



SECTION OF RHEUMATOLOGY

EUROPEAN UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

The advocate of medical specialists

Final report of Work Force Working Group

UEMS Spring Rheumatology Meeting

Praha, May 8-9, 2026

Rudolf Puchner, Eva Rath, Christian Dejaco, Jürgen Wollenhaupt

**Austria
2020**

The Supply of Rheumatology Specialist Care in Real Life. Results of a Nationwide Survey and Analysis of Supply and Needs

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Rudi Puchner - former Austrian UEMS delegate



What about Rheumatology specialist care in Europe?



In 2021 all delegates of the European board of rheumatologists of the UEMS (57 delegates of 30 member states) were invited to answer a questionnaire



Questionnaire with 16 questions

2021 and update 2023

Aim of the study:

To compare the delivery of specialist care for patients with rheumatic diseases across European countries

Questions about

- working conditions for rheumatologists
- organization of care for rheumatologic patients

Participating countries:

Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom





Workforce Survey - topics

- Working hours per week (full-time equivalent, FTE)
- Weekly hours dedicated to patient care
- Number of patients seen (first appointments, follow-up appointments for patients with IRD/Non-IRD)
- Duration of first appointments/follow-up visits (in minutes)
- Working places (outpatient department, private practice,..)
- Number of rheumatologists

**OPEN ACCESS**

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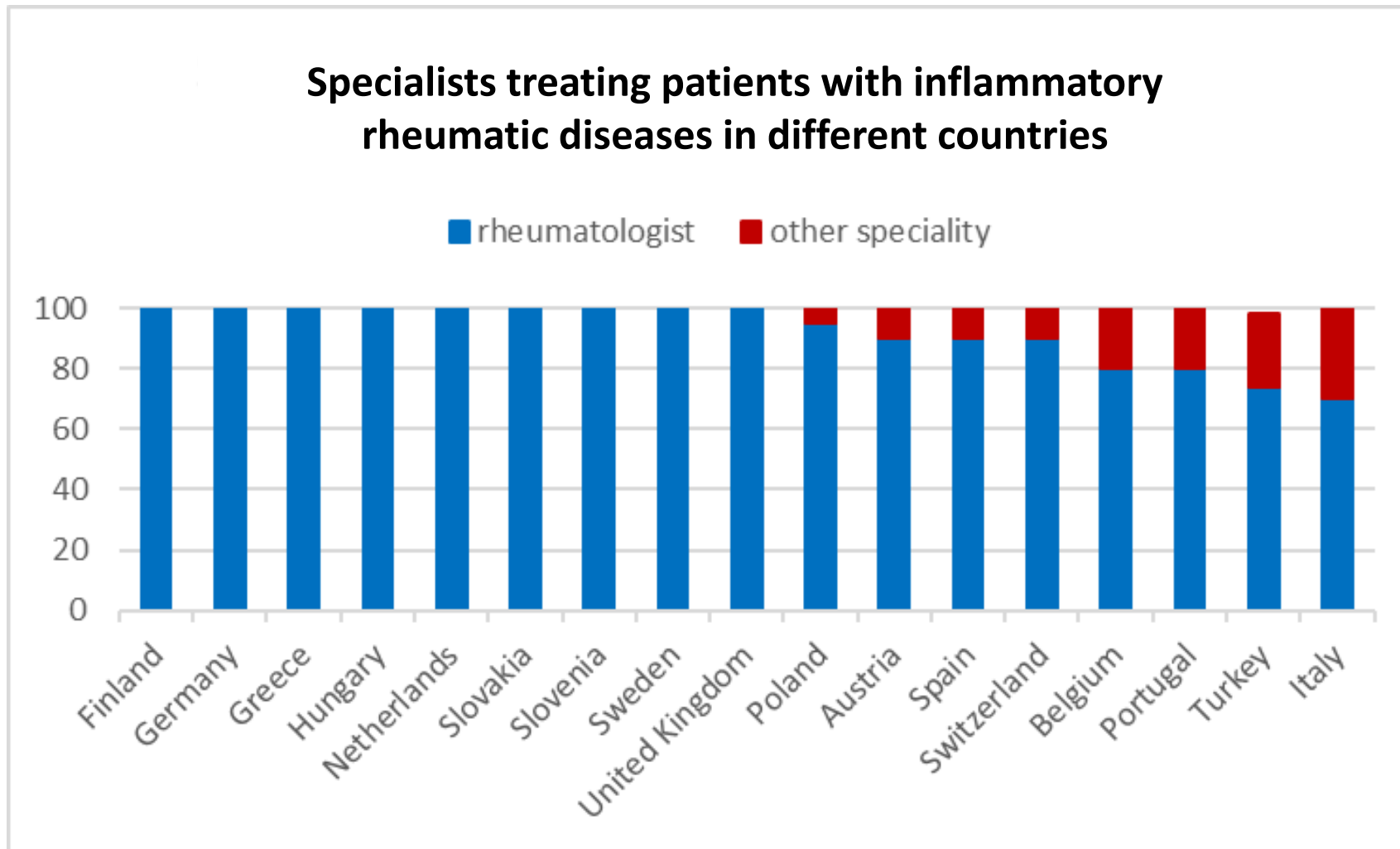
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Rheumatology specialist care in Europe: workforce trends and regional variations from a UEMS survey (European Union of medical specialists)

