Resolution on the EU response to HIV/AIDS in the EU and neighbouring countries, mid-term review of Commission Communication

2011/2864(RSP) - 01/12/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 454 votes to 86, with 44 abstentions, a resolution on the EU response to HIV/AIDS in the EU and neighbouring countries, mid-term review of Commission Communication.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, ECR, GUE/NGL and EFD.

The resolution recalls that in 2009, 161 000 people became infected with HIV in the EU and neighbouring countries, bringing the number of people living with HIV to a total of more than 2.2 million according to estimates by UNAIDS and WHO. They stress that the ECDPC estimates that in the EU 30% of people infected with HIV do not know that they have the virus, and that of those diagnosed half are presenting at late stages of infection, by which time they cannot benefit fully from treatment, creating unnecessary risks of morbidity, mortality and transmission. Undiagnosed sufferers are 3.5 times more likely to transmit HIV than those who are diagnosed. The number of HIV infections is rising at an alarming rate, particularly in Eastern Europe;

In this context, Parliament calls on the Commission and Council to implement the Communication on 'Combating HIV/AIDS in the European Union and neighbouring countries 2009-2013' and its accompanying Action Plan by:

- scaling up the implementation of prevention strategies which effectively target regional or local epidemiologic trends and needs, and working towards universal access to prevention, testing, counselling, treatment, care and support;

- supporting an effective response to HIV/AIDS in priority regions, such as the worst affected EU Member States, the EU's worst affected neighbouring countries and the Russian Federation and other CIS countries;

- developing means to reach and support the population groups which are most at risk and most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS across Europe.

Parliament calls on the Council to demonstrate political leadership in addressing the continued HIV epidemic in Europe, to develop country-specific HIV action plans and to support effective responses to HIV in neighbouring countries through policy dialogue, technical capacity-building and support for civil society engagement. The Commission and the Council are called upon to provide the **resources needed to guarantee equitable access to HIV prevention, testing, treatment, care and support**, to address stigma and other barriers to timely access to counselling, testing and early care, etc. Measures are needed to improve instruments and actions to address co-infections such as tuberculosis or hepatitides B and C, among others, through improved access to screening and effective access to treatment.

Combat discrimination: Member States are called upon to take all necessary action to end discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, paying particular attention to all people vulnerable to and affected by HIV, to review laws and policies

that adversely affect the delivery of effective HIV programmes and to ensure that people living with HIV /AIDS are involved and represented when anti-discrimination policies are drawn up. All people living with HIV/AIDS should enjoy the best available standards of care and treatment, regardless of their origin, nationality, opinion, age, gender, sexual orientation and religion or any other status.

Parliament notes that prevention measures should explicitly include adequate information and sex education, **access to means of protection, such as male and female condoms**, and a strengthening of the rights and autonomy of women in sexual relationships.

United Nations: Parliament welcomes the commitments made at the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS in 2011, in particular the aims of ensuring treatment for 15 million HIV-positive people worldwide by 2015 and of reducing new HIV infections by 50% by 2015. It welcomes the UN call for the timely delivery of affordable, high-quality and effective antiretroviral treatments by pharmaceuticals companies, with a special focus on cost-effective strategies, in particular the use of generic medicinal products.

Parliament calls on the Commission and Council to implement the changes needed to fulfil their obligations under the UNGASS (United Nations General Assembly Special Session) Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. It also calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to honour their obligations towards the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria and to continue to support its work in developing countries.

Lastly, Parliament calls on the Commission and Council to ensure access to high-quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, information and supplies covering, inter alia:

- confidential and voluntary counselling;
- testing and treatment for HIV and all sexually transmitted infections;
- prevention of unintended pregnancies;
- equitable and affordable access to contraceptives, including access to emergency contraception;
- safe and legal abortion,
- including post-abortion care;
- and care and treatment to prevent vertical transmission of HIV, including to partners and children.