

# A POLITICAL COMMITTEE FOR THE HEALTH REFORM

Dean Prof. **Bajram HYSA**

The Health System Reform is a difficult process to undertake but it is very necessary if we want this system to be contemporary. The integrated concept of health is of a determinant importance for a society that claims to be progressive. Political rhetoric, in this context, does not have much value. In the endless discussions on the health reform would be more appropriate to include a wide range of interest groups and to organize discussions for making it transparent. This leads to the conclusion that this reform positively affects the majority of Albanian citizens and is in the benefit of all Albanians. It is important for any society and political project, to have as primary aim a health service as good as possible for Albanian citizens in the most fair, modern, transparent and human way, in accordance with Council of Europe standards and other forums, known internationally.

## Reform and the Governance

Of course, health reform has central importance for democratic governance as it has important implications for economic recovery and is evaluated as a measure of success of the government. A key objective of health policy for many European countries is to ensure that the population has an adequate opportunity to use essential health care services and to be much more protected against the impoverishing effects of health expenditures. The government can significantly influence these policies through its strategy of health financing. But the extent of the achievement of being able to use the services and financial protection against health risks is significantly influenced by the level of resources used for the health sector. By the way, these resources are mobilized by the collection of these resources, in one place, and by the manner of how these resources are distributed to the users. Mixing public and private expenses, the percentage of funds collected in one place, compared previously with the payments carried out of pocket at the point of service delivery, mechanisms used to distribute public funds and the ones collected and to pay the providers of the service; they all together have a direct impact on the effectiveness and on the efficiency with which the health care system achieves health outcomes and supports the protection

of the population against the impoverishing effects of health fluctuations.

## The Performance of the Current Reform

The Healthcare reform in Albania during the 8 years of democratic government undoubtedly has marked the beginning of a new history in the field of health care. Considerable achievements have occurred during this time. In our health system have been undertaken reforms, have been approved laws, were created new structures, are being entered and being implemented technologies and modern diagnostic and treatment methods. The current government has always believed in the success of the reform, because this reform, according to the Prime Minister, would meet several objectives, namely: would provide affordably health insurance for all Albanians, would reduce increasing costs of health care for the state budget and businesses; would guarantee equal access and choice of physician and different plans for health insurance, as well, would improve patient safety and the quality of health assistance.

Promising for the most modern health system in the region, the actual Prime Minister said that "whatever the state budget does, even the budget of the richest country in the world, can not fully accomplish all the needs of the system in case it fails in absorbing in the interest of health and sickness, the so-called "funds" from the private sector, if we fail in educating the citizen to spend on health, if we fail in convincing him that health should be his priority every day, and if we fail in creating maximum facilities for the citizen and for the development of his health".

The Prime Minister stated that there won't be a move towards total privatization of health, but the public sector will be maintained, while developing private health sector, in order that the citizen will have the right to choose. This means that the competition between public and private sector is a tough race and extremely helpful.

## Opposition's Alternative

Socialist leadership has promised free medical service

in all the country, considering this as part of democratic reforms. During the presentation of the program of the SP for healthcare system, Mr. Edvin Rama stated that "should be set a national service health, namely the service must be purchased by the state, and not by the citizen". The reason, according to him, is simple: "The health insurance scheme has failed, either in financial terms, either in providing health care for citizens. So, this law not only offers nothing new to them, to one million Albanians who are now uninsured, but it does not solve the chronic problem of under-financing health system, as it leaves in place the current scheme, which covers only 7% of expenses for health". The proposed system highlights the strong role of the state in support of public health, including here even the measures taken to the prepaid medical care. Such a vision, although basically has the motto "the common good for as many people" has met resistance from many Western countries.

### **Characteristics of an Effective System**

The health care system offered to citizens varies from country to country. So which would be the best system? It depends on how the state is conceived, or the type of "contract" that has been made between the citizen and the state. This type of contract predicts the citizen's rights. The health care's right comes to the group "economic, social and cultural rights". In order to be implemented in the most successful way, health system reform should have the following features: understanding and the support of the population, wide consensus, inviting even representatives and other interested stakeholders, as local authorities, international organizations and multilateral and bilateral mass media, businesses, etc. It is required, without doubt, the political willpower. The burden of implementing health reform can not be hold only by the "shoulders" of a ministry. They require a full commitment of the political force that leads the country and the consensus of other forces. Therefore, should be built a political committee of health reform, which should lead the reform politically. It is important for the reforms to be implemented continuously and without interruptions. Delays or interruptions discredit the elements of health reform.

### **What has to achieve a Real Reform in Albania?**

In Albania, according to Chapter IV, Article 55, paragraph 1 of the Constitution (Chapter IV refers to "Freedoms and economic, social and cultural rights") "Citizens equally have the right for health care from the state". That is, health care is a right. But which can be considered a true reform in our health system? Health reform must achieve the main goal, health care coverage by law to over 90% of Albanian citizens, currently uninsured, in order to integrate all in the system. This

would be ideal. This does not necessarily require total state financing of the sector, but the introduction of a new concept for the reorganization of public and private structures, as complementary to each other. Foremost, it is required improvement and clinical management at all levels, improvement of the quality and safety of the healthcare system, improvement of management of health services, increasing opportunities for making health services efficient. Improving health financing system, means increasing coverage by prepaying. Collecting money into a fund is the only way to protect the weakest sectors of the population, regardless of their ability to pay. Improving governance of the health system is related to strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Health, in order to develop policies, strategies and to plan at a national level. In order that health reform had a wider distribution than any other reform, the responsibility should be shared among everyone, from the citizen currently insured to the one uninsured, among health institutions, those of health insurances, businesses and state budget. Employers should be obligated to insure all their employees, discharge contributions, without informality. The possibility of tax facility for small businesses can be seen in each case, so the cost of paying health insurance for employees, to be affordable to them. Grants should be provided to families with low incomes, to enable every citizen to purchase health insurance policies from private companies or from state health insurance program. Of course, for all these, the state is the regulator. Without state and healthy governance there can't be healthy population. Local government remains traditionally the best doctor when it harmonizes and protects the rights of citizens, for more alternatives and health services, but also for more competition and social diversity. But we should not forget that in medicine, rather than political power, influence and commands the professional medical power and where are part even the professors of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Medicine Tirana, which with much responsibility have made reforms to evolve from year to year.