



15 January 2021

## **The protests Federația „Solidaritatea Sanitară” din România organized on 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, are just the beginning!**

Yesterday, January 14, 2021, Federația „Solidaritatea Sanitară” organized the first action in the street within the *Protest for supporting compliance of legal and moral rights of healthcare workers*. The almost 2,000 „Solidaritatea Sanitară” members who protested yesterday in Bucharest and in most counties, could only represent the beginning of unprecedented actions! Given that this is a protest organized under the restrictive conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, a category of professionals already exhausted in the fight against this scourge, burdened by a growing workload, many of them in isolation due to infection, the evaluation of dissatisfaction can be understood correctly by multiplying by 10 the number of participants (equivalent to participation under normal conditions).

There is a growing dissatisfaction in the Romanian public health system, with the latest measures taken in December 2020 (discriminatory treatment regarding the application of the retirement age reduction for particularly dangerous working conditions and the interruption of the legal rate of correction of wage inequalities/salary cuts) contributing to amplify the situation. The social indifference of the current Government, manifested in particular by the disregard that treats social dialogue and legal rights, tends to be the last straw.

The Government's attempt to use measures that should be limited to combating the COVID-19 pandemic as a weapon in the fight against the legal and moral rights of health professionals exacerbates the crisis. Romania is the only country from E.U. where the resignation of medical personnel is prohibited, the professionals being subject to a military regime (only in terms of obligations), which is equivalent to forced labor. The measure banning the strike has in fact blocked the possibility for health workers to defend their rights, being directed against those for whom the Government should in fact recognize their merits for their efforts and sacrifices in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Federația „Solidaritatea Sanitară” warns the Government of the consequences of its attempts to abuse the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to cut wages and refuse to grant legal and moral rights to health workers. In the conditions of this law abuse, the prohibition of the strike also expires, the health professionals having the possibility to be on general strike. This is the main direction determined by the indifference of the current Government towards the rules of social dialogue, towards the legal and moral rights of health professionals. The alternative is to increase the migration of health professionals, at a time when the opportunities offered by Western countries have reached an unprecedented level.

The citizens of this country can be treated because (still) there are professionals in the public health sector. About almost 6 years ago, the health professionals' departure curve had reached its maximum level, after the salary level had caused a massive migration, other governments indifferent to the fate of the public health system had blocked employment and a Romanian President had publicly recommended that professionals leave if they were dissatisfied. Through arguments, protests and sometime the understanding of the rulers in the last, we managed to correct some of the problems (even if, through inequities, the rulers hurried to create others), reducing so the departures from the health system. The COVID-19 pandemic came after the results of our actions had already determined a stabilization of the level of departure of professionals. Facing the same criticisms that we face now, during this period we had a decisive contribution to saving the human resources used during this pandemic. Now a new Government of indifference tends to turn things back on track, giving a new signal to health professionals to leave. The protest continues!

