Hourly wages of health care personnel, March 2016
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Mission of the Department of Health Statistics:
Public Health and Welfare through Better Statistics and Information

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Introduction

The analysis provides an overview of the hourly and monthly wages of health care personnel across different occupation groups and types of health care provider in March 2016. The results are compared to the data for the same period in 2015. The research data has been published in the Health Statistics and Health Research database (www.tai.ee/tstua).

The data on the wages of health care personnel is collected with report “Hourly wages of health care personnel” for March every year. The report form and procedure for submission have been established with a regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs.

All wages presented in the analysis are gross wages in euros. The wages of personnel employed on the basis of contracts for services have not been included in the analysis. Furthermore, no data about the income of self-employed persons is collected with this report.

The data on hourly wages cover the data of both full-time and part-time personnel, meaning employees who work either full-time or part-time, and also those who were partially absent from work (on vacation, sick leave or care leave) in March. In the analysis of the hourly wage data, it is important to bear in mind that the number of the working hours in March has been different from year to year. The number of standard working hours of a full-time employee was 176 both in 2015 and 2016. Therefore, the hourly wages of health care providers with fixed monthly wages are one-to-one comparable to the data of 2015.

The monthly wages data only cover the information about persons who work on a full-time basis or more, who worked entire March, were not sick or on vacation.
1. Wage trends

According to Statistics Estonia, the national average monthly wage was 1,091 euros in the first quarter of 2016. Compared to the same period of last year, the national average wage increased by 8.1% (Figure 1). The average wage in the health and social welfare sector was higher than the national average wage, amounting to 1,142 euros and increasing 9.0% over a year. The wage increase of health sector is related to the new collective agreement. On 19 December 2014, the Estonian Hospitals Association, the Union of Estonian Medical Emergency, the Estonian Medical Association, the Estonian Nurses’ Union, and the Federation of Estonian Healthcare Professionals Union signed a collective agreement, establishing minimum wages for health care personnel. According to this, the minimum wages are the following from 1 January 2016: physicians 10 euros per hour, nurses, midwives and health support specialists 5.5 euros per hour, ambulance technical specialists 4.7 euros per hour, emergency medical care technical specialists 4.9 euros per hour, and caring personnel 3.3 euros per hour.

*Source: Statistics Estonia

Figure 1. The average monthly wage of health care personnel and the national monthly wage, 2011–2016 (euros)
According to the data of the report of the National Institute for Health Development “Hourly wage of health care personnel”, the gross monthly wage of physicians (except for dentists) together with all additional remunerations increased by 1.7 percentage points compared to the increase of the national average wage in March 2016. **The total monthly wage of physicians increased by 9.8% over a year.** If we look at the cumulative wage increase within the period of 2011–2016, the wages of physicians have increased at the same pace with the national average wages. The average wages of physicians are 2.3 times higher than the national average wages. This indicator has been more or less at the same level over years. Last year, the wages of physicians were 2.2 times higher than the national average wages.

**The total monthly wage of nurses and midwives increased by 9.1%**, exceeding the general national wage increase by one percentage point. The wages of nurses and midwives were 14% higher than the national average wages. If we look at cumulative wage increase within the period of 2011–2016, the wage increase of nurses and midwives has been somewhat quicker than the increase in the national average wages.

**The total monthly wage of caring personnel** with all additional remunerations increased the most when taking into account the wages of all health care personnel – **14.6%** – and amounts to 71% of the national average wages of 2016. In 2015, the wages of caring personnel accounted for 67% of the national average wages.
2. Wages of physicians

Monthly wage of physicians

The average monthly wage\(^1\) of full-time physicians with all additional remunerations was **2,471 euros** in March 2016 (Figure 2), increasing by 9.8% compared to 2015. Compared to the wage increase in 2015, which was 8.2%, the wage increase in 2016 was 1.6 percentage points higher. In order to earn 2,471 euros, the physicians work an average of 184 hours, or 8 hours more than the standard working hours of March 2016\(^2\). The average total monthly wage of physicians who fully complied with standard working hours in March 2016 was 2,229 euros. This means that working overtime increases the wage of physicians nearly 10%.