Eva Rath^{1*}, Rudolf Puchner^{2,3}, Christian Dejaco⁴ and Juergen Wollenhaupt⁵



other specialities:

general practitioner, orthopedic surgeon, internal medicine, rehabilitation specialist, sports doctor, neurologist, endocrinologist

Finland: diagnosis and start of therapy rheumatologist, follow-up care shared by rheumatologist and general practitioner

Institutions caring for patients with inflammatory rheumatic diseases in different countries

country	hospital outpatient departments	private/public practices
Slovenia	100	0
Finland	100*	<2%
Sweden	96	4
Netherlands	95	5
Turkey	94	6
Hungary	90**	10
Poland	85	15
United Kingdom	85	15
Austria	80	20
Italy	80	20
Portugal	75	25
Spain	75***	25****
Belgium	40	60
Slovakia	40	50*****
Switzerland	40	60
Greece	30	70
Germany	20	80

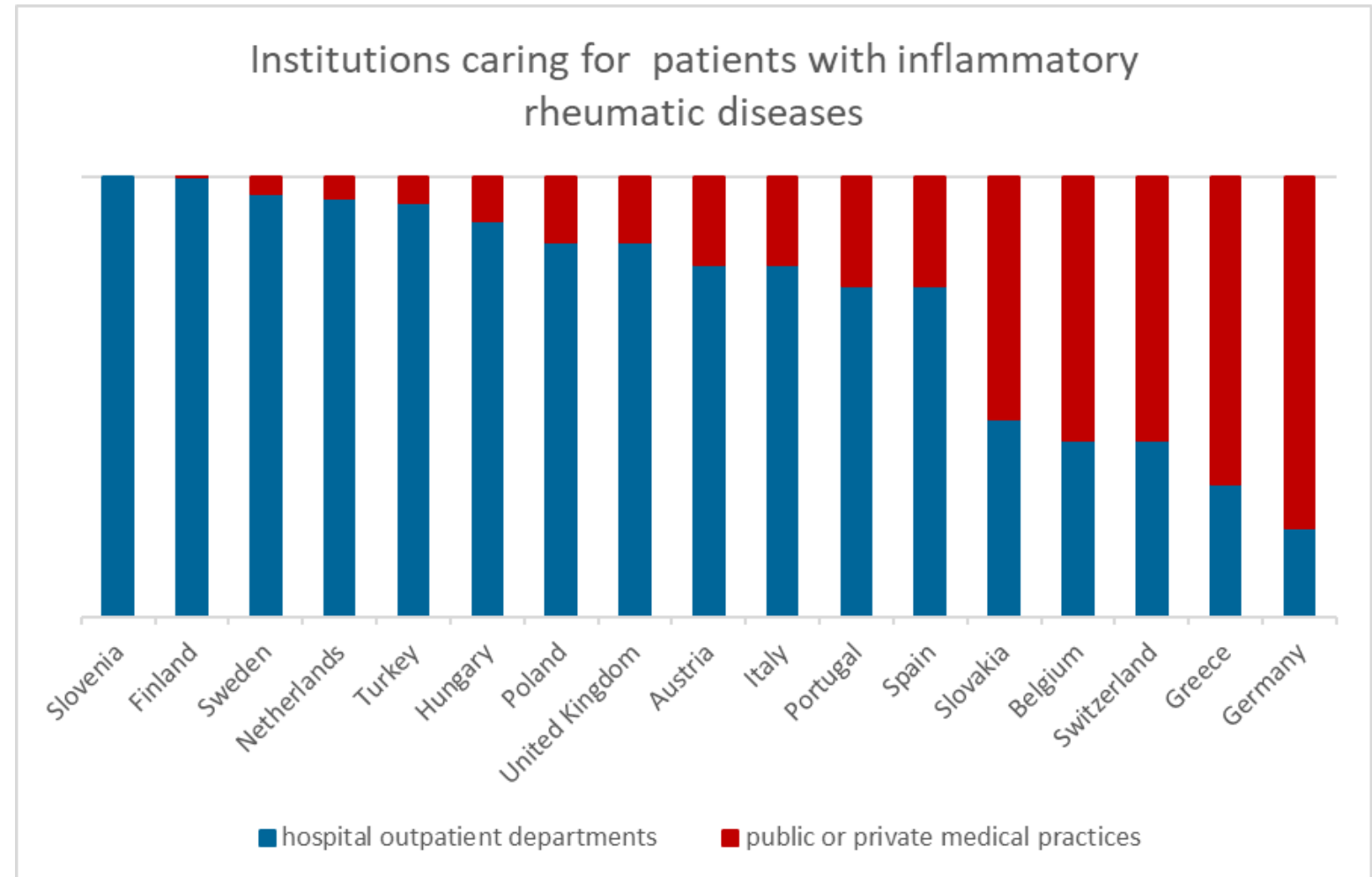
*later on general practitioners with treatment paths for already diagnosed patients

