The absence of organizational culture in the Greek Health System even after the 2009 financial crisis: The case of EOPYY

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According to modern western conceptions of management, all public agencies or bodies are supposed to have and at certain time intervals to improve and reinforce their basic core values, beliefs, assumptions and informal rules in order to "force" the personnel to perform better and efficiently. Thus, not only money from the state budget will be used efficiently but also the public will continue to enjoy an improved service.

In the case of post-2009 Greece, the elected governments appear to have made all necessary steps to modernize the country's health services system. Organized and operating under the Ottoman-Turkish culture of the state in the service of the politically strongest individual, these agancies-organizations had been a great source of corruption, money-laundering and tax evasion for a large number of people, medical doctors, pharmaceutical companies and even employees. Although the attempt to incorporate all clientelistic health-agencies into one in the image of the western ones seemed the proper road to follow, however as primary research shows only surface measures have been imposed. The absence of a modern organizational culture in the health system agencies and personnel; as well as the strong-attachment of its human resources to leading political figures and parties continuous to present an insurmountable obstacle for reaching higher levels of efficiency and productivity

The employees of the newly established National Organization for Health Services (EOPYY) found themselves suddenly in a position that they had to plan, organize and function it without a clear idea of what were their exact duties and rights, their areas of responsibility and their short-term goals. Without proper offices, organizational structure and tools (eg., computers, telephones and fax machines and sometimes even without a desk), employees from different health services and possibly with diverse organizational culture and experiences had been hastily called in to co-operate and serve the less or more urgent needs of a large and diverse number of

customers. It was not a surprise to them that Law N.4238/17-2-2014 which defined certain goals, responsibilities and organizational objectives of EOPYY was published two years after EOPYY had started to operate.

The results presented here are the outcome of a research conducted during the first ten days of March of 2013 with the aim to examine/understand whether the unification of various organizations of health services into a large one, EOPYY, would contribute positively or negatively to the development of a more or less common organizational culture and the latter's effect on the employees' performance. In addition, it examines the role of organizational culture upon the level of emotional and professional satisfaction on the employees, their ability to produce better end results towards the citizens that seeking EOPYY's assistance as well as on the existence of motivation factors that would "force" employees to improve their behavior towards both their fellow employees and their customers.
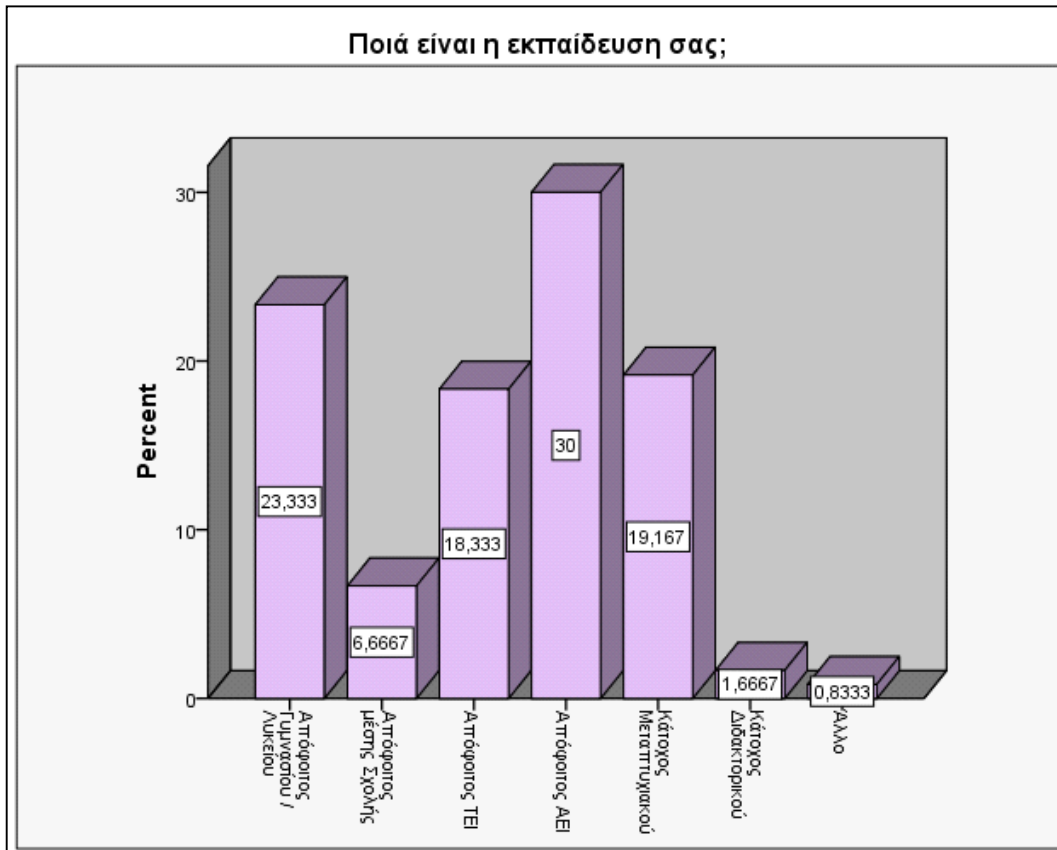
Basic Characteristics

The questionnaires, 150 in total, were distributed randomly in the various administrative offices of EOPYY in Athens. From them, 120 returned it with an answer. 88 of them were women and 32 men. Those of age ranging from 26-40 years old constituted the 35,3% while those of 40 years old and above reached the 64,7% of the sample. Furthermore, 52.1% of those were born and raised in Athens, Pireaus and Thessalonike, while 79,2% were married.

The SPSS program was employed for the analysis of the responses.

Demographic elements

The following table describes the level of education of those who responded to our questionnaire. Thus, 23.3 % had elementary education certificate, 6,7% had graduated from a post-elementary school, 18,3% had a degree from a Technological Institution, 30% were holders of a bachelor's degree, 19,2% had received an MA degree and 1,7% had received a Ph.D.

TABLE 1.1

Ποιά είναι η εκπαίδευση σας;

- 23,333 — Απόφοιτος Γυμνασίου / Λυκείου
- 6,6667 — Απόφοιτος μέσης Σχολής
- 18,333 — Απόφοιτος ΤΕΙ
- 30 — Απόφοιτος ΑΕΙ
- 19,167 — Κάτοχος Μεταπτυχιακού
- 1,6667 — Κάτοχος Διδακτορικού
- 0,8333 — Άλλο

In the following table, the employees describe the health insurance agency that they used to work before coming to EOPYY. Hence, 41,7% of them used to work for IKA-ETAM, 15,8% for OPAD (Civil Servants), 20,8% for OAEE, 1,7% for OGA (Agriculture) , 15% for TAYTEKO, 2,5% for the HOUSE OF THE SAILOR () and 2,5% from several smaller agencies.

