

## EPSU-HOSPEEM Project

“Strengthening social dialogue in the hospital sector in the East, South and Central Europe” (2019-2021)

### Summary Document

The project was a key action of the EU sectoral social partners in the hospital and healthcare sector for HOSPEEM and EPSU.

HOSPEEM and EPSU benefited from the financial support of the European Commission for the joint project (VS/2019/0008) - **Strengthening social dialogue in the hospital sector in the East, South and Central Europe**) running from February 2019 until December 2021 and aimed at implementing a core priority of the joint work programme 2019 - 2022 of the European sectoral social dialogue committee for the hospital sector, i.e. address the capacity building needs of national social partners in the hospital and healthcare sector with the support of DG EMPL.

The project’s **purpose** was to **provide an appropriate framework to continue addressing the capacity building needs of social partners**. The work served to help build the capacity of the hospital sector social partners in **14 targeted countries** (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Romania, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia) by **exchanging on and collecting the relevant topics and priorities for the EU-level sectoral social dialogue**.

The action contributed to 1) create a common understanding of the situation and its overall impact on the hospital and healthcare sector and healthcare workers and 2) raise awareness amongst employers and workers on the improvements of strengthening sector social dialogue and involvement in the European semester and 3) identify relevant measures and tools to address them. The workshops also promoted the exchange of knowledge and best practices and fostered cross country learning.

The project organised **three regional workshops**, in June 2019 in Bucharest (Romania), in November 2019 in Rome (Italy) in April 2021 online (originally planned in Zagreb, Croatia). The **dissemination workshop** webinar took place in June 2021, and it was targeted to a wider audience beyond the national social partners. The workshops brought together over 170 participants from 23 Member States, the United Kingdom, Norway, and the Republic of Moldova, mainly from national trade unions and employers organisations. Representatives of the European Commission (DG EMPL, social dialogue unit, Unit for Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, DG SANTE, Health Systems Unit, Cabinet member of European Commissioner Nicolas Schmit), Eurofound, the Portuguese Permanent Representation to the EU as well as national experts in the fields participated in the events.

The regional workshops and dissemination workshop contributed to **raising awareness amongst employers and workers on the improvements of strengthening sector social dialogue and involvement in the European semester and identifying relevant measures and tools to address them**. The workshops also promoted the exchange of knowledge and best practices and fostered cross country learning.



The contracted experts drafted the reports of the three regional workshops and the final workshop. The fact sheets containing information gathered through the survey and supplemented by the workshops' discussions are available on the [HOSPEEM](https://hospeem.org)<sup>1</sup> and [EPSU](https://www.epsu.org)<sup>2</sup> websites.

Based on the reports and discussions during the workshops the following **'take-home messages'** can be formulated:

- Strengthening sector social dialogue in the hospital sector and building the capacity of national sectoral social partners is key to a successful European social model. **A strong sectoral social dialogue in the health sector has a significant impact on the health and well-being of its workforce, the organisations, and society.** Due to COVID-19, coupled with the ongoing demographic change, the demand for high-quality healthcare is rising, and the need for future health systems to be resilient. The health workforce is equipped with the necessary tools and skills to deliver the services.
- **Improvements in involving and strengthening the autonomy and importance of sectoral social partners in the decision-making process at the national level also supports recruitment and retention policies and improve workplace safety and health, including preventing, managing, and reducing musculoskeletal disorders psycho-social risk at the workplace.** Additionally, it makes the health sector more attractive for the future workforce, that are faced with new care patterns, the increasing digitalisation of the sector, necessary skills development, and continuing professional and life-long learning. Working in partnership to ensure that the sectoral social partners have an equal say in the health system management provides clear benefits and added value and leads to a win-win situation.
- **A well-functioning sectoral social dialogue and the performance of national health systems are interlinked.** It was highlighted that having sectoral social partners' voices heard in the national decision making is a shared concern between employers and trade unions. Therefore, the cooperation of employers and trade unions is fundamental in successfully building capacity and strengthening the national sectoral social dialogue.
- Regarding the **European Semester**, several tools and opportunities are available for national social partners to allow greater involvement. They often need to be better known, implemented, and used.
- The events were a key step for the sectoral social partners in the hospital sector in identifying key priorities and measures to strengthen national sectors for effective dialogue in the hospital sector. Social partners should make the best possible use of the conference results and the project in the social dialogue / collective bargaining.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://hospeem.org/activities/hospeem-epsu-project-2019-2020-on-strengthening-social-dialogue-in-the-hospital-sector-in-the-east-south-and-central-europe/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.epsu.org/article/strengthening-social-dialogue-hospital-sector-new-hospeem-and-epsu-project>