*Source: Statistics Estonia

Figure 2. The average monthly wage of full-time physicians by types of health care provider, March 2016 (euros)

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\(^1\) Includes the basic wage, regular additional remunerations, additional remunerations for work in the evenings, in the night, on weekends and national holidays, additional remunerations for overtime, and other regular additional remunerations. This also includes non-regular additional remunerations (quarterly and annual bonuses, as well as other non-regular achievement and value-based remunerations).

\(^2\) In March 2016, the number of standard working hours of a full-time employee in the event of a 40-hour working week was 176.
Due to higher wages and better conditions, **Estonian physicians often work in Finland.** When comparing the total monthly wages of Estonian and Finnish physicians, the wages of our physicians are 2.6 times lower than the wages of our neighbours. According to the labour force survey data of Finland, the average wage of Finnish physicians was 6,543 euros in March 2014. When comparing the relation between the average wages of physicians and the average national wages by states, it can be said that these figures do not differ significantly. According to Statistics Finland, the average national wages were 3,308 euros in 2014, meaning that the average wages of Finnish physicians are two times higher than the average national wages. The wages of Estonian physicians have been slightly more than two times higher than the average national wages over the past years.

Similarly to the previous year, the physicians employed in hospitals earned the highest monthly wage – **2,817 euros.** This is 14% higher than the average total monthly wages of physicians. Compared to the previous year, the wage gap between the average wages of physicians and the wages of physicians employed in a hospital has increased by 1.4 percentage points. The physicians who are employed in a hospital worked an average of 190 hours to earn 2,817 euros. This is 6 hours more than the number of average working hours of physicians and 14 hours more than standard working hours. It is interesting to note that according to the labour force survey data of Finland, the average wage of physicians employed in a hospital was lower than the average wage of physicians in March 2014, amounting to 6,108 euros, however, this is 2.2 times higher than the wage of physicians employed in the hospitals of Estonia.

The total monthly wages of physicians increased the most in outpatient rehabilitation care providers, where the increase was 17.3%. Although the wage increase was the highest in rehabilitation care providers, it still remains the lowest average total monthly wage by the type of the health care providers in comparison with the gross monthly wages. The average total monthly wage of the physicians of rehabilitation care was 1,754 euros, which remains below the average wages of physicians by 29%. Rehabilitation care providers were followed by family doctor offices, where the total monthly wage of physicians was an average of 1,951 euros, and the annual increase 8.6%. Although family doctor offices pay the lowest wages compared to other providers, the Estonian Tax and Customs Board has identified that family doctor offices are the largest beneficiaries of the income of self-employed persons by type of health care providers.
The wages of physicians employed by independent emergency medical care providers, which remarkably increased by 31% in the previous year, remained at the level of 2015. At the same time, the number of average working hours needed to earn the average wages decreased in 2016. In March 2015, when the average total monthly wage of physicians employed in emergency medical care was 2,337 euros, an average of 207 hours were spent to earn this amount, and in March 2016, an average of 182 hours were spent to earn 2,342 euros. The average total monthly wage in outpatient rehabilitation care providers was 2,299 euros, which is an increase of 10% over a year.

**The average basic monthly wage of physicians** was **2,001 euros** (Figure 2); increase compared to the previous year is 10.4%. The highest basic monthly wage was seen in other providers and hospitals, 2,496 and 2,100 euros, respectively. The lowest basic monthly wages were paid in outpatient rehabilitation care providers.

**Additional remunerations constitute an average of one-fifth** of the wage of physicians. The share of additional remunerations from the total monthly wages has remained at the level of 2015. The share of additional remunerations in monthly wages is the highest for physicians working in a hospital, amounting to more than a quarter. The physicians who are employed in other providers and family doctor offices earn the lowest additional remuneration, where the additional remunerations amount to 1.2% and 6.3% of the total monthly wages, respectively.

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3 Basic wages, i.e. gross wages paid in March pursuant to the piece, hourly, daily, weekly or monthly wage rate that has been determined in the employment contract or legislation. Does not include additional remunerations.

