II

(Acts whose publication is not obligatory)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE
of 15 September 1986
on specific training in general medical practice

(86/457/EEC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Articles 49, 57 and 66 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission (1),

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament (2),

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee (3),

Whereas Council Directive 75/362/EEC (4), as last amended by the 1985 Act of Accession, and Council Directive 75/363/EEC (5), as last amended by Directive 82/76/EEC (6), on freedom of movement for medical practitioners, contain no provisions regarding the mutual recognition of diplomas attesting to specific training in general medical practice or the criteria to which such training should conform ;

Whereas, although the Council did not consider that the time was right to take appropriate measures on the matter at Community level, it nevertheless noted that in a number of Member States there was a growing tendency to emphasize the general medical practitioner's role and the importance of his training ; whereas it accordingly requested the Commission to study the problems connected with this development ;

Whereas the point has now been reached where it is almost universally recognized that there is a need for specific training for the general medical practitioner to enable him better to fulfil his function ; whereas this function, which depends to a great extent on the doctor's personal knowledge of his patients' environment, consists of giving advice on the prevention of illness and on the protection of the patient's general health, besides giving appropriate treatment ;

Whereas this need for specific training in general medical practice has emerged mainly as a result of the development of medical science, which has increasingly widened the gap between medical research and teaching on the one hand and general medical practice on the other, so that important aspects of general medical practice can no longer be taught in a satisfactory manner within the framework of the Member States' current basic medical training ;

Whereas, apart from the benefit to patients, it is also recognized that improved training for the specific function of general medical practitioner would contribute to an improvement in health care, particularly by developing a more selective approach to the consultation of specialists, use of laboratories and other highly specialized establishments and equipment ;

Whereas improved training for general medical practice will upgrade the status of the general medical practitioner ;

(1) OJ No C 13, 15. 1. 1985, p. 3 and OJ No C 125, 24. 5. 1986, p. 8.
(2) OJ No C 36, 17. 2. 1986, p. 149.
(3) OJ No C 218, 29. 8. 1985, p. 9.
(4) OJ No L 167, 30. 6. 1975, p. 1.
(5) OJ No L 167, 30. 6. 1975, p. 14.
(6) OJ No L 43, 15. 2. 1982, p. 21.

Whereas, although this situation seems irreversible, it has developed at different rates in the various Member States; whereas it is desirable to ensure that the various trends converge in successive stages, without however forcing the pace, with a view to appropriate training for every general medical practitioner in order to satisfy the specific requirements of general medical practice;

Whereas, to ensure the gradual introduction of this reform, it is necessary in an initial stage to institute in each Member State specific training in general medical practice which satisfies minimum quality and quantity requirements, and supplements the minimum basic training which medical practitioners must receive in accordance with Directive 75/363/EEC; whereas it is immaterial whether this training in general medical practice is received as part of, or separately from, basic medical training as laid down nationally; whereas, in a second stage, provision should be made to subject the exercise of general medical practice under a social security scheme to completion of specific training in general medical practice; whereas further proposals to complete the reform should subsequently be put forward;

Whereas this Directive does not affect the power of the Member States to organize their national social security schemes and to determine what activities are to be carried out under those schemes;

Whereas the coordination, pursuant to this Directive, of the minimum conditions governing the issue of diplomas, certificates or other evidence of formal qualifications certifying completion of specific training in general medical practice will render possible the mutual recognition of these diplomas, certificates or other evidence of formal qualifications by the Member States;

Whereas, under Directive 75/362/EEC, a host Member State is not entitled to require medical practitioners, in possession of diplomas obtained in another Member State and recognized under that Directive, to complete any additional training in order to practise within its social security scheme, even where such training is required of holders of diplomas of medicine obtained in its own territory; whereas this consequence of Directive 75/362/EEC will remain in effect as regards the exercise of general medical practice under social security schemes until 1 January 1995, from which date the present Directive requires all Member States to make the exercise of general medical practice in the context of their social security schemes subject to the possession of specific training in general medical practice; whereas medical practitioners established in practice before that date under Directive 75/362/EEC must have an acquired right to practise as general medical practitioners under the national social security scheme of the host country even if they have not completed specific training in general medical practice,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

Article 1

Each Member State which dispenses the complete training referred to in Article 1 of Directive 75/363/EEC within its territory shall institute specific training in general medical practice meeting requirements at least as stringent as those laid down in Articles 2 and 3 of this Directive, in such a manner that the first diplomas, certificates or other evidence of formal qualifications awarded on completion of the course are issued not later than 1 January 1990.

Article 2

1. The specific training in general medical practice referred to in Article 1 must meet the following minimum requirements:

(a) entry shall be conditional upon the successful completion of at least six years' study within the framework of the training course referred to in Article 1 of Directive 75/363/EEC;

(b) it shall be a full-time course lasting at least two years, and shall be supervised by the competent authorities or bodies;

(c) it shall be practically rather than theoretically based; the practical instruction shall be given, on the one hand, for at least six months in an approved hospital or clinic with suitable equipment and services and, on the other hand, for at least six months in an approved general medical practice or in an approved centre where doctors provide primary care; it shall be carried out in contact with other health establishments or structures concerned with general medical practice; however, without prejudice to the aforesaid minimum periods, the practical instruction may be given for a maximum period of six months in other approved health establishments or structures concerned with general medical practice;

(d) it shall entail the personal participation of the trainee in the professional activities and responsibilities of the persons with whom he works.

2. Member States shall be entitled to defer application of the provisions of paragraph 1 (c) relating to minimum periods of instruction until 1 January 1995 at the latest.

3. Member States shall make the issue of diplomas, certificates, or other evidence of formal qualifications awarded after specific training in general medical practice, conditional upon the candidate's holding one of the diplomas, certificates or other evidence of formal qualifications referred to in Article 3 of Directive 75/362/EEC.

4. Member States shall designate the authorities or bodies competent to issue the diplomas, certificates or other evidence of formal qualifications awarded after specific training in general medical practice.