** including 40% in outpatient clinics

*** including outpatient clinics

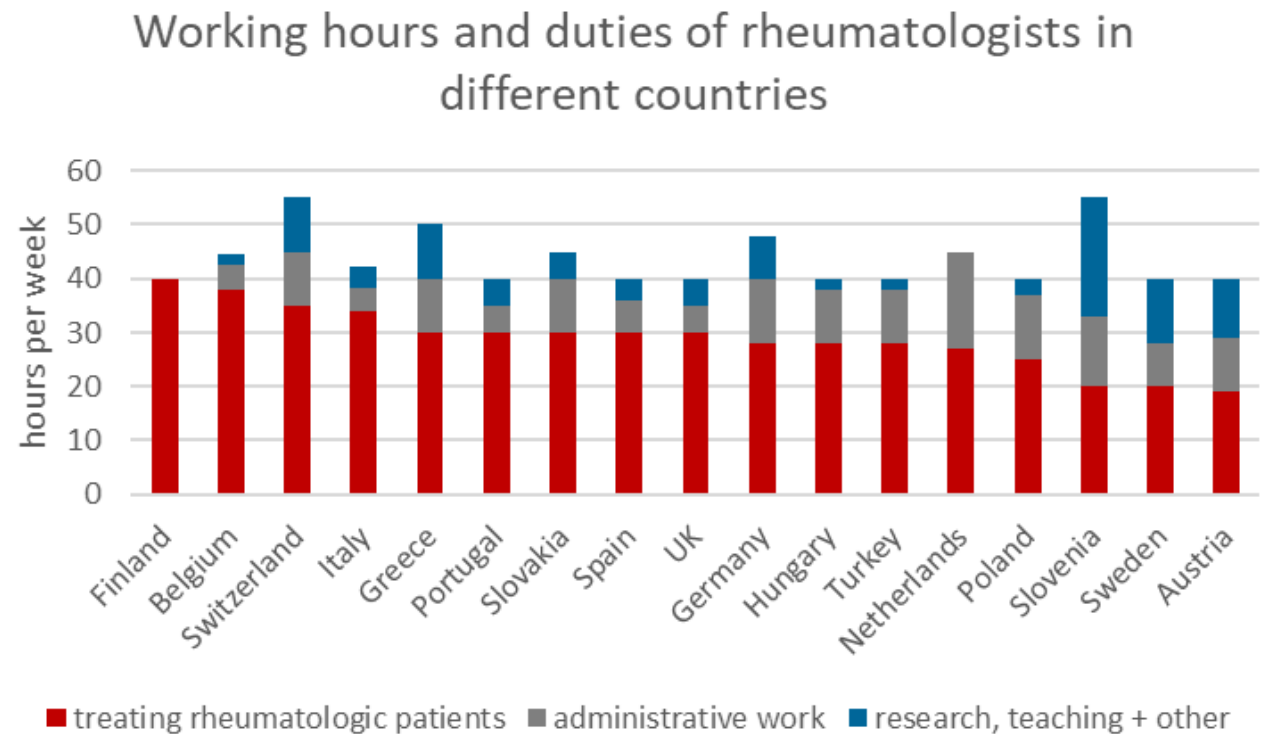
**** with private health insurance

***** about 10% of