4 This includes any remaining providers with an activity licence for the provision of health care services, such as training institutions, outpatient medical departments in prisons, the Defence Forces of Estonia, institutions specialised in the provision of assistant personnel services to family physicians.
The proportion of the wages and additional remunerations of physicians significantly differ by the type of hospital. The highest total monthly wage was paid in regional hospitals (Figure 3), where it was 2,977 euros. Additional remunerations amounted to 38.1% of the total monthly wages. At the same time, the basic monthly wages were one of the lowest there. The lowest total monthly wages were paid in local hospitals, where the share of additional remunerations was 9.7%.

Compared to the same period of last year, the total monthly wages of physicians employed in a hospital increased by 11.2% and their basic monthly wages by 12.2%. The wage increase occurred in all hospital types and it was quicker than in 2015 (except in local hospitals). The total monthly wages increased the most in general and nursing care hospitals, 16.2% and 15.6%, respectively. The total monthly wages (4.2%) and the basic monthly wages (1.2%) increased the least in local hospitals, where the wage increase was the highest in the previous year, 9.4% and 15.8%, respectively. The basic monthly wages increased the most in general hospitals, with an annual growth of 17%.

*Source: Statistics Estonia

Figure 3. The average monthly wage of full-time physicians by type of hospital, March 2016 (euros)
Hourly wage of physicians
In March 2016, the average hourly basic wage of full-time and part-time physicians was 11.87 euros (Figure 4) and their total hourly wage 13.48 euros (Figure 5). Compared to the previous year, the average basic and total hourly wages of physicians increased by 10% and 9.3%, respectively. The median amount of the basic hourly wages and the total hourly wages was 10.23 euros and 11.97 euros, respectively, amounting to 10.1% and 9.9%, respectively. The basic and total hourly wages of physicians employed in emergency medical care increased more than on average, 20.7% and 25.5%, respectively, and in other providers, 21.3% and 24.1%, respectively. The hourly wage increase of emergency medical care providers probably occurred due to smaller number of working hours. The analysis on monthly wages shows that an average of 25 hours were worked less to earn the monthly wage that was equal to 2015.

Figure 4. The average and median basic hourly wage of physicians by type of health care provider and hospital, March 2015 and 2016 (euros)
The basic hourly wage of physicians employed in hospitals was 11.51 euros and their total monthly wage 13.64 euros. The increase in the hourly wages of physicians employed in a hospital remained at the same level with the average wage increase of physicians. The hourly wages by hospital types increased the most in special hospitals, and the basic hourly wages increased by 21.1% and the total hourly wages by 16.8%. While the hourly wages increased in all other hospital types, the basic hourly wages decreased by 3.5% and the total hourly wages by 6% in the rehabilitation care providers. This change has occurred due to reduction in the number of persons who have been included in the analysis. The reason for this is the fact that few physicians are employed in the rehabilitation care providers, and if even some of them earn lower wages, it will immediately affect the average wages.

![Figure 5. The average and median total hourly wage of physicians by type of health care provider and hospital, March 2015 and 2016 (in euros)](image-url)
According to the current wage agreement, the minimum hourly wage of physicians is 10 euros per hour from the beginning of 2016. In 2016, a total of 594 physician positions earned below the minimum wage, amounting to 16.8% of all physician positions. In 2015, a total of 561 physician positions earned below the minimum wage, amounting to 16.2% of all physician positions. The number of physician positions earning less than the minimum wage has increased by 5.9%. When we take a look at the positions that earned the minimum wage, which was established according to the wage agreement concluded in 2015, when the minimum hourly wage of physicians was 9 euros, then 6.5% of the physician positions earned below the minimum wage. Therefore, there are still health care providers that fail to comply with the wage agreement valid for 2015.

