Resolution on long-term care for older people

2010/2759(RSP) - 09/09/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following a debate which was held on the 7 September on Oral Question O-0102/2010 to the Commission on long-term care for older people, the European Parliament adopted a motion for a resolution tabled by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs on the same subject.

It calls on Member States to consider the demographic developments in recent years, especially the ageing of population, leading to increased budgetary pressures and high demand for better health and social care infrastructure, and encourages Member States to fight against social exclusion against elder people and any type of discrimination based on age. Reminding Member States that ensuring access to adequate health and care services is a fundamental principle of the European model of solidarity, Parliament calls, through the Open Method of Coordination, for an exchange of information, policy ideas and best practice between Member States on the provision of long-term care for older people and, in particular, measures and minimum professional standards in order to:

- reduce health inequalities and safeguard older people in the community and in care settings,
- tackle elder abuse,
- adopt human resource strategies to fight against staff shortages,
- help disseminate information and communications technologies to promote the (care within families and) independence of older people.

Recognising the importance of both the quality and continuity of care, the resolution calls on Member States to improve specialist training, education and reinsertion measures for all those people, including informal carers and those requiring professional qualifications, with long-term care responsibilities for older people. It notes that such training may also help improve the status of this important work. Member States are asked to tackle the issues of poor payment of care work, shortage of personnel, lack of training or inadequate training, which all put a strain on care provision. Members note the important contribution made by civil society, church and charity organisations in the provision of care. They call on the Commission and Member States to take into account the needs of informal carers, who provide a significant proportion of care for older people, and to take concrete measures to support and safeguard this resource via training, respite and measures to reconcile work and family life.

Parliament calls on the Commission to:

- collect data and draw up a summary of the institutional, community and home care infrastructure for older people in each Member State;
- do more research to establish the number of deaths among older people in long-term care that are attributable to malnutrition or dehydration;
- produce a Green Paper on elder abuse and safeguarding older people in the community and in all care settings, including a focus on patient mobility and details of best practices already existing in the 27 Member States;
- prepare a study which will give a clearer picture of the increasing requirements for the care of older people and an estimate of the anticipated specialist provision for the period until 2020.

Parliament goes on to regret that in many Member States the funding and provision of specialist geriatric medicine has been reduced over the years, and that not sufficient training has been given to other specialists on older people's issues. It notes that this has in many cases led to a reduction in the quality of

care provided to older people and which, at times, constitutes unfair discrimination against them. Members States are asked to keep this situation under review, with a view to increasing resources in this area should it be necessary.

It advocates the introduction of programmes providing in-home welfare assistance and health care for the elderly or, in those countries where such arrangements already exist, the continuation thereof, to be administered by the municipal and local authorities within their respective terms of reference.

Lastly, Parliament calls on Member States to reduce the burden on those who care for older people or people with disabilities and – to enable carers to take up employment – set up integrated care systems.