



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA  
DRŽAVNI SVET

# STRATEGIC CONSULTATION ON MODERN HEALTH POLICIES

**Strategic consultation on modern health policies: health reform should be very thorough in order to correct everything that has gone wrong over the years.**

Ljubljana, 12 May 2023 - at the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia, alongside the Slovenian Business & Research Association (SBRA) the conference was organised held a strategic consultation on modern health policies. The main purpose of the consultation was to draw attention to certain professional and scientifically supported facts in the field of healthcare, while being aware that the healthcare reform is one of the most important changes that affects every citizen.

The participants of the consultation were addressed by the President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia **Marko Lotrič**, State Councilor, Vice-President of the State Council Commission for Social Welfare, Labour, Health Care and the Disabled, **Monika Ažman**, and the President of the the Slovenian Business and Research Association (SBRA), Assoc. Dr. **Draško Veselinovič**.

Expert contributions were made by mag. **Saša Jazbec**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Slovenia, prof. dr. **Timotej Jagrič** from the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Maribor, Assoc. dr. **Tatjana Mlakar**, general director of the Institute for Health Insurance of Slovenia, prof. dr. **Maks Tajnikar** from the Faculty of Economics of the University of Ljubljana, prof. dr. **Andrzej Fal**, Chairman of the Department of Organization and Economics of the Health System at the National Institute of Public Health, Head of the Department of Internal Diseases and Allergies at the Central Clinic in Warsaw and an international expert on public health, cf. M.Sc. **Dorjan Marušič**, Ph.D. med., member of the expert commission at the European Commission, and prof. dr. **Gojko Stanič**. The consultation was coordinated by Assoc. dr. **Draško Veselinovič** and **Danijel Kastelic**, state councilor, president of the National Council's Commission for Social Welfare, Labour, Health Care and the Disabled.

## **Emphasis and conclusions of the consultation:**

The participants of the consultation agreed that the health reform that is being announced should be very thorough in order to solve all the problems in the health care that have accumulated over the years, and to a large extent they were exposed by the covid-19 pandemic. Although more and more money is spent on healthcare, its effects are deteriorating. At the same time, the public financial picture is not the best. Public debt currently amounts to approximately 70% of Slovenian GDP. According to health expenditure in relation to GDP, we are in the lower part of the ranking of developed countries, while from the point of view of health, according to WHO studies, we are at the level of less or medium developed countries. With all this, Slovenia has become markedly

demographically exposed - no longer an aging, but already a long-lived society, the characteristics of which bring additional challenges for healthcare and society as a whole.

Within the framework of the fiscal rule and with the increased cost of borrowing, Slovenia also has quite a few funds available in the Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP) for the green transition, digital transformation, and health and social security. In the field of healthcare, we must direct these development funds to technologies that increase added value and improve productivity. It is worth highlighting innovations in healthcare, which are consequently also important for the launch of innovations in society in general.

It was estimated that, compared to other comparable EU countries, the resources for healthcare in Slovenia are relatively sufficient, but we still have a lot of room for improvement in the area of the organization of processes and the functioning of the healthcare system, its efficiency. An assessment was also made of the currently too low standards for doctors, which were lowered some time ago, but perhaps not sufficiently thoughtfully. The need for general digitization, including in healthcare, was particularly emphasized. The latter, next to the green transition, is defined as the second most important European direction, and is more than a necessity in Slovenian healthcare. Various forms of non-refundable EU funds are also available for accelerated digitization, which is the focus of the Slovenian Economic and Research Association from Brussels, the only non-profit Slovenian organization of its kind in Brussels.

In connection with the proposed abolition of supplementary health insurance, the issue of the ability to maintain the same scope of health services within the basket of rights to which insured persons currently have access in accordance with the existing two-tier financing system, both from compulsory and supplementary health insurance, and which insurance products was raised will now be able to offer different insurance companies in the field of healthcare.

It was also pointed out that ZZSZ has a 30-year tradition and correctly handles all current challenges, but unfortunately it does not have a significant influence on expenses, which are largely determined externally, and it is also insufficiently involved in the preparation of health reform in Slovenia .

As already emphasized, the Slovenian healthcare system undoubtedly has many reserves - both in terms of organization and management, as well as in more rational and optimal spending of money intended for healthcare. Well-developed and organized prevention also reduces costs in healthcare.

In preventive activities, which must also include so-called i. "harm reduction", or "damage reduction", Slovenia is among the worst in Europe, as the internationally recognized expert in pulmonology and public health prof. dr. Andrzej Fal from Warsaw Central Clinic and Chair of the Department of Organization and Economics of the Health System at the National Institute of Public Health. Many premature deaths in the EU, especially in countries facing challenges in the regulation of healthcare, which in many ways also include Slovenia, are the result of weak systemic care in the field of preventive activities. Public health policies in many developed countries indicate that measures to reduce harmful consequences for the health of the population are the right direction. It is a principle that encourages scientifically proven approaches or products that replace a harmful lifestyle with a less harmful one. The principle of harm reduction represents a motivation for a healthier lifestyle and has already been proven to work in the field of non-transmissible chronic diseases (diabetes, smoking, sunbathing, ...). In doing so, it is important to take into account scientific discoveries and the resulting facts, access to the right information and also the right of people to be correctly informed about the consequences for their health.

The participants of the conference agreed that people and concrete positive scientific discoveries and findings must always be at the forefront of health efforts (the so-called "evidence-based" health care and, consequently, such treatments and health policies). On this basis, a wider social consensus (agreement) must be sought in the field of health care, which must involve significantly more stakeholders than until now. The primary level of healthcare must be the foundation of the Slovenian healthcare system.

Last but not least, there are also the social science aspects of health reform, with an emphasis on personnel policy in the field of health care, including comprehensive care for health care workers, which is all too often forgotten in other reforms. In his address, the President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia, Marko Lotrič, pointed out the necessity of a broad view of the challenges in health care: "As with other complex solutions, the key to success in health care will be a compromise at the level of the entire society - it will be necessary both political and general -social compromise. First of all, certainly the willingness and sincere interest of all professional groups in healthcare to maintain a quality system that will provide patients with quality services when and where they need them."