TABLE : 1.2

Από ποιά υπηρεσία προέρχεστε
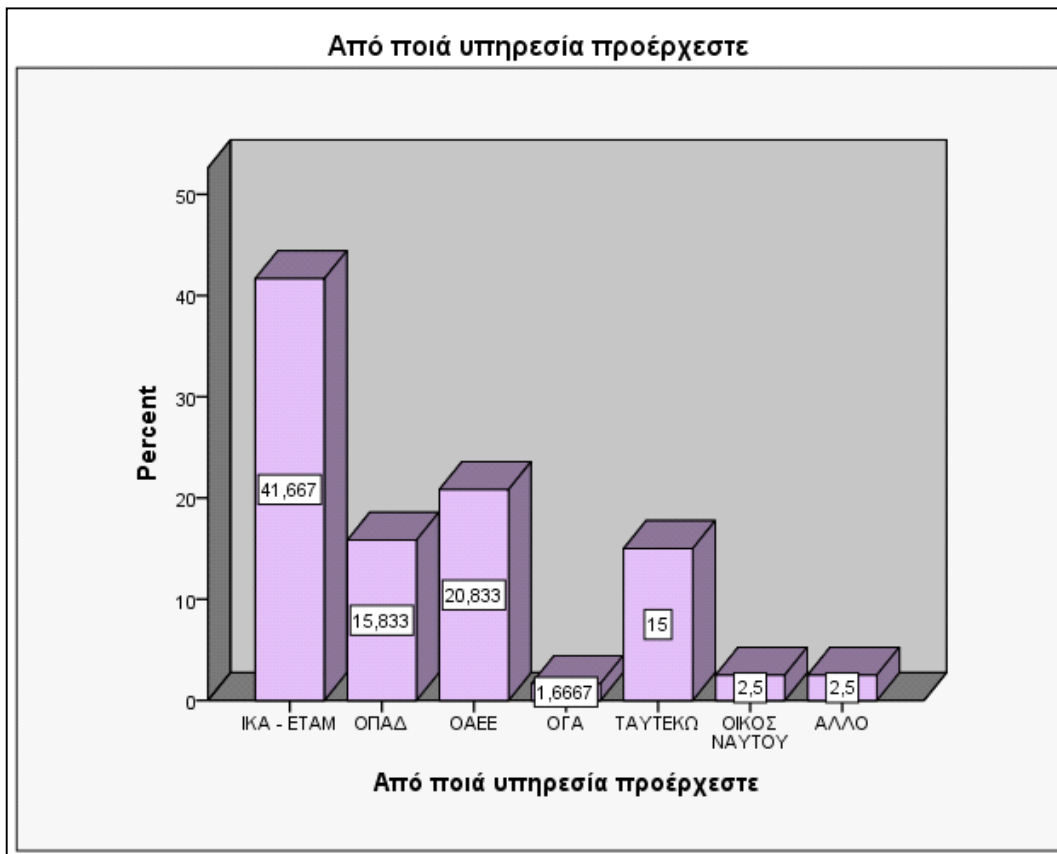
96.7% of the EOPYY employees are tenure-track. From them, 17,6% have 1-5 years of experience on the job, 18,5% have 6-10 years, 13,9% have 11-15 years, 11,1% have 16-20 years, 22,2% have 21-25 years, 14,8% have 26-30 years and the rest 1,9% have 31-35 years. In other words, 50% of the EOPYY employees have similar work experience of 1-15 years and the other 50% have 16- 35 years.

It was also pointed out that 81.7% of them were simple employees, 14.2% were holding the position of the supervisor and 4,2% that of the director.

The Organizational Culture of EOPYY

According to the responses received, only 1,7% agrees strongly that the working environment supports αξιοκρατία, 10,4 simply agrees, 22,6% neither agrees nor disagrees, 34% disagrees while 31,3% disagrees completely.
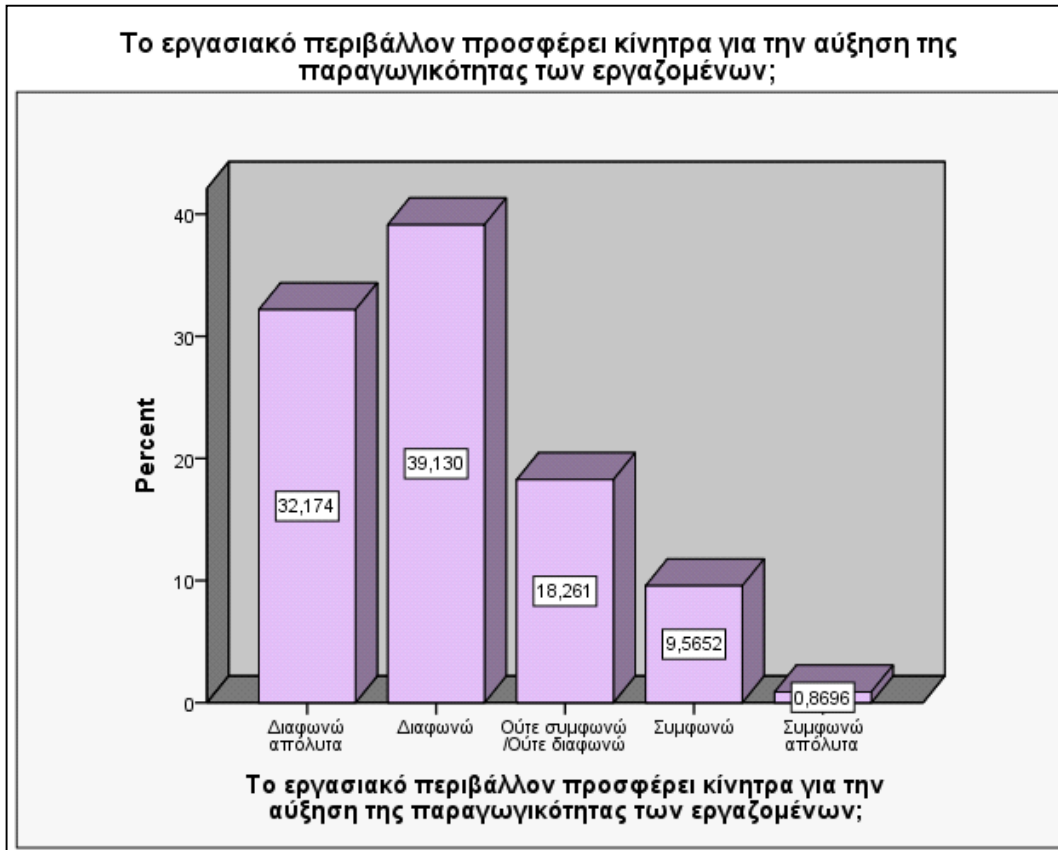
TABLE: 1.3