patients are taken care of by both



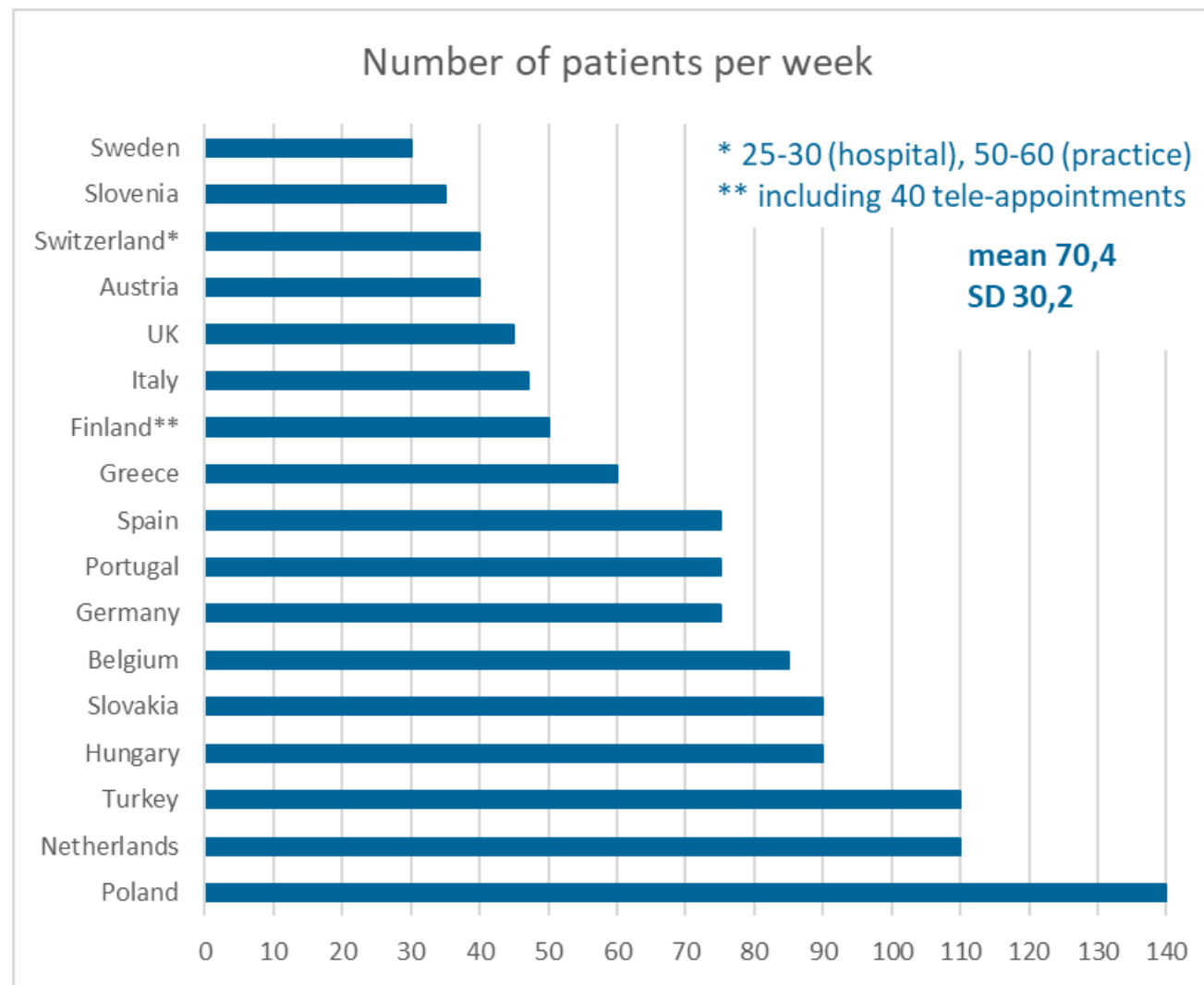
Working hours and duties of rheumatologists in different countries (in hours per week)

