Question for written answer E-003712/2025
to the Commission
Rule 144
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Subject: Protecting doctors' health: full implementation of Directive 2003/88/EC on working time

In the Whitebook 2024[1], the European Federation of Salaried Doctors (FEMS) points out that, due to the shortage of medical staff, Directive 2003/88/EC on working time is often derogated in several Member States, undermining the protection of workers' health. This situation has increased the physical and mental burden on doctors, who are forced to endure excessively long shifts, frequent overtime, and insufficient rest, including daily, weekly, and annual leave. In addition, there is widespread misuse of on-call periods (stand-by duty), used to compensate for staff shortages: doctors must remain close to their workplace, in a constant state of alert, unable to fully enjoy their free time.

In light of this:

1 How does the European Commission intend to strengthen the enforcement of Directive 2003/88/EC by establishing common EU-level standards, defining maximum working hours, extending minimum rest periods, and recognizing stand-by duty as a separate category of working time with its own characteristics?

2 How does the European Commission plan to launch structured dialogue with Member States and social partners and, if necessary, propose legislative or interpretative measures to harmonize the management of stand-by duty and address the shortage of medical staff?

Submitted: 24.9.2025

[1] European Federation of Salaried Doctors (FEMS), European Doctors Working Conditions – A FEMS White Book, 2024.