

Theodore Tryfon: The Greek Pharmaceutical Industry is a solution for Development – Commenting on Mr. Tsipras’s visit



1. How did you perceive the Prime Minister’s statements on drugs?

I believe that the statements are clearly towards the right direction. They have explicitly revealed the Greek Pharmaceutical Industry’s developmental dimension, as well as the significant Domestic Added Value, which is created by the Production, Research, and Exports of Greek Drugs. An important issue that must be immediately resolved is the budget for pharmaceutical expenditure – a budget, which is at extremely low levels for the year 2015.

2. A great deal of the Greek Pharmaceutical Industry’s activity concerns the production of generics, a group of drugs for which there has been much discussion during the last years. However, although an increase in their consumption is observed, the market share of domestically-produced generics has not increased in our country. What is it that we are doing wrong, and what should we do henceforth?

Unfortunately, this is the case; and, obviously, something is done incorrectly. To be more precise, the Greek Generic – a drug with a history and an accumulated 50-year expertise, but also with a significant contribution to the GDP, employment and research –, remains anchored to 18-20%. This reality is the **consequence of the incorrect policy** that was followed during previous years in the pharmaceutical sector. The measures, which led to this result, were specific.

What we need to do henceforth, is clear and precise. International experience has shown that **the expansion of the use of generics occurs as a result of the physician's conscious choice, a clearly-defined incentive for the pharmacist, and the reception/confidence shown by the patient.**

Therefore, an important issue that evidently affects the development of Greek generics is the way prescribing methods are presently applied, based on the active ingredient – Thus, as far as this specific measure is concerned, we are clearly in favor of a double system, which will rely on both the chemical name's indication as well as the possibility for the physician to propose a brand name – especially when prescribing generic drugs. This is the only way to essentially avoid the prescription of unique active ingredients by a physician, that ultimately regards, more expensive, imported drugs. Unfortunately, the current system contributes to the substitution of generics with the original patented drugs, thus creating, an incentive for the physician not to prescribe generics. Furthermore, it removes the Greek generic's identity, which is its brand name.

Moreover, **the pharmacist must also have a clear incentive, so as to both keep the prescription to Greek generics, and, of course, substitute with domestically-produced drugs.** Within this context, the Greek Pharmaceutical Industry promotes the collaboration with Greek pharmacists, who trust Greek Drugs and have the power to transmit this to the patient. In partnership with the authorized pharmaceutical associations, we are planning common activities which will aim at informing the public about the quality of Greek generics.

As domestic drug manufacturers, we emphasize, yet again, that the existing implementation framework of the active ingredient system leads to increased prescribing of imported drugs, both originals and generics. It is therefore absolutely clear that this measure **has failed.**

I would like to stress that **we are not asking for the law to change.** However, **there is an imperative need to modify the parameters of its application,** through specific interventions, as follows:

- Ensure the possibility of the *physician* to **propose a brand name as well,** when choosing to prescribe generic drugs.
- Provide *pharmacists* with appropriate *incentives* for the distribution of Greek generics. Within this context, it appears necessary to *ensure positive terms of profitability,* in order to avoid injurious situations for the pharmacist.
- Ensure *reduced participation* for patients, when they choose a Greek generic.
- *Inform the public about the quality of Greek drugs,* which are found in Greek households for the last 50 years, well-established drugs which are prominent in the minds of Greek patients having rightfully earned their trust.

3. In your opinion, which are the pillars that the national pharmaceutical policy should, henceforth, rely on?

Unfortunately, the fiscal consolidation effort, which was realized in the drug sector during previous years, **unilaterally focused on reducing the relevant expenditure through interventions on drug prices, rather than rationalizing their use**. Certainly, it was necessary to limit the soaring pharmaceutical expenditure that had reached its highest levels in 2009. However, the outcome proves that the **accounting perception**, through which this specific expenditure was addressed, threatened the pharmaceutical care's sustainability, ignoring the patients' real needs.

It is therefore absolutely clear that, henceforward, an **overall pharmaceutical policy** should be designed, a policy centered on the following pillars:

- **Access and low drug cost participation for the insured.**
- **Immediate rectification of the current, non-sustainable budget for drugs, at a level close to the EU per capita average.**
- **Implementation of the needed reforms, in order to control drug consumption and prescription.**
- **Evaluation of the expensive treatments' therapeutic value, in order to guarantee access of the patients to truly innovative treatments, and avoid unnecessary charges for the insured and the insurance funds alike.**
- **Reinforcement of the under-staffed EOF, as well of EOPYY's Drugs Directorate.**
- **Expansion of the use of affordable and quality Greek Drugs.**

4. Hence, what do you, as the Greek Pharmaceutical Industry, have to say to the Prime Minister?

We clearly commit ourselves to increasing investments in production, jobs, research and exports. We will maintain and expand our production units in Greece, our country. We pledge to cover 70% of primary healthcare with cost-effective and quality drugs. We pledge to contribute to the reduction of patients' participation for drugs that are produced by the Greek Pharmaceutical Industry. We also pledge to provide relief and support for the coverage of uninsured patients.

In what regards the Greek Pharmaceutical Industry's perspective, we ask for a stable 3-year framework, an overall pharmaceutical policy that will take into account: the Greek Pharmaceutical Industry's growth dimension, the assurance of payments – and thus, of the Greek companies' cash flow –, and a much more rational rebate/clawback system.