



Mr José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission

Strasbourg, 11 June 2012

Dear Mr President,

We are writing to bring to your attention aspects of the current health-care crisis in Greece, hoping that you might be able to personally commit towards effectively addressing this problem.

As citizens' health and safety is a core EU priority, EU health policy gives everyone the right to the same high standards of healthcare and access to quality healthcare, with the EU striving to attain a higher level of health protection through all European policies and activities, in accordance with Article 168 TFEU. While the organisation and delivery of healthcare is the responsibility of EU countries, European health policy consists of developing a shared competence with Member States and complementing national policies.

In the case of Greece however, the organisation and delivery of healthcare by its authorities has been rendered almost impossible. The crisis has led to an increase in medical treatment in the public hospitals by 30%, while health spending has declined by 20% or more and there are significant shortages and cutbacks in medical and nursing staff.

Certainly, corruption, poor organisation and the system's wastefulness must be addressed. In particular, the national healthcare system employs a large number of doctors in bureaucratic procedures that burden citizens and encourage corruption, while there are simultaneously major shortages of nursing personnel and doctors in several regions, particularly the islands and rural areas, as well as in hospitals and social infrastructures. Moreover, pharmacists have seen pharmaceutical companies gradually reduce the supply of drugs available on the Greek market since 2010, with shortages of some 170 medicines having been recorded. The situation has led pharmacists to refuse to further dispense drugs and pharmaceuticals on credit, with recently reported cases of cancer patients being unable to procure life-saving medicine. Furthermore, in many major hospitals in Attica and other regions there are huge deficiencies in consumable materials. In some hospitals, the patients must buy their own catheters, blood bags or plaster, while in others patients have to wait 6 to 12 months before surgery because they can't afford money for materials or because the hospitals are severely understaffed. Many elderly citizens not only saw their pensions reduced to unsustainable levels but must now pay their own doctors and medicines. Hospitals decide to close clinics because of shortages of materials or personnel. Some are running out of doctors in critical specialties.



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For example, Attikon Hospital (a major hospital in the Attica region), suspended the operation of the Cardiac Surgery Department. The situation is worse in other regions far away from the capital. Hospital Kos in the South Aegean region has been without a pediatrician and is operating with one cardiologist. Many islands are left without even a single doctor. In Hospital AHEPA in Thessaloniki, the Heart Surgery and Vascular Surgery departments were shut down, since the materials used are expensive and there is no money to buy them.

In view of the healthcare panic that has seized the Greek population and is shocking public opinion throughout Europe and the world, we urge you, as President of the Commission, to act according to the responsibility vested in you by the Treaties to ensure that everyone in Greece lives in dignity, has access to quality preventive health care and has the right to benefit from medical treatment under the conditions established by national laws and practices and as enshrined in Article 35 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Please also ensure the payment to the pharmaceutical companies and pharmacies, either by backing the social security system or by rendering direct payment a first priority, in order to guarantee Greek citizens' access to life-saving medicines.

We ask you to shape the Troika priorities to take account of the solutions detailed by the Greens in their latest position paper on how to help Greece overcome the crisis, in order for the Greek authorities to be in a position to realistically provide the above-mentioned rights to Greek citizens.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Harms

Daniel Cohn-Bendit

Co-Presidents
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