

Statement of Support for French Junior Doctors

April 2025

Context

The Junior Doctors Network (JDN) of the World Medical Association (WMA) is closely monitoring the ongoing debate surrounding a motion from the French Parliament which seeks to better serve medically underserved areas (“medical deserts”) in the country. The proposed legislative reform aims to address regional disparities in healthcare access by mandating certain professional obligations for junior doctors, including compulsory establishment of physicians in designated under-served areas and the mandatory participation of doctors in the national on-call duty system (“*permanence des soins*”).

While the intention to strengthen healthcare delivery in underserved regions is understood and applauded, the affected doctors across the country have expressed their opposition, calling for a model that respects their freedom of career choice as physicians; one that safe-guards their well-being while balancing service delivery to the population and protects the individual doctors' autonomy.

Key Concerns and International Best Practices

1. The proposed restriction on the freedom of establishment violates the civil rights of physicians: their ability to choose their area/region of practice. International standards, including the [WMA Statement on Physicians Well-Being](#) (2015), emphasizes that autonomy in career decisions is critical for professional satisfaction, workforce stability, and ultimately, the quality of patient care.
2. The implementation of mandatory on-call duty should take into account compliance with the European Working Time Directive (EWTD). This is important to prevent burnout among doctors and to ensure patient safety. Long shifts contribute to fatigue-related errors.
3. The combination of mandatory geographical assignments and compulsory on-call duties may exacerbate poor working conditions in already pressured settings. Rather than enhancing service provision, these constraints have the potential to discourage new graduates from entering or remaining in the profession especially in the field of primary care, more specifically in the areas that are of the greatest unmet need.

Support for Collective Action

When physicians' working conditions deteriorate, collective action—including protests—is a legitimate means of advocacy ([WMA Statement on the Ethical Implications of Collective Action by Physicians, 2012; reaffirmed 2022](#)). The WMA JDN stands in solidarity with French junior doctors in their call for fair employment conditions, just remuneration and professional autonomy. We affirm that healthcare reforms must be developed in partnership with those directly affected and grounded in respect for the rights and contributions of medical professionals.

The WMA JDN, together with French junior doctors, call on the French government to engage in meaningful bilaterals with junior doctor representatives to consider alternative models that align with both healthcare equity goals and physician well-being, with the ultimate objective of enhancing patient care.



About the World Medical Association Junior Doctors Network (WMA JDN)

The Junior Doctors Network (JDN) serves as an international platform for junior doctors to facilitate an open dialogue of global events and activities that are relevant to their postgraduate training and the World Medical Association (WMA). Its mission is to empower junior physicians to work together towards a healthier world through advocacy, education, and international collaboration.

You can learn more about the WMA JDN [here](#) or contact us at chair.jdn@wma.net.

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