



**SOCIÉTÉ EUROPÉENNE DE PÉDIATRIE AMBULATOIRE – SEPA  
EUROPEAN SOCIETY OF AMBULATORY PEDIATRICS – ESAP**

Dear Ministers of Health for European Countries,

Children are the future of our society and the future of our children begins today. This remains true without regard to country and economical and political situation. It is clear that physical and mental health of children and adolescents is a prerogative for their future wellbeing. The best health care for children and adolescents can only be achieved by health care professionals trained to the highest possible standards. The health professional best qualified to fulfill this function are paediatricians. They are responsible for an all-embracing and long term approach to the health and development of the child and adolescent.

The mission of paediatricians, dealing with newborns, children and adolescents from birth to at least 18 years, focusses on three main areas:

- Medical care and prevention
- Health promotion and support of children, adolescents and their families
- Involvement in community networks.

Fundamentally, paediatricians deal with three circles of practical action:

- the first circle involves the child, the siblings, the parents, and the next of kin
- the second circle involves kindergarten, school and the medical and paramedical networks
- the third circle involves the judicial world, regulatory authorities, state and other institutions and private companies.

Because children and adolescents are at the centre of each of these circles and the child and adolescent have specific needs, we feel that paediatricians should be their advocates, ensuring that they remain at the focal point.

In many European countries, the care of children is left to general practitioners due to political and economical considerations.

Moreover, the number of paediatricians is on the decline in practically all countries. At the same time the average age of paediatricians is ever increasing. Due to the current political situation in many EU member countries, training positions are becoming rare and paediatric primary care is not encouraged.

One should keep in mind that in some of these countries the number of general practitioners is also decreasing. Hence, in a few years, the number of GP's will be insufficient to meet the health care needs of the young population.

Who will then take care of children and adolescents?

Paediatrics is not adult medicine applied to young patients. Paediatrics is specialized medical care for children and adolescents, who are entitled to high quality health-care to suit their particular needs. Several studies have clearly shown that paediatricians deliver more qualified care and are more cost effective than GP's.

We therefore ask you to give consideration to the following requests:

- To revise the concept and implementation of paediatric care in our diverse European countries.
- To support (made more accessible) medical training in paediatric primary care for all those who wish to work in this field.

- To determine the number of paediatricians required to secure the health care needs of each country and increase their numbers where necessary.
- To provide paediatricians with the essential conditions to deliver good clinical practice for children and adolescents.
- To convey our concerns to general practitioners who want to care for children and adolescents, that they need better training in paediatrics, i.e. at least a minimum of one years training in a paediatric hospital and in an ambulatory paediatric setting under the supervision of a paediatrician.

Yours sincerely.

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President of European Society  
of Ambulatory Paediatrics