	treating rheumatologic patients	administrative work	research, teaching + other	total working hours per week
Finland	40 (100%)	0	0	40
Belgium	38 (85%)	5	2	45
Switzerland	35 (80%)	10	10	50
Italy	34 (80%)	4	4	43
Greece	30 (60%)	10	10	50
Portugal	30 (75%)	5	5	40
Slovakia	30 (67%)	10	5	45
Spain	30 (75%)	6	4	40
UK	30 (75%)	5	5	40
Germany	28 (70%)	12	8	40
Hungary	28 (70%)	10	2	40
Turkey	28 (70%)	10	2	40
Netherlands	27 (60%)	18		45
Poland	25 (60%)	12	3	40
Slovenia	20 (36%)	13	22	55
Sweden	20 (50%)	8	12	40
Austria	19 (47%)	10	11	40



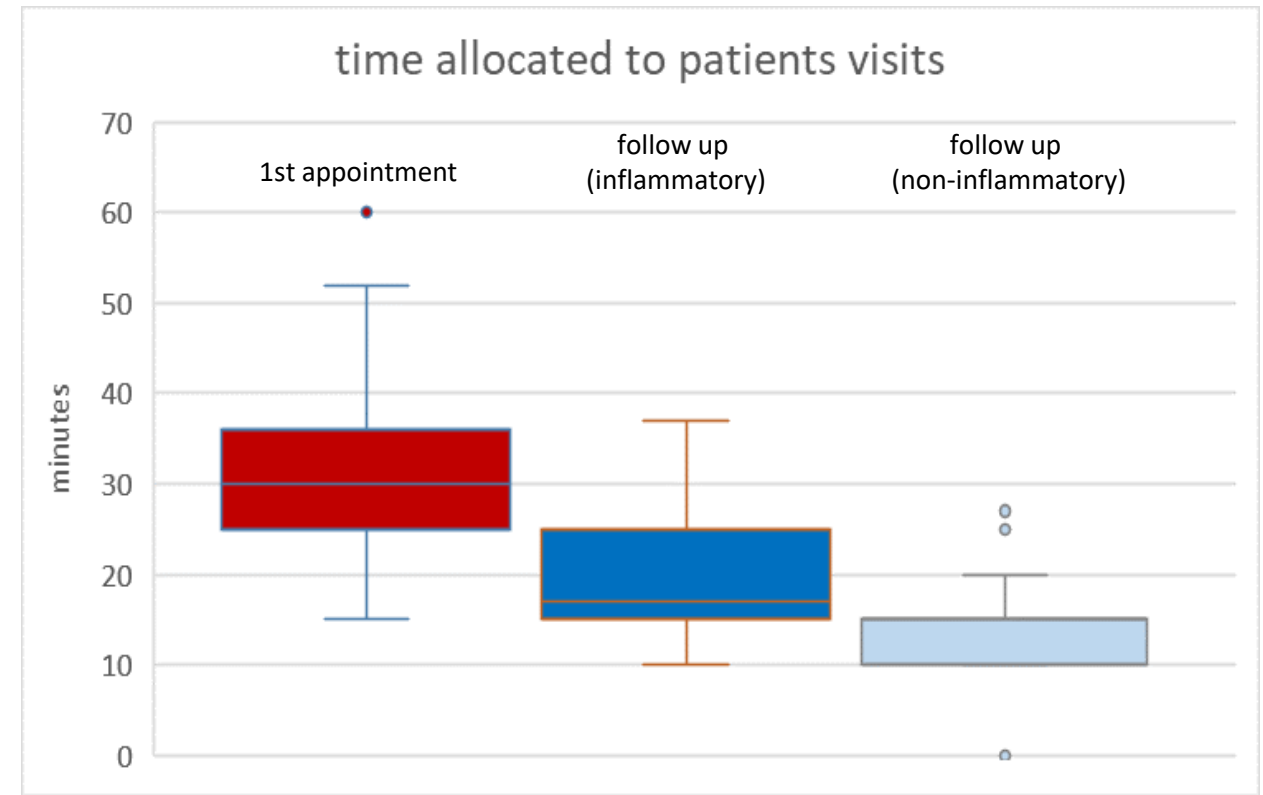
Number of patients a rheumatologist sees per week in different countries