Το εργασιακό περιβάλλον ευνοεί την αξιοκρατία;

The following table shows that 0.8% agree strongly that the working environment offers incentives for the increase of employees final production, 9,5% simply agrees, 18,2% neither agrees or disagrees, 39,1% disagrees and 32,1% totally disagrees.
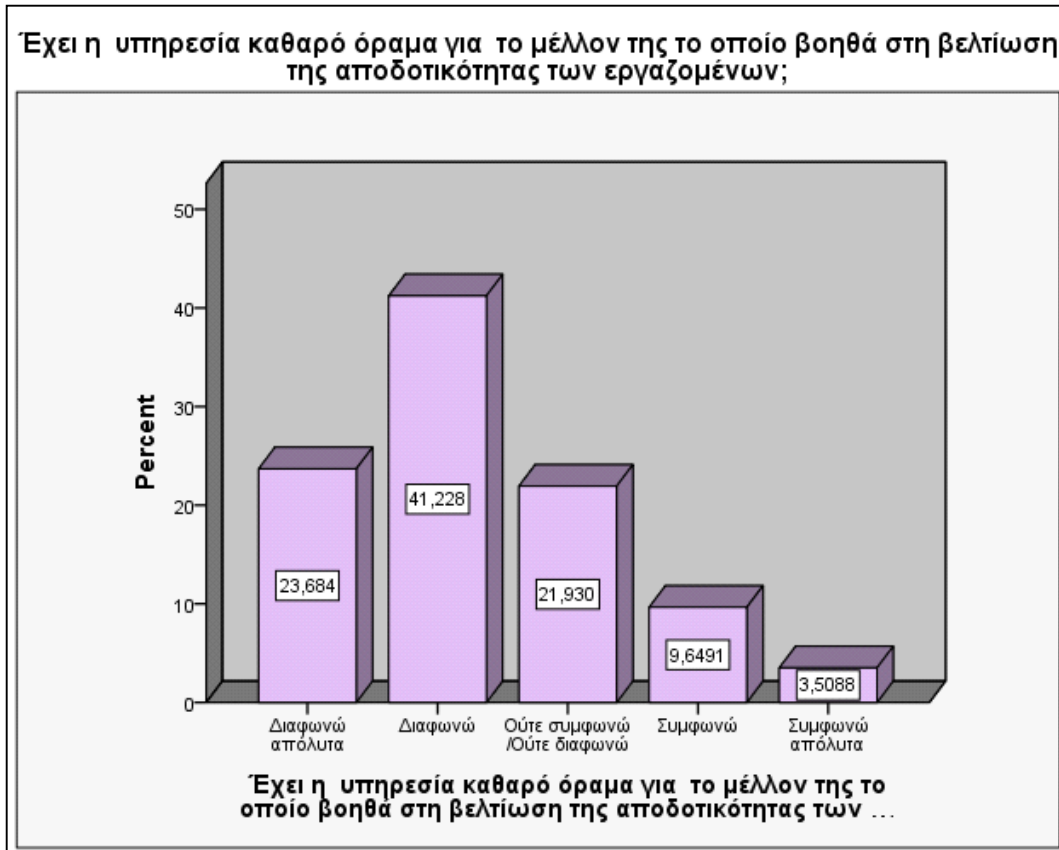
TABLE: 1.4

Το εργασιακό περιβάλλον προσφέρει κίνητρα για την αύξηση της παραγωγικότητας των εργαζομένων;

32,174 — 39,130 — 18,261 — 9,5652 — 0,8696

Percent

Διαφωνώ απόλυτα — Διαφωνώ — Ούτε συμφωνώ /Ούτε διαφωνώ — Συμφωνώ — Συμφωνώ απόλυτα

Το εργασιακό περιβάλλον προσφέρει κίνητρα για την αύξηση της παραγωγικότητας των εργαζομένων;

In the following table, 3,5% totally agrees that EOPYY has a clear vision of its future and thus contributing to increasing their level of productivity, 9,6% simply agrees, 22% neither agrees nor disagrees, 41,2% disagrees and 23,6% disagrees completely.

TABLE : 1.5

Έχει η υπηρεσία καθαρό όραμα για το μέλλον της το οποίο βοηθά στη βελτίωση της αποδοτικότητας των εργαζομένων;
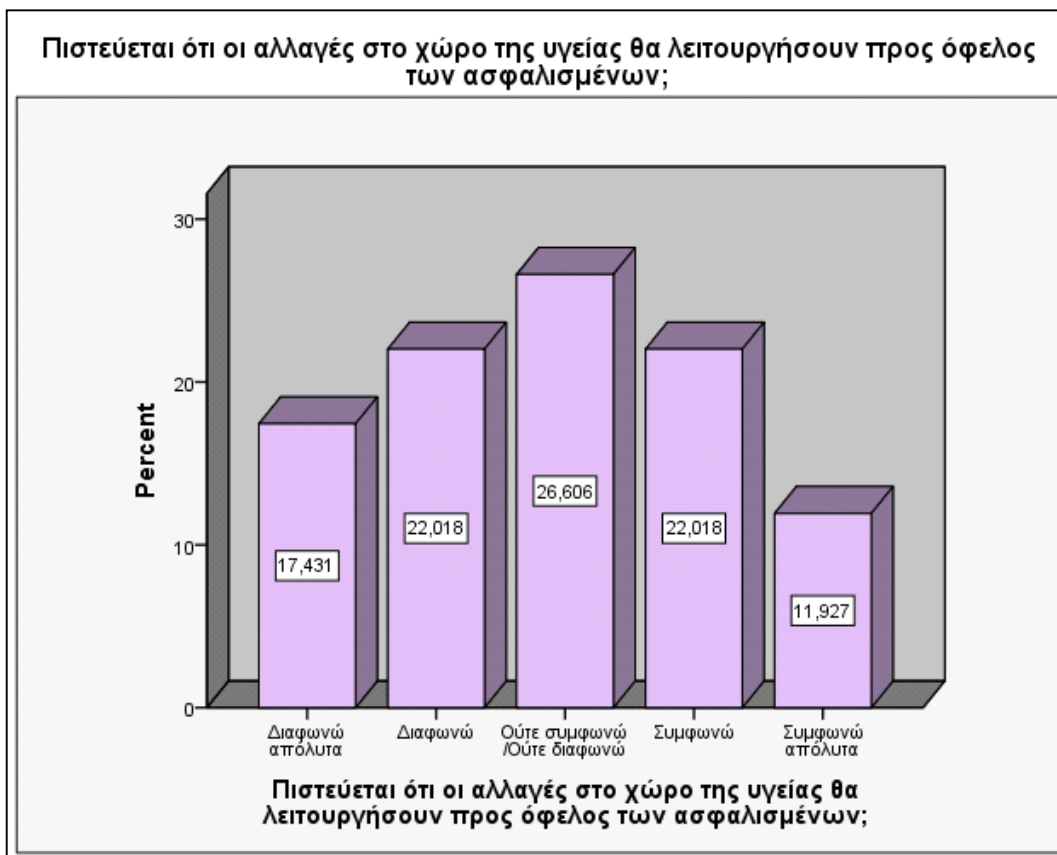
Furthermore, while 9% considers unionism an institution that can assist improving the employees' evaluation and professional growth, only 5% agrees that unions and their activities are using their power for the growth of the employees' productivity, 16,8% believes that the same institutions will exercise their influence on EOPYY and its directors in favor of the citizen-customer. 9%.