Figure 6. Division of physician positions paid under the wage agreement by type of health care provider and hospital, 2016 (%)
total of 238 physician positions in family doctor offices providers earning less than the minimum wage, which amounts to 32.5% of the physician positions in family doctor offices. In the previous year, there were a total of 222 such positions in family doctor offices. More than a half of the physician positions in hospitals that earned less than the minimum wage were located in regional hospitals (Figure 6). There were a total of 141 corresponding positions in regional hospitals, amounting to 13.4% of the physician positions in regional hospitals.
3. Wages of nurses and midwives

**Average monthly wage of nurses and midwives**

In March 2016, the average gross monthly wage of full-time nurses and midwives with all additional remunerations was **1,244 euros** (Figure 7), and it took an average of 183 working hours to earn this amount. When calculating the average monthly wages of nurses and midwives solely on the basis of the wages of those who fulfilled 176 standard working hours established for 2016, their average total monthly wage was 1,153 euros. This means that working overtime increases the total monthly wages of nurses and midwives by 7.3%.

When comparing the total monthly wage of Estonian nurses and midwives with the wages of Finnish nurses and midwives, it is 2.8 times lower. According to Statistics Finland, the average wage of Finnish nurses and midwives was 3,501 euros in March 2014.

Compared to the previous year, the total monthly wages of nurses and midwives increased by 9.1%. The additional remunerations amount to 15.9% of their monthly wage; in the previous year, the share of the additional remunerations was 14.9%. The average gross amount of additional remunerations has increased by 15.9%, amounting to 198 euros. Similarly to the physicians, the nurses and midwives employed in outpatient rehabilitation care were the lowest-paid (25.6% less than the average wage). Their total monthly wages were the only to remain below the national average total monthly wages. Although the total monthly wages of nurses and midwives employed in the rehabilitation care was the lowest, their annual increase was the highest by the type of health care providers, amounting to 23.8%. The wages of nurses and midwives in rehabilitation care dropped in the previous year. One might consider that the great increase of 2016 compensates for the slight drop in wages over the previous year. The average total monthly wages of nurses and midwives employed in family doctor offices was equal to the national average wages, with an annual increase of 8.6%.

Similarly to the previous year, the nurses and midwives earned the highest wages in independent emergency medical care. The nurses and midwives employed in independent emergency medical care earned 16.7% more than the average monthly wages of nurses and midwives. Their number of working hours was also higher than the average – they worked an average of 192 hour to earn **1,452 euros**. This exceeds the number of average working hours.
of nurses and midwives by 9 hours. One component in a considerable total monthly wage is a great share of additional remunerations, amounting to an average of 327 euros. Compared to the previous year, the average additional remuneration has increased by a quarter. The wage gap between nurses and midwives employed in independent emergency medical care and rehabilitation care is nearly 1.6 times. Compared to the previous year, the wage gap between the types of these two providers has slightly decreased; in 2015, it was almost double.

In the previous year, the total monthly wage of nurses and midwives employed in emergency medical care significantly increased by 46% and their basic monthly wage by 34%. In March 2016, their wages did not increase, but decreased – the basic monthly wages by 8.5% and the total monthly wages by 2.7%. The decrease in the monthly wages has probably occurred due to the smaller number of their working hours compared to March 2015.

*Source: Statistics Estonia

Figure 7. The average monthly wage of full-time nurses and midwives by type of health care provider, March 2016 (euros)
In 2016, the average basic monthly wage of nurses and midwives exceeded the limit of 1,000 euros for the first time (Figure 7), being an average of **1,046 euros**. The increase is 7.8% compared to the previous year. The nurses and midwives employed in independent emergency medical care and other providers earned the highest basic monthly wages, amounting to **1,126** and **1,085**, respectively. The lowest basic monthly wages were paid in outpatient rehabilitation care providers, however, the annual increase was the highest similarly to the total monthly wages – 24.3%.

The total monthly wage of nurses and midwives employed in hospitals was **1,290 euros** (Figure 8), which is an increase of 10.9% compared to the previous year. Thereby, the additional remunerations amounted to 19.2%, increasing by 1.4 percentage points over a year. The highest total monthly wage was paid in regional hospitals (1,380 euros) and the lowest in rehabilitation hospitals (1,113 euros). The total monthly wages of all nurses and midwives exceeded the national average wages. In the previous year, the total monthly wages of nurses and midwives employed in rehabilitation and local hospitals remained below the national average wages.

