

Topikes Monades Ygias!

The rapid rise of Greece's primary health care

In just one year, Greece has established nearly 100 new community-based primary health units, free at the point of access and known locally as Topikes Monades Ygias or TOMYs. In a few months, around a million people will benefit from the new services.

The units are key elements of the newly designed primary health care system and are the first point of contact and the main coordinator of care for people in the area.

Here, multidisciplinary teams - general practitioners/family doctors, paediatricians, nurses, health visitors and social workers - provide health care for people in a continuous manner, looking at disease prevention, health promotion, diagnosis, treatment, monitoring and care. The new units will also have clear referral mechanisms. This is a major change from the otherwise fragmented network of different public and private health providers, primarily specialists, providing care upon request and with little coordination. The impact is keenly felt.



“TOMYs are clearly a big, big, big service and a major breakthrough in health.”

Pantelis Leosis, 80 years

Collaboration reaps rewards

Greece's health system was deeply affected by the financial crisis, which had a direct impact on access to health services, quality of care and financial protection. Pressure from the crisis revealed long-term problems in areas such as health governance and primary health care provision.

The Greek health authorities, in close collaboration with WHO Europe and other stakeholders, analysed the progress of health reform in Greece and made recommendations for its future direction and improvement.

Close collaboration between WHO and the Greek Ministry of Health began five years ago in 2013 when WHO Europe set up a Health Reform Support Programme and a Project Office, with financial support from the European Commission. This year a WHO Country Office opened in Athens.

In 2016, the Greek Government developed the Primary Health Care Roll-out plan and implementation started after the new law on PHC was passed in August 2017. With much celebration, the very first TOMY opened in Thessaloniki, Evosmos in December 2017, and there are currently 98 units in operation. Each unit has a capacity to serve approximately 10 000 people.

This is a reform that aims to shift the focus from treatment to prevention. It is an evidence-based response to the health systems crisis and to societal demand for the elimination of health inequalities," stated Minister of Health Andreas Xanthos.

Dr Hans Kluge, Director of the Division of Health Systems and Public Health at WHO Europe, congratulated the Greek authorities and the communities. "Real fundamental health reforms are possible in Greece and they are happening now, not in the far future".



In June 2018, WHO and the Greek Ministry of Health inaugurated the new WHO Country Office in Greece. L-R: Dr Andreas Xanthos, Minister of Health; Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab WHO Regional Director for Europe; Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General.



“My name is Pantelis Leosis, I am 80 and I live in Metamorfoosi, Attica. TOMYs are clearly a big, big, big service and a major breakthrough in health. I found a setting that was very friendly and pleasant. At the TOMY, I definitely don't pay for anything. From my place, the TOMY is ten minutes by car. Better health for all!”

“ Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the Ministry of Health, we have made significant efforts that will continue to contribute to improving the health of the Greek people, including the most vulnerable.

Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab
WHO Regional Director for
Europe