



# FEDERAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS MÉDICOS (NATIONAL FEDERATION OF DOCTORS)

## **Proposal for Medical Career renegotiation**

### **The historical framework:**

Decree-Law (DL) no. 73/90 revised the legal regime for medical careers in the services and facilities of the Portuguese National Health Service (NHS), stemming from the need to refurbish the remuneration system of medical professionals, based on a more dynamic model, as a new approach to the organisation and functioning of healthcare facilities. The Decree introduced the exclusive dedication (ED) work regime, consisting of 35 working hours (ED optional) and 42 hours (ED only), the pay rates being set on the basis of ED work. The salary for the 42-hour work week would be increased by 25 per cent over the basic monthly salary and included a 25 per cent increase in the years of service for retirement purposes. Wages in ED involved the payment of holiday and Christmas bonuses of the same amount.

Decree-laws 176 and 177/2009 eliminated ED, which coincided with the beginning of the deterioration of the NHS and the exodus of doctors in search of better working conditions.

During the troika bailout, as a temporary measure, Decree-Law 266-D/2012 was renegotiated to address the needs at the time but failed. This decree introduced the 40-hour work week, increasing the work hours in the Emergency Department (ER) from 12 to 18 hours a week in the hospital, and raising the number of patients for Family Doctors from 1,500 to 1,900 patients. Although Decree-Law 266-D/2012 was negotiated with a commitment to review it in three years, it has remained in force. Low pay (€2,863.21 for an entry-level attending physician, which corresponds to approximately €1,800 net) has resulted in even more physicians fleeing the country or moving to private systems. The advent of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic exacerbated the exodus of doctors in search of better working conditions and an improved work-life balance.

### **The grounds for the need for adjust the pay scale:**

Doctors have lost approximately 20 per cent of their purchasing power over the last 10 years (data from July 2022 - *Jornal Económico* [18 per cent], Eugénio Rosa [20.2 per cent]) - which means that a doctor's salary adjusted for inflation is €3,664.91 (based on the entry level of the medical career, with a 40-hour work week).

In 2023, it was proposed that physicians' pay rates be adjusted for the loss of purchasing power over the last ten years, and that the work week be reduced to 35 hours, in line with other civil servants and the European Union countries. A 35-hour work week makes it possible to balance work and family life, with consequent gains in productivity and the attractiveness of the NHS for doctors.

Based on these assumptions, a gross monthly salary of €3,664.91 is proposed for entry-level doctors working 35 hours a week, which corresponds to an hourly rate of €24.35.

By approximation, aligning the pay now being proposed for doctors with the Single Pay Scale Schedule (Tabela Remuneratória Única TRU), the entry-level attending physician corresponds to index 60 on the TRU. Progression to the following grades and scales will take place every two positions under the attending physician grade, every four positions under the specialist grade, and every six pay positions under the senior specialist grade.

It is also proposed, like DL 414/71, that the residency training be considered the entry-level grade in the career.

Regarding the salaries in force under the previous regimes, namely residency, the 35-hour work week with and without ED and the 42-hour work week with ED, and the full-time availability regime in the Public Health speciality, adjustments to the pay rates shall follow the assumptions. The possibility of transitioning to a new regime is provided for, if it is more favourable, regardless of the nature of the employment relationship (Public Employment Contract or Individual Employment Contract) without it being considered a progression or resulting in loss of points awarded previously through employee assessment.

## **The importance of the exclusive dedication regime for retaining doctors in the National Health Service:**

Experience from implementing Decree-Law 73/90 has shown that the ED regime contributed to the retention of doctors in the NHS. There are several reasons for this:

1. The doctors carry out their professional activity in one location,
2. Better pay,
3. Best work/life balance,
4. Gradual reduction in the working hours over the years,
5. Absence of duplication of work in night shifts, bank holidays or weekly rest days,
6. Stability in the team in which the doctor works.

With only one workplace, rest breaks are better guaranteed, and there is less need to work on weekly rest days and bank holidays. It also ensures better integration into the work team and greater dedication to the employer institution, thereby fostering the development of motivating professional projects. The institutions and patients benefit from the quantitative, but more importantly the qualitative, enhancement of the planned activities resulting from motivation, project implementation, transdisciplinarity and research. Medical training will certainly improve thanks to the greater availability of senior staff, who are more likely to be involved in differentiating projects.

By implementing this work regime, we are convinced that the conditions will be in place to attract and retain doctors in the NHS, thus avoiding their leaving for other sectors or emigrating.

### **FNAM's therefore proposes:**

1. The renegotiation of the medical career and respective pay scales as follows:
  - a. Basic weekly working time of 35 hours (Table 1);
  - b. 12 hours in the emergency department and reduction of the list of patients for family doctors;
  - c. 35-hour work week with exclusive dedication, optional and with 20 per cent pay increase;
  - d. Possibility of extending weekly working time from 35 to 40 hours with exclusive dedication, optional and increased by 40 per cent (with a reduction of 1 hour/year up to 35 hours per week, with no change in monthly pay, from the age of 55);
  - e. Restitution of annual leave of 25 working days of holiday, and an extra 5 days when regulatory leave is taken outside high season;

f. The annual leave is increased by 1 extra day of holiday after every 5 years of work up to 5 working days, which shall not be reflected in the calculation of the holiday allowance, without prejudice to other increases provided for by law on other grounds;

g. The exclusive dedication regime entails an increase in the remuneration package in the form of a supplement, which includes the payment of holiday and Christmas allowances of the same amount, and shall count towards social and retirement benefits;

h. Given the difficult and risky nature of the medical profession, the possibility of early retirement for doctors after 36 years of service or at the age of 62;

i. Reinstatement of the Medical Residency as the entry-level grade of the Medical Career.

j. Measures to support parenthood and postgraduate training

## 2. Change in Category Grades:

a. Attending physician: 5 grades (currently 8);

b. Senior specialist: 2 grades (currently 3).

3. Automatic promotion to Specialist for all doctors who obtain the Consultant grade.

4. Issue a call for application to Senior Specialist.

### Proposed pay scales:

Category	Grade	TRU	35h <sup>1</sup>	
			monthly rate	hourly rate
<b>Senior Graduate Assistant</b>	2	98	5 708,52	37,93
	1	92	5 386,40	35,79
<b>Graduate Assistant</b>	5	86	5 064,29	33,65
	4	82	4 849,55	32,22
	3	78	4 634,82	30,80
	2	74	4 420,07	29,37
	1	70	4 205,33	27,94
<b>Assistant</b>	5	68	4 097,96	27,23
	4	66	3 990,58	26,52
	3	64	3 883,22	25,80
	2	62	3 775,83	25,09
<b>Specialised training</b>	1	60	3 668,48	24,38
	2	41	2 649,17	17,60
<b>General training</b>	1	39	2 543,91	16,90
		32	2 175,48	14,46

Table 1 – Proposed pay schedule.

<sup>1</sup>35 hours: current rate for 40h, adjusted for the loss of purchasing power over 10 years (20%) and for inflation in 2022 (7.8%).  
Notes: 1. Remuneration updates for the exclusive dedication regime of 42 or 35 hours, or 35 hours without exclusive dedication, would be equivalent to an increase in TRU levels of 30% of the hourly value. 2. In addition to the increase in remuneration levels and adjustments referred to above, there will be added remuneration increases across the Public Administration, in accordance with the terms set out in the Multi-Year Valuation Agreement for Public Administration workers — 2% per year, until 2026.

FNAM Executive Committee

14 November 2023