Also, 55% believe that change constitutes a major force for improving the function of the organization and the level of productivity of the employees. 93% of them believe that there are certain sections of the new organization that create several problems to the rest and thus, they should change.

34% believes that changes implemented in the health service could benefit the citizen-customer.

TABLE: 1.6

Πιστεύεται ότι οι αλλαγές στο χώρο της υγείας θα λειτουργήσουν προς όφελος των ασφαλισμένων;

Category	Percent
Διαφωνώ απόλυτα	17,431
Διαφωνώ	22,018
Ούτε συμφωνώ /Ούτε διαφωνώ	26,606
Συμφωνώ	22,018
Συμφωνώ απόλυτα	11,927

Πιστεύεται ότι οι αλλαγές στο χώρο της υγείας θα λειτουργήσουν προς όφελος των ασφαλισμένων;

In addition, while 86% of those agree and agree completely that there are certain changes that ought not to be implemented or at least be modified, 87% argue that there are certain

changes that had to be implemented and do not appear in the law dealing with the establishment and the functioning of EOPYY.
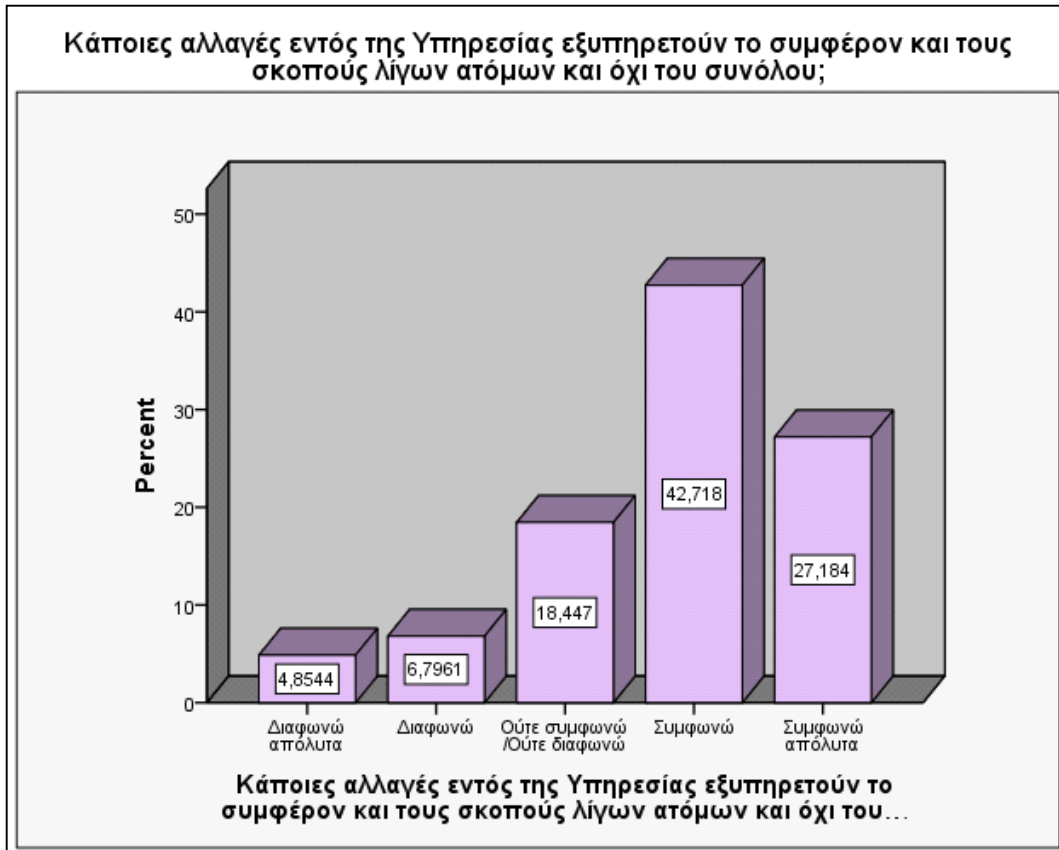
While 86% of the EOPYY employees believe that the role of supervisor-director is vital in the implementation of changes, 91.4% also believes that the employees of all positions and degrees should be informed and even asked of their opinion considering upcoming changes in the functioning of the organization they are working because that makes them feel the organization as part of their family. In the table that follows only 29% of those claim that it satisfies them to talk with other people about their organization and the people working in it. In addition, 49% feel that their organization's problems are also their own problem.

