Resolution on the proposal for a Council directive implementing the Framework Agreement on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector concluded by HOSPEEM and EPSU

2010/2529(RSP) - 11/02/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 11 February 2010, the European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs on the proposal for a Council directive implementing the Framework Agreement on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector concluded by HOSPEEM and EPSU (COM(2009)0577).

Parliament refers to its resolution of 6 July 2006 with recommendations to the Commission on protecting European healthcare workers from blood-borne infections due to needle-stick injuries (see INI/2006/2015), and it recognises that the proposed Council directive incorporates the most significant findings of its that resolution. It also welcomes the fact that the Commission has requested Parliament's opinion, particularly since this is an issue that has received considerable attention from Parliament over a period of many years. Parliament recommends that the measures defined in the proposed directive be urgently adopted and implemented, as the workers in question have already waited more than five years since this very serious matter was first brought to the Commission's attention.

Members note estimates that there are more than one million needle-stick injuries in the European Union every year, and that needle-stick injuries may lead to the transmission of more than 20 life-threatening viruses, including Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV/Aids, and thus present a serious health problem. Such injuries and other injuries caused by sharp medical instruments represent one of the most common and serious risks for health workers throughout Europe. However, independent studies have shown that the majority of needle-stick injuries can be prevented by better training, better working conditions and the general use of safer medical instruments incorporating sharps protection mechanisms.

Parliament welcomes the fact that the Framework Agreement has been developed on an equal basis in cooperation between HOSPEEM (European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association) and the FSESP (Fédération Syndicale Européenne des Services Publics), who are recognised by the Commission as European social partners in the hospital and healthcare system. It also welcomes the fact that the Framework Agreement entails a clause on "minimum standards" without prejudice to existing and future national and Community provisions that are more favourable to workers, recalling that Member States and /or the social partners should be free to adopt additional measures which are more favourable to workers in the area concerned.

The resolution calls on the Commission:

- to issue guidance to accompany the agreement and thereby assist with its smooth implementation in all Member States;

- to monitor the application process for the Agreement and to inform the European Parliament on its implementation on a regular basis.