

Athens, June 27th 2016

Dear Prime Minister Tsipras,

Since 2010, that is, since the implementation of the first Memorandum, our health care system has undergone two fundamental changes, which have gradually generated the tragic consequences we see today. The first of these changes was underfunding; the second one, hiring ever fewer or no staff, in both categories of doctors and nurses, until very recently.

Health spending has declined from 7% of GDP in 2009 to 3.5-4% today, whereas the EU average is 7%.

By way of example, hospital spending until 2012 was about 2 billion EUR, which declined to 1.3 billion EUR in 2015 and 1.15 billion EUR in 2016.

From 2013 we started to see the consequences of these cuts causing tremendous hardship.

The figures confirm this:

- 1) An increase in infant mortality from 2.7% in 2010 to 4% in 2014.
- 2) A Negative evolution of the births/deaths ratio since 2011. In 2014 there were 92.148 births, a decline of 2.1% since 2013, when the total was 94,134. ***I.e. a decline of 2.1% in just one year***

In contrast, deaths have increased by 1.17% during the same period, rising from 111,794 in 2013 to 113,740 in 2014.

According to Eurostat, this negative trend in population growth is set to continue, causing the Greek population to decrease steadily until 2050.

3) Increase in morbidity:

- Acute miocardial infarctions, from 1.4% in 2009 to 2% in 2015
- Diabetes mellitus from 7.9% in 2009 to 9.2% in 2015
- Depression, from 2.6% in 2009 to 4.7% in 2015

4) The Study HELLAS HEALTH IV carried out by the Institute of Community and Preventative Medicine in 2015:

- One out of four citizens regularly taking medicine has had to reduce their consumption of basic necessities in order to pay for the medicine.
- **One in five of these citizens cannot keep up with payments and ends up not receiving the medicines.**

5) According to the yearly survey Europe Health Consumer Index (EHCI), which assesses the health systems of 35 countries according to 48 indicators, Greece held the 22nd place in 2012 and gradually went down the ranking: 25th in 2013, 27th in 2014 and finally 28th in 2015.

The cuts in public hospital funding have created a serious shortage both in medication, medical devices and supplies in hospitals. The Metropolitan Community Clinic Elliniko supplies 4 to 5 public structures a week on average.

The reduction of staff and hiring has also had tragic consequences. I will mention but two:

I) ICUs are not functioning at full capacity with waiting lists of 20-30 patients. As a result, human lives are being lost.

II) The average waiting time for cancer treatment is 4 to 5 months, with dramatic consequences for the patients.

Until 2014, uninsured patients had absolutely no access to the health care system. In the summer of 2014, the government then in power gave uninsured patients access to the subsidised prescription drug system at the same level as the insured. This government also allowed access of the uninsured to medical services by means of three-member committees. Unfortunately, these initiatives never worked in practice, because most uninsured patients didn't even have enough money to pay for the partially subsidised medicine and the three-member committees never gained traction, which means that the law didn't provide uninsured patients with any access to diagnostic tests.

About three months ago, the present government passed a new law establishing income thresholds to allow access to free medicine and for the first time giving uninsured patients access to diagnostic tests, but only in public institutions. The law also abolished the three-member committees and patients would be admitted to treatment free of charge just with their National Security Number (AMKA). This law has however not yet been put into practice.

This law is a great improvement to the previous one, but for it to work in practice; the public health system would need generous funding, both for hospitals and for Primary Health Care Centres (PEDY). We have patients who can provide you with testimony that this system is not being applied in practice.

Even with this law we continue to have two categories of patients: the insured, who have access to both the public system, and private practitioners with an agreement with the Greek Public Health System (EOPYY); and the uninsured, who only have access to the public system. Thus, for example, the average waiting time for a CAT-scan is 4 to 5 days for an insured patient but 20 to 25 days for the uninsured, and that in the areas where the necessary equipment is available and functioning. This raises the questions about the conditions in establishments that do not even have the equipment at their disposal.

I could provide you with numerous examples of other ways in which austerity has affected public health and I remain at your disposal for any further information.

What we request and what we have been striving for all these years, is for public health to be ring fenced from austerity policies. This is what we are asking from you: an initiative of the Greek Government to launch a pan-European information campaign about the tragic consequences of the

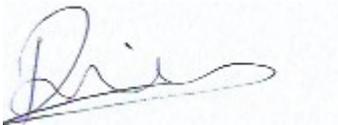
austerity policies that we have suffered all these years, especially in the field of public health. We also urge the Greek government to **exclude health from the philosophy of austerity.** There are forces within the European Parliament that will provide support for such an initiative, including the co-president of the Greens/EFA group, Mrs Rebecca Harms, who has already undertaken major initiatives to this end, as well as other MEPs.

We must draw attention to these tragic consequences, that have resulted into a humanitarian crisis, and on the basis of European and international law, we request to stop austerity measures impacting the health sector. Health must be freed from the shackles of the Memoranda.

Only in this way can uninsured patients have equal access to the health system, can a proper reform of Primary Health Care be undertaken and only in this way will it be possible to stop the increase of mortality and morbidity in our country.

Respectfully,

Georgios Vihas

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vihas', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

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