country	patients per week
Poland	140 (125-150)
Netherlands	110 (<126)
Turkey	110 (70-150)
Hungary	90 (80-100)
Slovakia	90
Belgium	85 (70-100)
Germany	75
Portugal	75 (50-100)
Spain	75
Greece	60 (50-70)
Finland	50*
Italy	47 (40-55)
UK	45
Austria	40
Switzerland	40**
Slovenia	35
Sweden	30
mean	70,4
SD	30.2
IQR	47,5
* including 20 tele-appointments	
** 50-60 (practice), 25-30 (hospital)	



Time allocated to 1st appointments and follow up visits (in minutes) in different countries

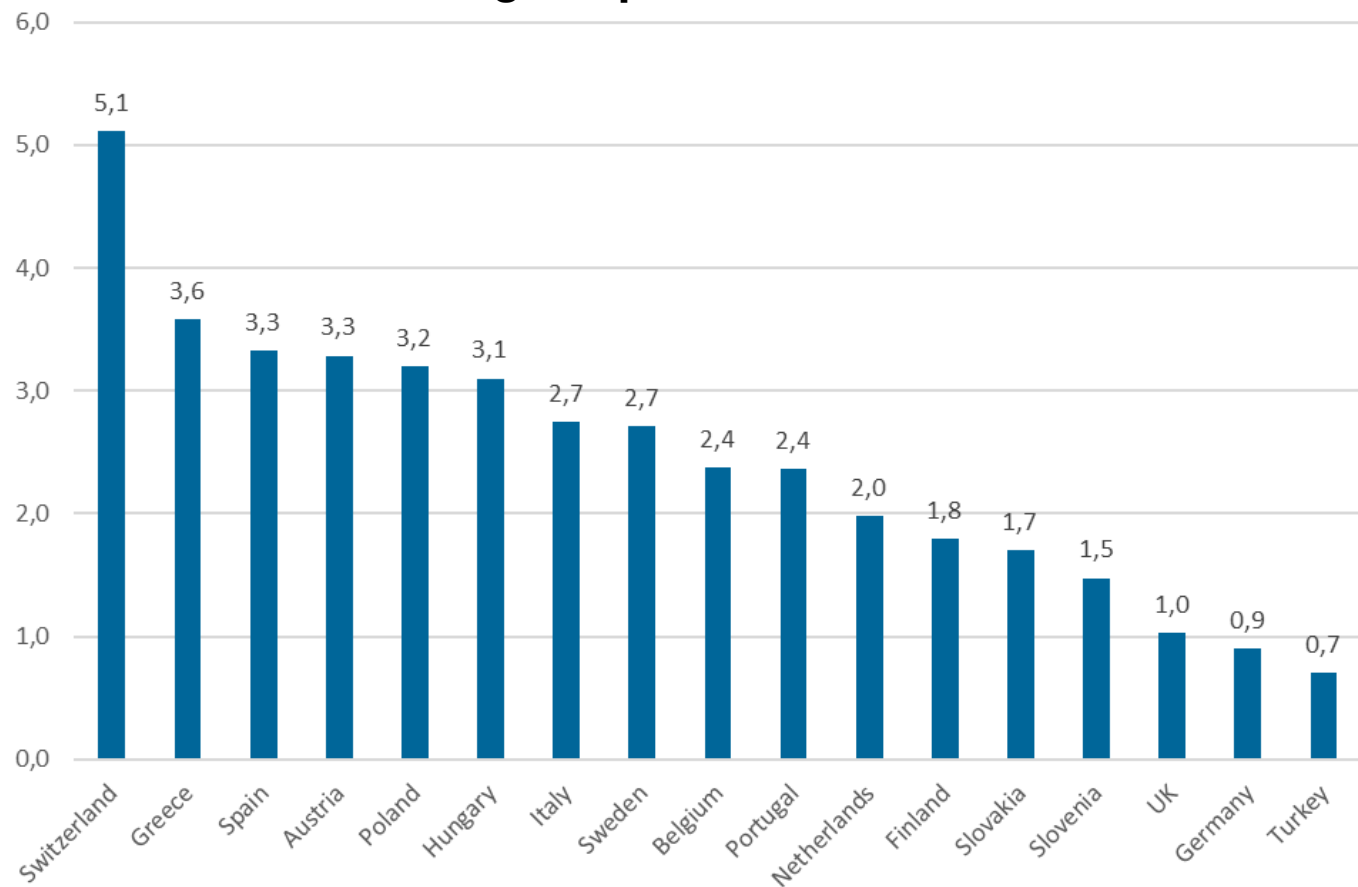
	1st appointment	follow up visit inflammatory	follow up visit non-inflammatory
Sweden	60	15-30	0
Switzerland	60	20-30	20-30
Finland	45-60	30-45	0
Greece	30-45	20	15
Portugal	30-40	25-30	25-30
Austria	30	20	10
Germany	30	15	0
Italy	30	20-30	20
Netherlands	30	15	15
Slovakia	30	15	10
Slovenia	30	15	15
UK	30	15	15
Belgium	20-30	20-30	10-20
Poland	20-30	15-20	15
Hungary	20	15	10
Spain	20	15	15
Turkey	15	10	10



