

Public management of health is not on the agenda

Protecting health and launching a basic health plan would be a step towards protecting the environment and combating climate change that would also contain health costs, which are necessary to pay off debts

The time for the end-of-year accounts is approaching, and rumours and indiscretions about the contents of the financial documents of each State follow one another in all EU countries. In Italy, the economic situation is confronted with an oversized debt (to be reduced), with low incomes that can scarcely contribute to its reduction, and with a limited and incomplete realisation of the Agenda 2030 goals that are little talked about and no one seems to care about anymore.

Above all, the idea has spread that the fight against climate change and the achievement of economic goals are in conflict with each other. If we look at the government proposals, none give priority to environmental aspects, especially for services and the fight against inflation. In the latter case, it would be necessary for those who have accumulated profits in recent years, to put them back into the circuit in various forms, but tending to curb the erosion of labour income, in order to prevent the internal market (which lives on consumption generated by household purchases) from being blocked.

But those who could do this have no intention and complain more than those who, living on fixed incomes, have to juggle to make ends meet. My grandfather used to say: 'it is easier to make those who eat only once a day skip lunch than to take one away from those who eat five times a day'. Thus the government's timid attempts at rebalancing by taxing capital gains, made more to keep up appearances to the national-popular electorate, and the supplements for low-income earners, which boil down to a full tank of petrol, are without much meaning.

In the tourbillon of proposals, the health item is totally missing, if we exclude the call for vaccines, which is necessary in a situation where Covid has only disappeared by decree and a further unfortunate quarantine period would mean meltdown, with the recession already inside the euro economic system.

Yet, protecting health and launching a basic health plan would be a step towards protecting the environment and combating climate change, which would also bring about a containment of health care costs, necessary to pay off debts. Seemingly so distant, the issues share the same fate in the market economic system: branded as situations where 'market failure' is realised because their costs would progressively grow so high as to be unsustainable for any economy. Every attempt so far to make their investment effective and their

implementation worthwhile has met with undesirable side effects for the markets, except for a few very profitable niches.

One obvious reason for this is the time lag between a preventive intervention, the results of which accrue after a few years, and a forced rehabilitation, by raising tariffs or reducing the number of those entitled to public assistance, which produces immediate effects. This is where our idea fits in, of a widespread, low-cost, networked plan, capable of providing a capillary basic check-up, with neighbourhood facilities, and information/training on how to improve the health of our lungs, our diet, our lifestyle.

Treating the millions of people suffering from lung disease with preventive measures, by reducing pollution, would be convenient for the whole system, if the health system did not live on patents and the 'creation of markets'. Because it is cheaper to create a new market out of nothing (e.g. cosmetic interventions) than to make everyone breathe more decent air by improving public transport and reducing private transport. It is no coincidence that in the health sector in Italy private facilities are favoured to supplement and then little by little replace the public ones and, for transport, the gift of a full tank of petrol (which will not improve the condition of the air) has been chosen in lieu of a drastic reduction in the cost of the ticket by increasing public transport.

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