

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4408/08

by Costas Botopoulos (PSE), Evangelia Tzampazi (PSE), Stavros Lambrinidis (PSE), Katerina Batzeli (PSE), Anni Podimata (PSE), Stavros Arnaoutakis (PSE), Maria Matsouka (PSE) and Maria Eleni Koppa (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Psychiatric reform in Greece

Investment in the mental health of the population of the EU is one of the EU's strategic policy objectives according to the Green Paper 'Improving the mental health of the population – Towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union' (COM(2005)0484).

Significant progress has been made in the field of psychiatric reform in Greece with the implementation of the Psychargos programme, cofinanced by the Commission, the objectives of which are de-institutionalisation, reducing the number of patients in psychiatric clinics and the operation of social rehabilitation facilities. More than 160 mental health and housing units are operating under this programme, employing some 2 500 workers and accommodating 2000 psychiatric patients, at the same time as providing medical services to at least 10 000 citizens.

Owing to the expiry of Community cofinancing, the programme is currently operating with great difficulty. Since 2005, the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity has constantly cut back funding, it does not fully pay the operating costs and the salaries of the employees, who go unpaid for months, making it impossible for the psychiatric and social rehabilitation units to function properly. Their closure will be a huge blow to psychiatric reform in Greece, endangering the physical and mental integrity of hundreds of patients.

Given the objectives set by the Green Paper and the need to ensure that the psychiatric reform programme in Greece continues to progress steadily and smoothly, will the Commission answer the following questions?

1. Is it aware of these specific developments?
2. Are there any possibilities for continuing Community funding of the programme?
3. Have the Greek authorities requested that the Psychargos programme be included in the operational sectoral programme 'Development of Human Resources'. If so, what is the amount of resources which will be made available for the Psychargos programme and what is the timetable for the utilisation of the relevant Community appropriations?
4. How will the Commission ensure that the psychiatric and social rehabilitation facilities now operating remain viable?