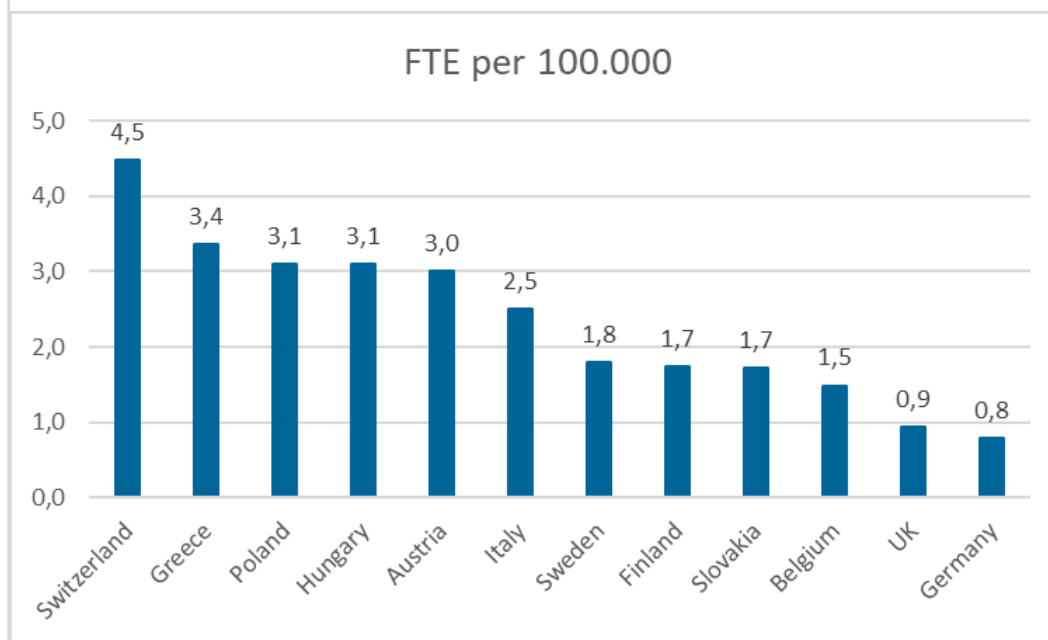
Numbers of Rheumatologists and inhabitants in the different countries