![Figure 8. The average monthly wage of full-time nurses and midwives by type of hospital, March 2016 (euros)](image_url)
The total monthly wages of nurses and midwives increased in all hospital types. The largest wage increase by hospitals occurred in rehabilitation hospitals, where the annual wage increase was 18.2%. The additional remunerations amounted to 26.8% of wages. In regional hospitals, the total monthly wages increased by 9.3%, remaining below the average wage increase of nurses and midwives.

The wages increased the least in nursing care hospitals, amounting to 7.9% and also remaining below the average wage increase of hospitals. At the same time, the wage increase was the highest in nursing care hospitals over the previous year. The total monthly wages of central and special hospitals increased equally to the average of hospitals, amounting to 10.5% and 10.1%, respectively. In local and general hospitals, the wage increase exceeded the average wage increase of nurses and midwives in hospitals; the annual increase is 15.2% and 14.2%, respectively. The highest additional remunerations were paid in regional hospitals, where the average additional remuneration was 346 euros, amounting to a quarter of the total monthly wage. Compared to the previous year, the additional remunerations have increased almost by one-tenth in regional hospitals. The lowest additional remunerations were paid in special hospitals, amount to an average of 121 euros per month.

The average basic monthly wage of nurses and midwives employed in hospitals was 1,042 euros in 2016, which is an increase of 9% compared to the previous year. Compared to the previous year, the increase in the basic monthly wages was nearly 7 percentage points lower. The highest basic monthly wage was paid to nurses and midwives employed in special hospitals (1,126 euros), with the annual increase of 5.7%. The increase in the basic monthly wages by the hospital types was relatively stable, amounting to 9–10%. Only nursing care and special hospitals experienced a lower wage increase compared to others, amounting to 3.4% and 5.7%, respectively.
Hourly wage of nurses and midwives

In March 2016, the average basic hourly wage of full-time and part-time nurses and midwives was 5.91 euros (Figure 9) and the total hourly wage 6.69 euros (Figure 10). The increase in hourly wages compared to the previous year was 8.2% and 10.7%, respectively. The median amount of the basic hourly wage was 5.60 euros and with regard to the total hourly wage 6.45 euros, which increased respectively 8.8% and 13.09% compared to the previous year. The total hourly wages of nurses and midwives were two times lower than that of physicians. The total and basic hourly wages of nurses and midwives increased significantly more than the average wages in outpatient rehabilitation care, however, they still earn the lowest hourly wages there. The highest basic and total hourly wages of nurses and midwives are paid to nurses and midwives employed in specialised medical care providers.

Figure 9. The average and median basic hourly wage of nurses and midwives by type of health care provider and hospital, March 2015 and 2016 (euros)
In 2016, the basic hourly wage of nurses and midwives employed in a hospital was 5.82 euros and the total hourly wage 6.77 euros, increasing by 8.9% and 12.3%, respectively. The increase in both the basic hourly wages and the total hourly wages exceeded the general average wage increase of nurses and midwives. In terms of different types of hospitals, the basic and hourly wages increased the most in local and general hospitals. The nurses and midwives employed in special hospitals continue to earn the highest basic and total hourly wages by the hospital types, amounting to 6.6 and 6.93 euros, respectively. At the same time, the annual wage increase was nearly two times lower in special hospitals than the increase in the average basic and total hourly wage in hospitals.

Figure 10. The average and median total hourly wage of nurses and midwives by type of health care provider and hospital, March 2015 and 2016 (in euros)
According to the current wage agreement, the minimum hourly wage of nurses and midwives is 5.5 euros per hour from the beginning of 2016. In 2016, a total of 720 positions of nurses and midwives remained below the minimum wage. This amounted to 9.1% of all positions of nurses and midwives. Compared to 2015, the number of nurses and midwives who have been paid below the minimum wage has increased by 19.6%. In 2015, there were a total of 602 such positions. As is the case with physicians, it can be presumed that all providers had not yet managed to enforce the new minimum wage rates established at the beginning of the year. When it comes to the positions that earned less than the minimum wage (5 euros per hour) according to the wage agreement that was valid in 2015, there were a total of 218 such positions, which would amount to 2.7% of all positions of nurses and midwives.

