

Nurses' strike in Portugal cripples public health services

September 11 2017

Nurses in Portugal began a five-day strike over status, pay and working hours on Monday, crippling services at public hospitals, union leaders said.

The Portuguese Nurses Union said at least 85 percent of nurses at [public hospitals](#) took part in the strike, which led to the cancellation of nearly all health appointments and non-emergency services.

Hospitals guaranteed minimum care in intensive units and emergency rooms, while hundreds of nurses from major public hospitals gathered to protest.

Trade unions are pushing the government to reform their professional status to include a specialist [nurse](#) category, and they are also seeking a pay overhaul and a 35-hour working week for all nurses—as is the case for all public employees.

Nearly 16,000 nurses could already qualify to be a specialist nurse, as opposed to a general care nurse, according to the Portuguese Order of Nurses, which represents nursing and midwifery graduates.

The order's president Ana Rita Cavaco said there is a shortage of nurses in Portugal and that the country needs at least 30,000 extra nurses to fill the gaps.

Nearly 13,000 nurses left Portugal in the five years before 2016 to work

abroad, mainly to Britain, Switzerland and Germany, Cavaco previously said.

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