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## **The length of postgraduate training for geriatric medicine in European countries: An update for the year 2015**

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On a European level there are current ongoing discussions on the length of postgraduate medical specialist training, including for the specialty of geriatric medicine. The background is a European Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications in medicine which defines the minimum length of postgraduate training for medical specialties (Directive 2005/36/ec of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005). This Directive covers all medical specialties, including geriatric medicine. The European umbrella organisation of medical specialists in European countries (the European Union of Medical Specialists, UEMS) is now calling for an update of this Directive with new definitions of the minimum postgraduate training period. Specifically, the UEMS states in a letter dated April 28, 2015, to all UEMS Specialist Sections and European Boards: "[...] current European legislation does not reflect the current standards of modern medicine and this is why the UEMS repeatedly has called for an update to the provisions on medical specialist training in the framework of the revision of the Directive. It is commonly accepted that contemporary specialist medical training cannot be satisfactorily completed within less than five years [...]"

For the specialty of geriatric medicine, the European Directive currently requires four years as a minimum length of postgraduate training after medical school. To have a basis for a discussion of change of this directive, the UEMS Geriatrics section performed a survey of the length of postgraduate training for geriatrics in the year 2015. For this purpose, an e-mail survey was conducted among UEMS delegates to determine the minimum length of postgraduate training for each of the 22 countries with geriatrics listed in the European directive. For 3 listed countries (Cyprus Liechtenstein Luxembourg), no information was available due to the lack of a known national postgraduate geriatrics training programme in these countries. The survey among the 19 remaining countries revealed that the duration of postgraduate training varied between 4 and 9 years (4 years: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Spain; 5 years: Finland, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia; 6 years: Belgium; 7 years: Denmark, Norway, Sweden; 8 years: Iceland; Ireland, Malta; 9 years: United Kingdom). In the 6 countries with 4 years of postgraduate training for

geriatric medicine, the length of postgraduate training would have to be adapted if the minimal requirement changed to five years as suggested by the UEMS. This is an update of information published in a previous systematic international survey on European postgraduate training in geriatric medicine, the data for which was collected in the year 2013 [1]. The new 2015 survey provides information on the minimum time needed to become a Geriatric Medicine specialist since qualifying from medical school (including both basic as well as specialised training after medical school), and shows some changes from the previous survey. For example, Italy has recently reduced the training period from 5 to 4 years. The data for 2015 emphasize to what extent length of postgraduate geriatrics training differs between European countries. Given the mutual recognition of specialist titles in Europe there is a need for harmonization and quality assurance of geriatrics specialization. We hope that this letter, combined with additional information included in previous reports [1,2] may serve as a database for future steps in updating postgraduate training in geriatrics in Europe.

### **Compliance with ethical standards**

**Conflict of interest** The corresponding author, Andreas Stuck, confirms that for all co-authors there exists NO conflict of interest.

**Ethical approval** The study does not contain animals or human participants.

**Informed consent** For this type of study a formal consent was not required.

### **References**

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**Appendix (not part of published Letter to the Editor)**

**Table. European countries with geriatrics as a primary specialty according to the European Directive: Name of specialty title and duration of postgraduate training in 2015**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Name of the Specialty Title in this Country</b>	<b>Duration of Training (Number of Years)<sup>a</sup></b>
Cyprus	Γηριατρική	n.a.
Liechtenstein	Geriatric	n.a.
Luxembourg	Gériatrie	n.a.
Bulgaria	Гериатрична медицина	4
Czech Republic	Geriatric	4
Italy	Geriatric	4
Lithuania	Geriatric	4
Romania	Geriatric și gerontologie	4
Spain	Geriatric	4
Finland	Geriatric / Geriatric	5
Hungary	Geriatric	5
Netherlands	Klinische geriatric	5
Poland	Geriatric	5
Slovakia	Geriatric	5
Belgium	Gériatrie/Geriatric	6
Denmark	Intern medicin: geriatric	7
Norway	Geriatric	7
Sweden	Geriatric	7
Iceland	Öldrunarlækningar	8
Ireland	Geriatric medicine	8
Malta	Ġerjatrija	8
United Kingdom	Geriatric medicine	9

n.a.: information not available (country without known national training curriculum)

<sup>a</sup>numbers rounded to the next year