

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4570/06

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to the Commission

Subject: Viability of self-managed health funds in the EU: risk of fragmentation of the market in pharmaceuticals and medical devices

Many self-managed health funds in the EU which rely on the contributions of their insured members and employers, without receiving State aid, have sounded a warning about their viability owing to the increase in the cost of healthcare and the deterioration in the demographic situation. A fundamental component in controlling expenditure is the costing of health products, in particular pharmaceuticals which, on average, represent more than 15% of the health budget<sup>1</sup>. Both the manufacturing and retail prices of pharmaceutical products, however, differ significantly from one Member State to another, resulting in distortion of competition and fragmentation of the market in the Union. Typically, pharmaceuticals and medical devices, such as stents and pacemakers, are sold in Greece at prices several times those at which they are costed in other countries.

Recognising that the effective treatment of patients is of paramount importance and that there are wide differences in the prices of pharmaceuticals and medical devices among the Member States, will the Commission answer the following questions?

1. By what percentage do prices in Greece vary from those in other Member States for basic pharmaceuticals and medical devices (detailed breakdown of data)?
2. What measures will the Commission take for the benefit of consumers to even up the internal market of the Union and the market prices for pharmaceuticals and medical devices among the Member States, without causing delays to supplies of products to patients?
3. Although each Member State is able to lay down national criteria determining prices, reimbursement, and practices of prescribing and supplying pharmaceuticals, what measures will the Commission take to implement rules on transparent pricing and competition rules in respect of innovative, protected pharmaceuticals which could secure substantial savings for healthcare providers?

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2003) 383 final.