

## WONCA Europe Secretariat

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Dr. Ainis Dzalbs, The vice-president of the Rural Family Doctors' Association of Latvia  
World Health Organization Europe, Regional Director Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge  
European Commission, President Ursula von der Leyen  
The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Secretary-General Mathias Cormann  
The European Rural and Isolated Practitioners Association, President Oleg Kravtchenko  
The European Forum for Primary Care, Coordinator of the Forum Diederik Aarendonk  
The Latvian Medical and Dental Association, President Prof Dr Ugis Gruntmanis

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Dear Colleagues,

We write to you on behalf of WONCA Europe, an international association of 50 specialist colleges in Family Medicine from across Europe. We would like to express our sincere concern about the state of primary care in Latvia, particularly within rural areas. We are aware of the significant workload and workforce shortages that family physicians are facing in Latvia, despite their ongoing efforts to propose solutions to improve the situation over a number of years.

Latvia, as a member state of the World Health Organisation, has committed to developing a healthcare system based on robust primary care. Strong primary health care can meet 70% to 90% of a person's health needs throughout their life course. Evidence suggests that healthcare systems that are based on primary care can have higher quality and safety of care, improved population health, reduced mortality rates, and significantly lower national healthcare costs. Conversely, a weak and ineffective primary health care system will drive an increased demand for secondary and tertiary health services, which are much more costly and can overload hospitals.

We are outraged by the apparent lack of willingness on the part of the Latvian authorities to resolve this primary care crisis. This practice will undoubtedly lead to unsafe patient care, increased burnout rates among healthcare workers, difficulties in recruiting new and young family physicians, and ongoing emigration of Latvian healthcare workers. Furthermore, inadequate primary healthcare coverage has significant implications for health security and the international health reputation of Latvia as a modern European nation.

Therefore, we appeal to the Latvian health authorities to actively engage in finding solutions to the problem. The Rural Family Doctors' Association of Latvia has proposed well-defined and balanced short- and long-term solutions. We expect the authorities and all other relevant stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue to address the situation.

We are willing to cooperate and provide our expertise and experience through a meeting with the national stakeholders. Let us work together to ensure that every Latvian can access safe, high-quality primary care services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shlomo Vinker', is centered below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Prof. Dr. Shlomo Vinker  
WONCA Europe President