country	rheumatologists (n)	inhabitants § (Mio.)	rheumatologists per 100.000	full time (n)	part time (n)	FTE* (n)	FTE per 100.000
Austria	299	9,14	3,3	215	84	278	3,0
Belgium	279	11,7	2,4			175	1,5
Finland	100	5,59	1,8	90	10	97	1,7
Germany	750	84,4	0,9	375	375	656	0,8
Greece	372	10,35	3,6	279	93	349	3,4
Hungary	300	9,68	3,1	400	0	300	3,1
Italy	1614	59,56	2,7	1050	564	1474	2,5
Netherlands	352	18,02	2,0	–	–	–	–
Poland	1250	38,81	3,2	1000	250	1188	3,1
Portugal	247	10,43	2,4	–	–	–	–
Slovakia	95	5,52	1,7	85	10	93	1,7
Slovenia	31	2,12	1,5	–	–	–	–
Spain	1600	47,91	3,3	–	–	–	–
Sweden	289	10,52	2,7	–	–	189	1,8
Switzerland	450	8,84	5,1	225	225	394	4,5
Turkey	650	87,17	0,7	–	–	–	–
UK	700	68,44	1.0	466	233	640	0.9
	* calculated with 75% part time if not otherwise specified						
	§ source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2023)						
	FTE: full time equivalent						

Rheumatologists per 100.000 inhabitants

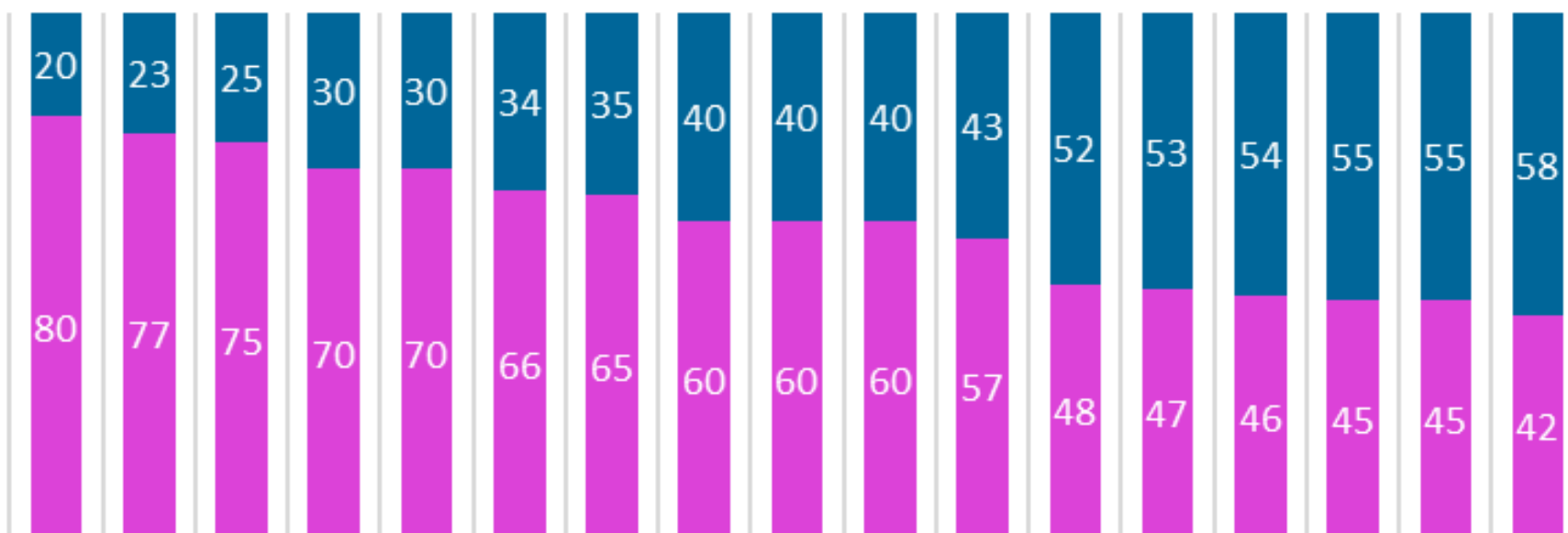


Full time equivalents per 100.000 inhabitants



gender distribution (%)

f m





Discussion

- heterogeneity in the organization of rheumatologic care (hospital-based vs. private practice models)
- wide variation in the number of rheumatologists per 100,000 inhabitants
- differences in working hours, distribution of duties, and administrative burden
- trend toward part-time work, especially among younger rheumatologists
- growing proportion of female rheumatologists
- non-inflammatory rheumatic diseases one-quarter of all rheumatology consultations

Limitations:

- only 17 countries (out of 30)
- based in part on estimations provided by national delegates
- national differences in care organization complicate cross-country comparisons



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT !!!



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