

Health care : a highway with crossroads



Many "crossroads", such as the ageing population and strict budget standards, may severely block the traffic on the health care highway. Geert Messiaen presented on 30 November 2016 in Antwerp his sixth book Health care : a highway with crossroads at the publishing house Garant.

Several ideas he had already written years ago are finally echoing today at the political level. The evolution of the mutual societies from mainly payment institutions to health coaching is contained in the Pact of the future which they signed on November 28 with Maggie De Block. Public opinion is beginning to accept the plea for the re-nationalization of prevention and health education, now that some parties are openly talking about it. Warning that Belgium - and not only Belgium - is not ready to absorb the ageing shockwave and that this is already leading to tragedies in the elderly sector, has recently prompted Minister Jo Vandeurzen to ask for a study on the need for beds in nursing homes and serviced residences.

The same is true for the sixth State reform in respect of which the author had long warned and which is likely to cause even more problems than it would have supposed to solve. The loudly announced disparities in health spending between Flanders and Wallonia are actually relatively insignificant: differences in medical consumption mainly occur between boroughs within the regions themselves and are due to socio-economic causes and medical supply in the region.

Europe is another crossroads on the highway, because it adopts a non-social position with no solidarity as a result of the severe budgetary standards which are bringing deep troubles into many health care systems, and thus for patients as well.

Instead of stubbornly concentrating on how we can cut spendings, we must stop being defeatist and pretending that our health care is too expensive. Remember my signal: health is no merchandise. A position confirmed internationally by the AIM (International Association of the Mutual societies). We are confronted with a constant increase in the population and its ageing. The growth norm, that is, the percentage that can exceed the expenses for the health care insurance beyond inflation, was legally fixed at 4,5%. The Government Michel Ist had already reduced it to 1,5% and recently broke its promise by imposing a reduction to 0,63%, while the plan office calculated the minimum necessary to 2,5% ...

The minister "asks for the efforts of all", but the saving on the administration fees of the mutual societies are such that the performance of their tasks is compromised. In addition to the budget efforts adopted by the previous government, there is an additional austerity measure of the current government of 120 million euros, spread over four years.

The signed pact can not be jeopardized by further savings on the administration fees during this legislature.

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