TABLE: 1.7

Αισθάνομαι πως τα προβλήματα της υπηρεσίας μου είναι και δικά μου προβλήματα;
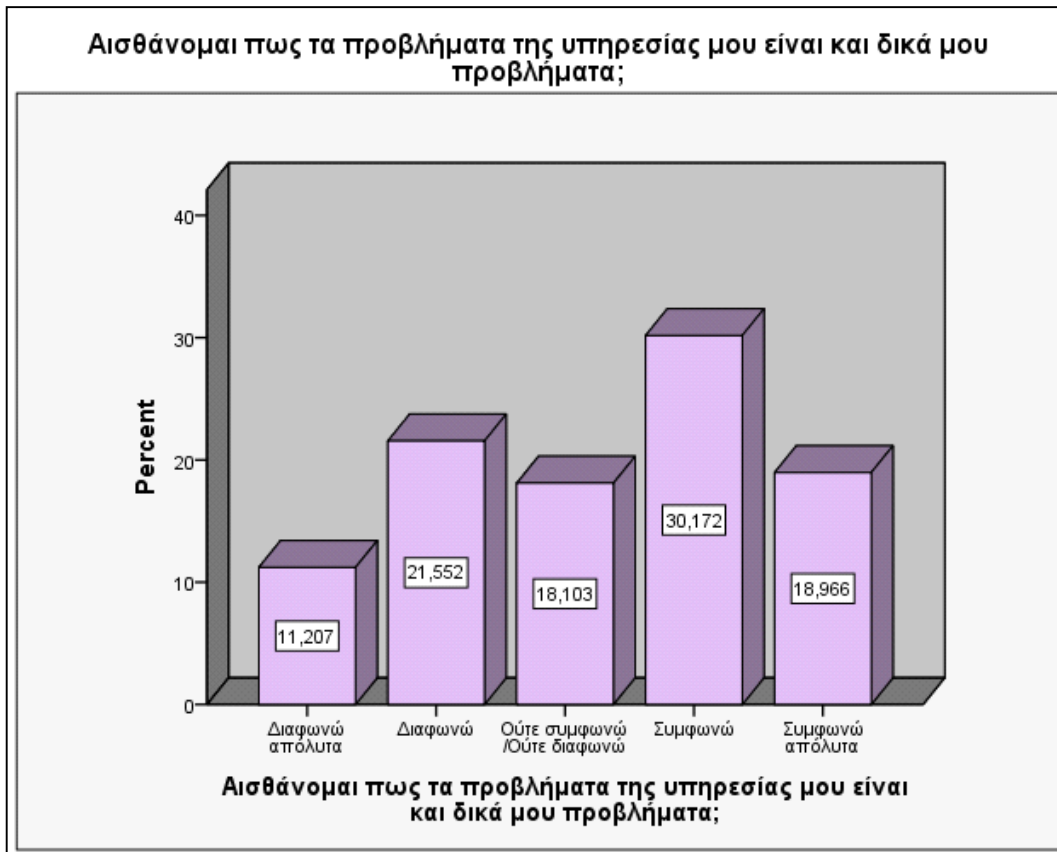
Furthermore, 27.1% totally agree that changes implemented in EOPYY would serve the interests of few people and groups and not the majority, 42,7% simply agree, 18,4% neither agrees nor disagrees, 6,8% disagrees and 4,8% disagrees completely.

TABLE : 1.8

Κάποιες αλλαγές εντός της Υπηρεσίας εξυπηρετούν το συμφέρον και τους σκοπούς λίγων ατόμων και όχι του συνόλου;

Only 9% of the employees totally agrees that they would like to continue in the same organization their professional career to the end, 22,5% simply agrees, 30,6% neither agrees nor disagrees, 20,7% disagrees while 17,1% totally disagrees.

TABLE : 1.9

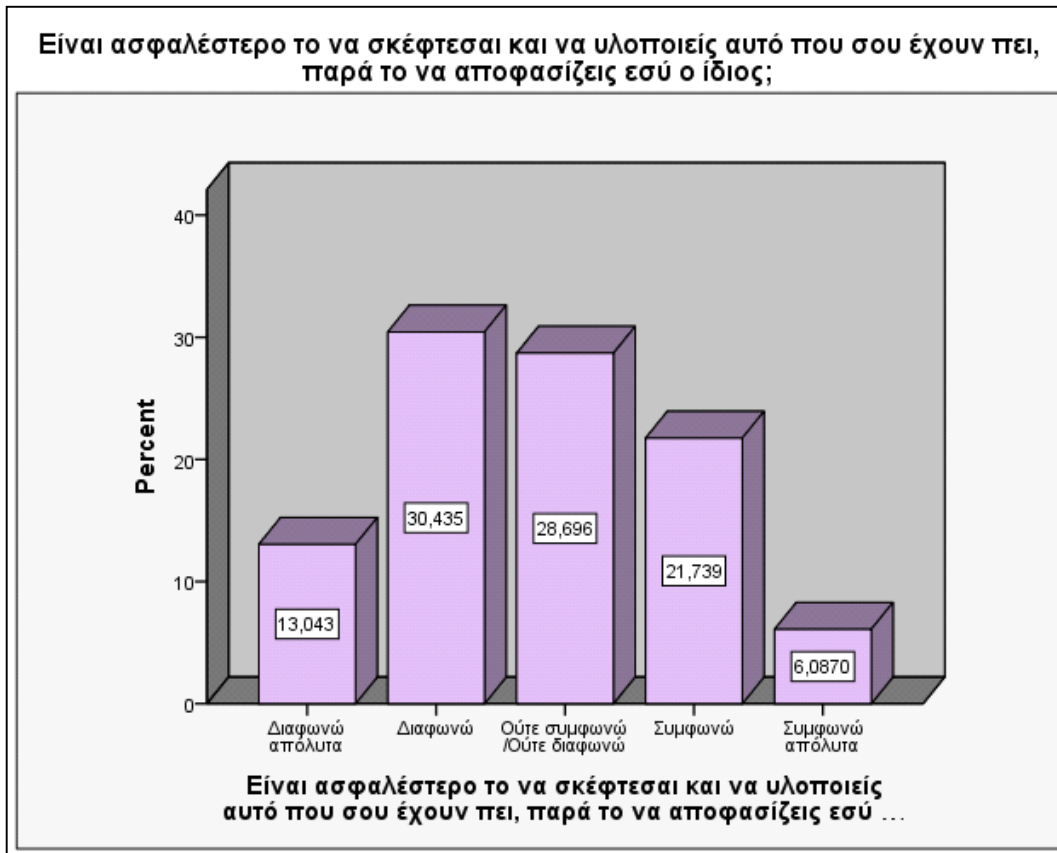Θα με ευχαριστούσε εάν το υπόλοιπο της καριέρας μου το περνούσα στην υπηρεσία αυτή;
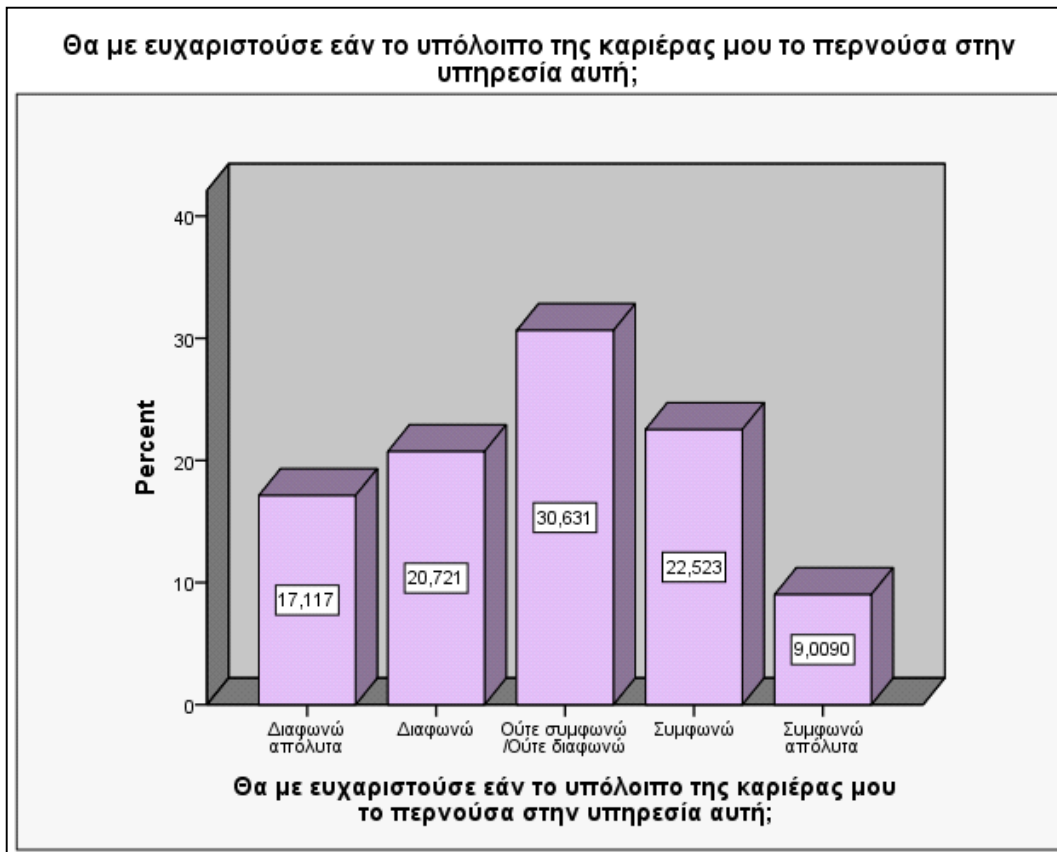
Also, 9.5% strongly agrees that it is better to remain silent, even if you see malfunctions and wrongdoings, rather than fight the system, 29.5% simply agree, 20.8% neither agrees nor disagrees, 19,1% disagrees and 20,8% totally disagrees.

