Preparedness and Response in the WHO European Region, 2018-2023

Brussels, 3rd of September 2021

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has led to much devastation. Lessons learned have to be utilised in order to better prepare for possible future pandemics and humanitarian crises through investment in prevention, for example specifically in vaccination efforts, as well as by improving our healthcare systems to make them more resilient.

As European medical students, we recognise the efforts made by the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) and all stand-by partners in emergencies, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding personnel deployment done by either the GOARN, its partners or the Member States, we would like to underline the possibility of the role of medical students. Across the region, medical students, sometimes not entirely voluntarily, have joined the workforce during their studies as a response to emergencies created by the pandemic. As European medical students, we would like to underline that medical students, especially ones in their final years, can be taken into consideration in the planning of responses of healthcare systems in emergency situations.

However, we want to highlight that the fair and ethical treatment of medical students included in these endeavours needs to be ensured.

We call upon relevant actors to ensure the adequate supply of PPE for medical students to the same extent as that of other healthcare professionals, in alignment with WHO guidelines. A survey conducted by EMSA regarding the supply of PPE and vaccination offers in the first months of 2021 has shown that, unfortunately, medical students working within the healthcare sector during the pandemic seem to not always be kept in mind in terms of PPE resources and supply and are not treated with the same respect for personal safety that all healthcare professionals should be treated with at all times. Regulations need to be drafted and upheld to include medical students in ideally mutually beneficial situations, while respecting their well-being and safety.

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