

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000269/26
to the Commission
Galato Alexandraki (ECR)
(23 January 2026)**

Subject: The collapse of the Greek national health system and the responsibility of Member States and the EU to ensure equal access to healthcare

Public hospitals in Greece are facing a severe operational crisis, due to chronic understaffing, the mass departure of healthcare professionals and the inability to replace permanent posts. Despite the statements repeatedly issued by the Government, tens of thousands of posts remain vacant, particularly in regional hospitals and health centres. Meanwhile, excessive workloads and low wages are leading to occupational burnout and an acceleration of brain drain.

Healthcare costs are increasingly being passed onto citizens, in a country that is already deeply impoverished. This is at odds with the Union's fundamental objective of universal and equitable access to health services. At the same time, the absence of binding EU interventions means Member States are dangerously diverging in terms of minimum public health standards.

Can the Commission answer the following:

1. How does it assess the current staffing situation in public hospitals in Greece and its compatibility with the principle of equal access to health?
2. Does it intend to propose binding minimum staffing and funding thresholds for public health structures across all Member States?
3. What concrete measures does it intend to take to address the brain drain in healthcare and prevent the further weakening of public health systems?

Submitted: 23.1.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(30 March 2026)**

Health workforce shortages are an important challenge for Member States. Analysis identifies persistent shortages and uneven distribution of health professionals in Greece, which hamper access to healthcare ⁽¹⁾.

Under Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ⁽²⁾, Member States are responsible for the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care.

The EU's role is to support Member States in strengthening their health systems, by encouraging cooperation and exchange of best practices, via technical assistance, funding and policy guidance.

In the 2020, 2022 and 2023 cycles of the European Semester, Greece received recommendations to ensure adequate and equal access to healthcare.

Reforms under the Greek recovery and resilience plan include the setup of a national health map, to map health workforce needs in real time.

This common challenge requires appropriate measures in line with the competences of Member States and the EU, using shared knowledge, such as through the activities of the Expert Group on Health Systems Performance Assessment ⁽³⁾.

The European Semester country reports systematically stress health workforce challenges and Member States can use EU funding instruments such as the Cohesion Policy Funds and the Recovery and Resilience Facility to address them.

The Commission also supports Member States through EU4Health initiatives such as the Joint Action HEROES on forecasting and planning of health workforce ⁽⁴⁾ and the Nursing Action ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Country Health Profile: Greece, 2025. https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b9b4092c-b357-4ae3-8d82-d9a252e7e159_en?filename=2025_chp_gr_english.pdf.

⁽²⁾ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=en>.

⁽³⁾ See for instance: https://health.ec.europa.eu/latest-updates/minutes-hspa-expert-group-workshop-staffing-levels-healthcare-16-october-2025-2025-11-06_en.

⁽⁴⁾ The project — JA HEROES | Health Workforce Planning Project, <https://healthworkforce.eu/the-project/>.

⁽⁵⁾ EU4Health programme, https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/2024-eu4health-work-programme_en.