Figure 11. Division of nurses and midwives positions paid under the wage agreement by type of health care provider and hospital, March 2016 (%) 

The largest number of the positions of nurses and midwives earning less than the minimum wage occurred in family doctor offices (291), and this was followed by hospitals with 278 positions (Figure 11), amounting to respectively 26.2% and 4.9% of the positions of nurses and midwives there. Nearly half of those positions in hospitals that earned less than the minimum wage were in regional hospitals (Figure 11).
4. Wages of caring personnel

Monthly wage of caring personnel

The average **gross monthly wage of caring personnel** in a hospital with all additional remunerations was **772 euros** in March 2016 (Figure 12), referring to an increase of 14.6%. An average of 186 hours were spent to earn the average total monthly wage, which is 10 hours more than the standard working hours in March 2016. The highest total monthly wages of caring personnel are paid in regional hospitals, exceeding the average total monthly wages of caring personnel by 6.6%. The lowest total monthly wages are paid in local hospitals, remaining 13.1% below the average wages of caring personnel. At the same time, the increase in the total monthly wages of caring personnel was the highest in rehabilitation hospitals, amounting to 21.6%. The smallest increase in the total monthly wages of caring personnel, i.e. 11.6%, was experienced in local hospitals.

*Source: Statistics Estonia

Figure 12. The average monthly wage of full-time caring personnel by type of hospital, March 2016 (euros)

The average **basic monthly wage** of caring personnel in a hospital was **616 euros**, which increased by 10.9% compared to the previous year. Similarly to March 2015, the highest basic monthly wages of caring personnel were paid in central hospitals and the lowest in
rehabilitation hospitals. The basic monthly wages increased the most in special hospitals – 14.6%. The increase in the basic monthly wages in special hospitals was 3.3% during the previous year.

Additional remunerations amount to an average of one-fifth of the caring personnel wages. The gross amount of additional remunerations has increased by 32% compared to the previous year. The remunerations for working on weekends and overtime constitute the largest share in additional remunerations paid to caring personnel. The share of additional remunerations is the greatest in regional hospitals (25.8%) and the smallest in local hospitals (11.5%).

**Hourly wage of caring personnel**

In 2016, the **average basic hourly wage of caring personnel** was **3.43 euros** (Figure 13) and the **total hourly wage 4.05 euros** (Figure 14). Compared to the previous year, these wages increased 10.1% and 15.1%, respectively. The median amount of the basic hourly wage was 3.31 euros, which is 7% compared to the previous year. The median hourly total wage was 3.95 euros, which is an increase of 15.3% over a year.

![Figure 13. The average and median basic hourly wage of caring personnel by type of hospital, March 2015 and 2016 (euros)](image-url)
The highest basic hourly wages of caring personnel are paid in nursing care and regional hospitals, and the lowest in rehabilitation hospitals, 3.47 and 3.14 euros, respectively. The total hourly wages were the highest in regional hospitals and the lowest in special hospitals, which is 4.15 and 3.70 euros, respectively.

Figure 14. The average and median total hourly wage of caring personnel by type of hospital, March 2015 and 2016 (euros)

According to the collective agreement, the minimum wage of caring personnel is 3.3 euros per hour. A total of 90 caring personnel positions in hospitals were remunerated below the minimum wage, amounting to 2.6% of the caring personnel positions in hospitals. Last year, there were 80 positions that were remunerated below the minimum wage. Therefore, the number of caring personnel positions remunerated below the minimum wage has increased by 12.5% in hospitals. Among these, the largest number consisted of the positions in nursing care and general hospitals, which covered more than half of the caring personnel positions that remained below the minimum wage (Figure 15).

Figure 16. Division of caring personnel positions paid under the wage agreement by type of hospital, March 2016 (%)
Health and health care statistics:

- Health statistics and health research database
  http://www.tai.ee/tstua
- Website of Health Statistics Department of National Institute for Health Development
  http://www.tai.ee/tegevused/tervisestatistika
- Dataquery to National Institute for Health Development
  tai@tai.ee
- Database of Statistics Estonia
  http://www.stat.ee/
- Statistics of European Union
  http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat
- European health for all database (HFA-DB)
  http://data.euro.who.int/hfadb/
- OECD’s statistical databases (OECD.Stat)