TABLE: 1.10

Μερικές φορές είναι πιο εύκολο να παραμένεις σιωπηλός από το να πολεμάς το σύστημα

Moreover, 6% agrees completely that it is safer to do what you were told by those higher than you than to decide by yourself, 21.7% agrees, 28.7% neither agrees nor disagrees, 30.4% disagrees and 13% totally disagrees.

TABLE : 1.11

Είναι ασφαλέστερο το να σκέφτεσαι και να υλοποιείς αυτό που σου έχουν πει, παρά το να αποφασίζεις εσύ ο ίδιος;

Only 21% agrees and agrees completely that with their decisions the higher-ranking administrators facilitate the work of their employees.

Furthermore, 13.3% agrees completely that their organization has/maintains a warm-friendly environment for them, 26% agrees, 23.4% neither agrees nor disagrees, 27% disagrees and 10.4% totally disagrees

TABLE : 1.12

Η υπηρεσία σας είναι ένα πολύ οικείο και φιλικό περιβάλλον για να εργάζεται κάποιος;
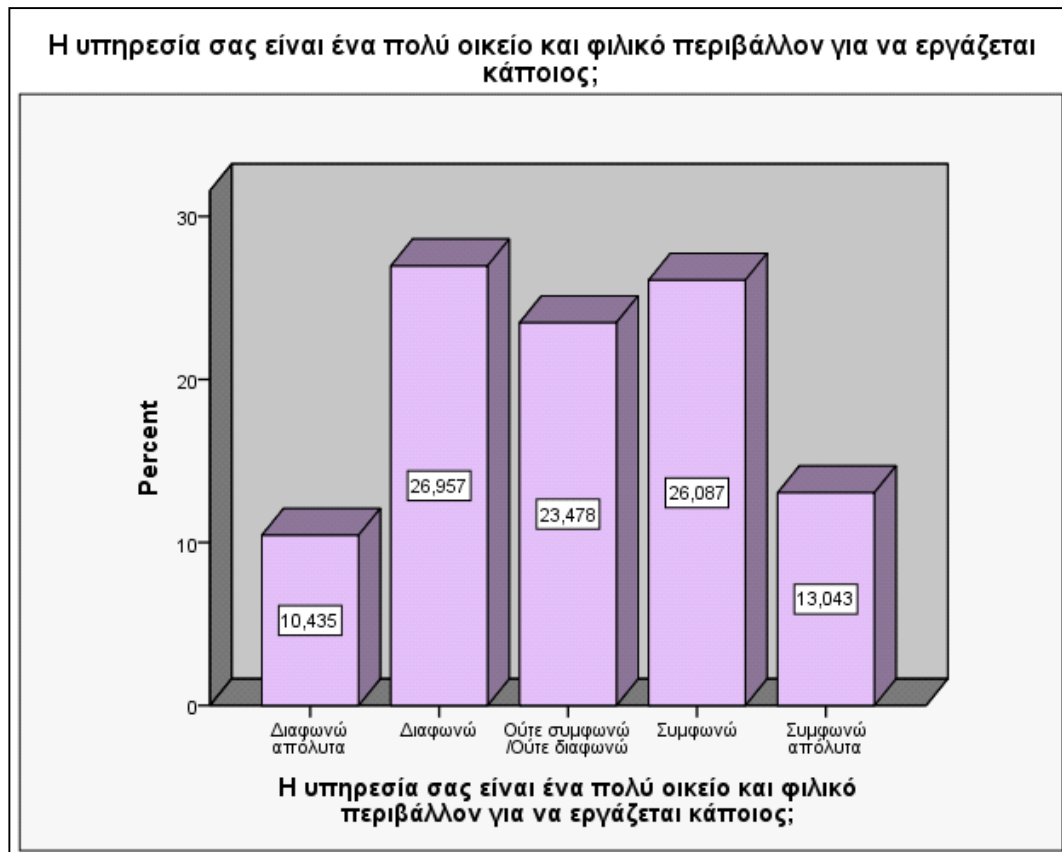
As a result, 9.7% agrees completely that they are interested in the accomplishment of the goals set up by their hierarchy, 29.2% agrees, 31.4% neither agrees nor disagrees, 24.7% disagrees and 4.4% totally disagrees.

