

“National Health System in Greece 1983-2004: From public sector to privatization”

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The purpose of this announcement is to examine the Greek National Health System, mainly under the government of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) from 1983 to 2004. The Greek Socialist Party was founded in 1974, after the collapse of the Greek dictatorship, and came to power only seven years after its establishment with the 1981 elections and remained in power until 2004, with an exception during the period 1990-1993. The 1397/83 law is the first attempt in the history of the Greek State for the introduction of a unified health system in Greece. The Greek socialists, under the leadership of A. Papandreou, based on the principles of solidarity and equality, consider that health policy is a state obligation and should not be faced under the terms of the free market economy. Moreover, they perceive health as a social benefit and the universality and equity in the provision of health services as necessary conditions for the creation of a society of solidarity and social justice. As a result, health policy constitutes exclusive state responsibility and is related to the increase of public expenses, a fact that is in contrast with the international tendency for restriction of public expenses and the introduction of elements of privatisation in the health sector. The predominance of economic liberalism and the emphasis in the restrictive policies in international level, appear to influence the policy of PASOK, especially when the Greek economy continues to present regularly high inflationist pressures and increasing budgetary deficit. During the period 1990-1993, Nea Demokratia, the

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Internationaler Workshop der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung am 3./4.12.2005 „Europa muss auf die Herausforderungen der menschlichen Gesundheit reagieren, nicht auf die ‚Herausforderungen der Globalisierung‘“

Greek conservative party, which came to power with a neoliberal orientation imposes significant changes to NHS to the direction of privatisation and liberalisation.

PASOK at its second governmental tenure (1993-2004) and especially under the leadership of C. Simitis (1996-2004), focusing on the entrance of Greece in Economic & Monetary Union, tries to harmonise with the prevalent political tendencies: the correlation of health policy with the prevailing economic priorities of budgetary discipline, the rationalisation of health expenses and the gradual replacement of the principle of universality by the principle of selectivity. With the designation of G. Papandreou to the leadership in 2004, PASOK, without radically changing its orientation, appears to adopt a policy which conforms with the choices of the European Committee and despite the fact that it does not distance itself from the logic of budgetary discipline, it seems that it conceives the health policy as one of the most important parameters for the financial and social growth of the European Union.