

Audit Report 4/2022

The response of ten NHS hospitals to the increased demand for intensive care beds, right after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The audit focused on the degree of preparedness and the effectiveness of the NHS hospitals' response to the increased demand for intensive care beds to treat COVID-19 cases, right after the outbreak of the pandemic and until the end of the year 2020.

A total of ten hospitals, all located in Greece's major cities and in areas heavily affected by the pandemic, were audited. The audit confirmed that, within 2020, intensive care units capacity, in the audited hospitals, had increased from 181 to 325 beds.

Furthermore, the audit concluded that:

- 1.** A number of the audited hospitals completed their response plans to the COVID-19 pandemic in time. However, the issue of the increased demand for intensive care beds was not fully addressed in those plans.
- 2.** The preexisting lack of adequate intensive care beds in the audited hospitals was only partially covered.
- 3.** Under the emergency circumstances caused by the pandemic, the insufficient number of adequately trained healthcare workers led to the understaffing of the extra intensive care units.
- 4.** Although the audited hospitals were reinforced, in terms of intensive care equipment and personnel, the need for intensive care hospitalization of COVID-19 cases exceeded their maximum capacity, especially in the areas outside the capital city that were mostly affected by the pandemic.