To the question if there are well defined goals and duties, 1.8% agrees completely, 16.2% agrees, 14.4% neither agrees nor disagrees, 40.5% disagrees and 27% totally disagrees.

TABLE: 1.13

Υπάρχουν, στην υπηρεσία, οργανογράμματα, στοχοθεσία κα οριοθέτηση αρμοδιοτήτων;
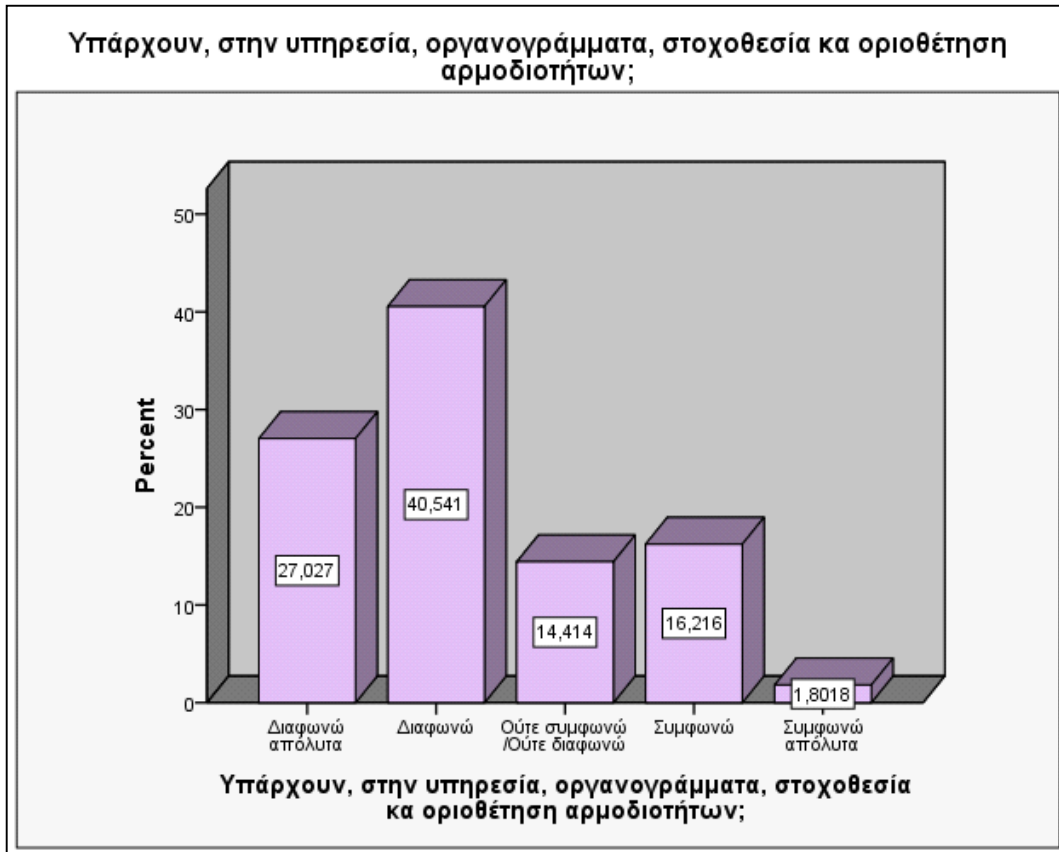
Also, 3.5% agrees completely that their administrative directors constitute an example of strong leadership, 18.3% agrees, 28.4% neither agrees nor disagrees, 31% disagrees and 18.3% totally disagrees.

TABLE : 1.14

Θεωρείται ότι η διοίκηση αποτελεί παράδειγμα ισχυρής ηγεσίας;
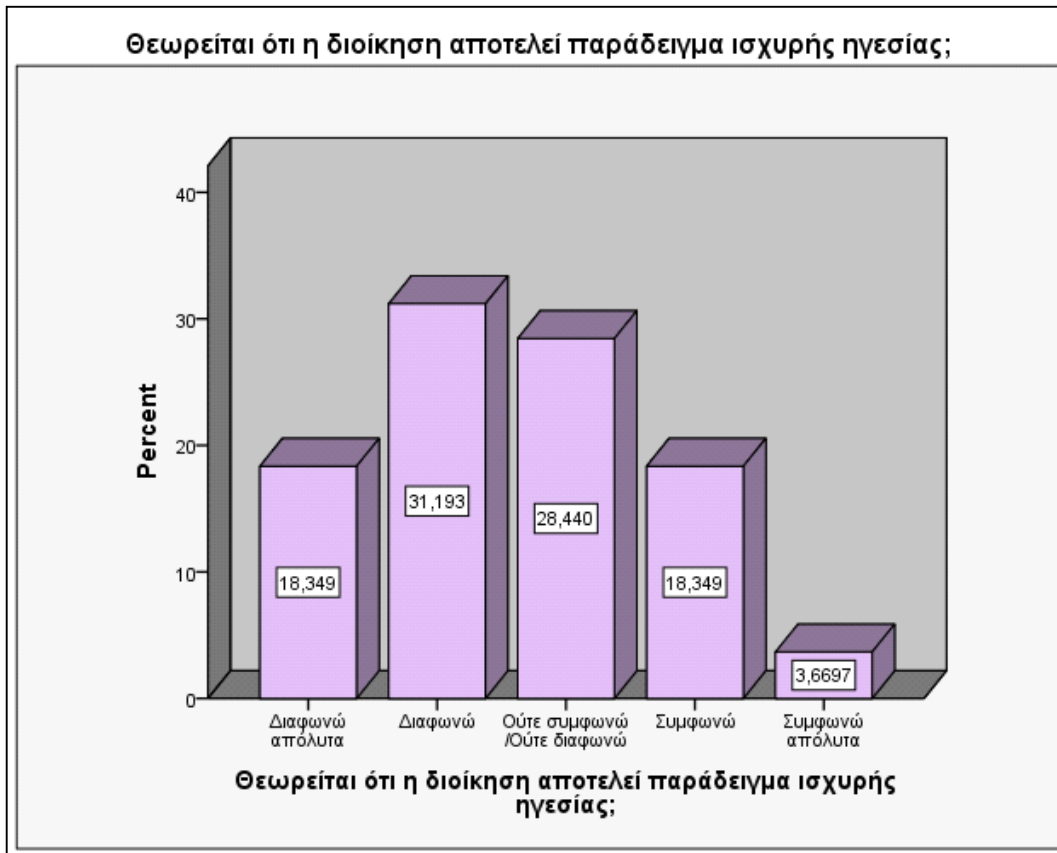
In addition, only 21% agree and totally agree that the directors organize, co-ordinate and examine the end-results of all of their activities inside the organization and 18% express the same attitude in the question whether the directors favor the participation of their employees in the decision-making process. Naturally, in the same category, 30.9% argue that the employees follow existing rules for the accomplishment of their goals.

