

L E T T E R E I N R E D A Z I O N E

The Greek Pompei in Health

After the official request by Greece's prime minister for help, the country was put under the supervision of the Troika, that is, European Commission (EC), European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and signed with them, in May 2010 the first and in February 2012 the second economic adjustment program, in exchange for financial packages, aiming at helping the country get out of its debt crisis, recover its lost growth and transform the national economy into a more sustainable model, including measures such as reductions in all public expenditures with efficient gains at the same time (1, 2).

Nevertheless, every single one of these measures had many side effects among Greek citizens, some of them measurable and others not yet.

In order to achieve mainly the economic targets, such as reductions in all public expenditures, even in the fragile public health sector, plus the achievement of a primary surplus in 2013 for the first time after many decades, Greece had to pay a very high price (3).

Per capita health spending in the period 2000-2009 grew more than 5% and then followed a yearly fall of 9% in the period 2009-2012.

Many measures taken in other public sectors (for example dismissals, salary cuts) have resulted in a significantly increased demand for public health services. Unemployment, immigrants, precarious workers and salary cuts have lead to a decrease in household income and inevitably patients are seeking care in public hospitals. An already over-stretched public health system receives prospectively more pressure but operates with less money.

The impact of the adoption of austerity policies in the Greek public sector and especially in the health sector have been widely reported and thoroughly analyzed.

Greece, the country that gave birth to democracy, culture, philosophy, the county of Asklepios according to mythology and of Hippocrates the legendary "father of medicine", is now vilified mainly due to political choices. Now the majority of Greeks are living a modern tragedy, awaiting the "deus ex machine".

The results of the austerity policies which were adopted by 2 elected governments led to their early resignation and

to the elections of 25 of January of 2015 when the Greek voters laid their hopes in SYRIZA, a leftwing party, which claimed to have a different political approach towards the crisis.

The new prime minister and the new president of the Greek Republic have officially declared that a large section of Greek society is facing a humanitarian crisis.

The new government is trying to convince their Europeans partners that the Greek problem is a European problem, that the austerity policies have led to a deadlock and the agreements that the previous governments signed must be revised (4).

Now, the new Greek government is in the middle of crucial negotiations with the European institutions trying to be consistent on the one hand with the promises for a better life given to the Greek people who elected it, and on the other hand with the inevitable reality of numbers, statistics and the country's debt.

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