To the question if among the employees exists an environment of trust, co-operation and team-work, only 4.8% agrees (nobody agrees completely), 30.4% neither agrees nor disagrees, 42% disagrees and 22.8% totally disagrees

TABLE: 1.15
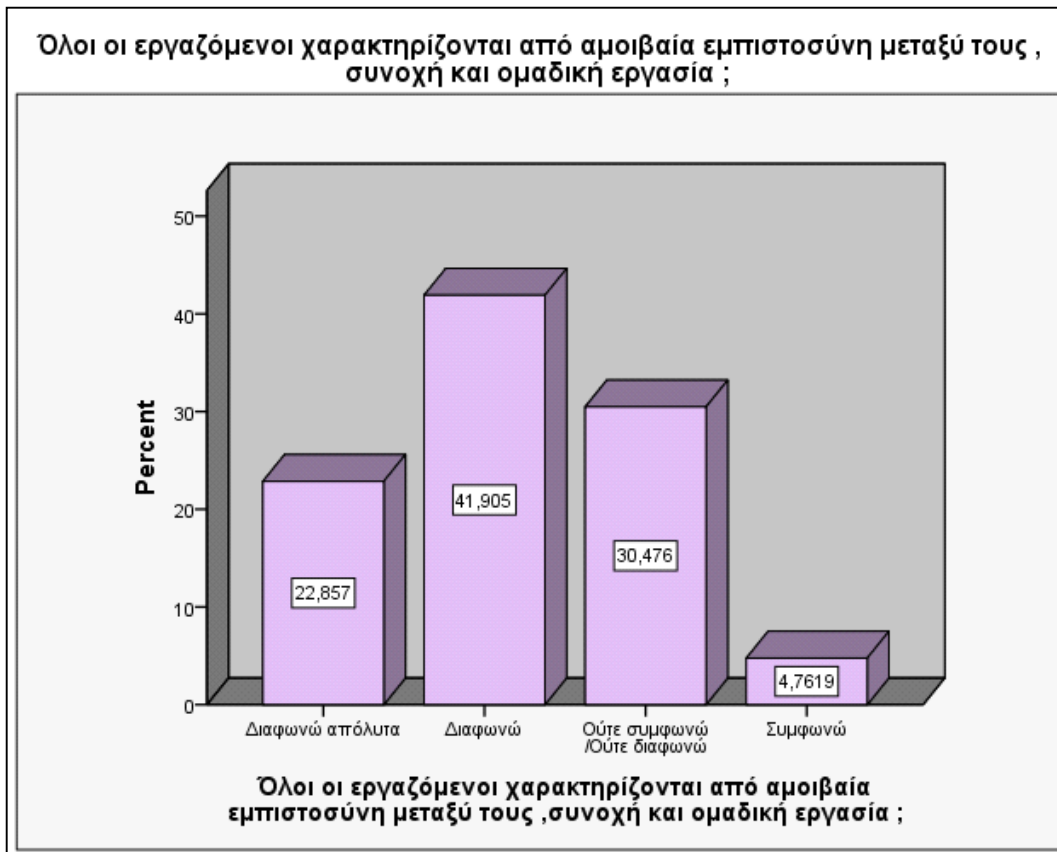
In addition, only 11.7% agree and agree completely that in the strategic goals of their organization is the development of an atmosphere of trust and co-operation between employees, supervisors and directors.

In questions regarding whether the strategy of the organization aims to develop dynamic employees capable of taking advantage from new technologies and projects as well as learning from their mistakes, only 15% agrees and agrees completely. In the same direction, 32% agree and agree completely that the same strategy puts emphasis on the internal stability and longevity of the organization.

Furthermore, 38.7% agrees and agrees completely that they participate together with fellow employees in several social activities and events, 31.6% that their organization has set as its goal the satisfaction of the citizen-customer. Moreover, 18% were positive on the longevity of their organization and their own future in it and only 12.5% agree and agree completely that the employees who have the right qualifications will advance in the hierarchical ladder.

Most important, only 4.3% agree and agree completely that EOPYY was created for the improvement of health services to the citizen-customer. To the question of whether their organizational culture has a positive or negative effect on their performance, 77.3% argue in favor of the second. When asked to describe it, they tend to use words such as: miserable, ineffective, unorganized, depended, without a program, chaotic. What they all claim, is that the organization continues to operate due to the *filotimo* of few employees.

Conclusion

The organizational culture of the newly established National Organization for Health Services (EOPYY) can be simply defined as "organized irresponsibility" (οργανωμένη ανευθυνότητα). In order to satisfy the conditions-directions set by the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund following the financial crisis of 2009, all Greek governments since then hastily tried to merge into a big organization, several health services agencies that existed before. Without following a modern system of management, the decision-makers simply assembled together a large number of employees. Although the latter had an above-average experience in

health services agencies, the inability of the new organization and its leading directors to present clear-cut organizational structure, regulations concerning the behavior and duties of the employees, their rewards and evaluation procedures as well as defined goals, succeeded to create a chaotic atmosphere and undefined organizational culture. Although the second factor should had been dealt with attention, given the diverse organizational cultures that these employees had brought with them, it appeared to be the last issue of concern for the decision-makers. The termination of EOPPY in March of 2014 was nothing more than an announcement of an already "malfunctioning"-"inoperable" organization. Have the planners learned their lessons in order the organization that replaced EOPYY, the PEDY, will not follow the same path? Time will soon tell us.