

# Towards a common European action on care

2021/2253(INI) - 05/07/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 436 votes to 143, with 54 abstentions, a resolution towards a common European action on care.

## *A Europe that cares*

Members noted that it is essential to ensure **dignity, independence, autonomy, well-being and participation in social life** through quality care throughout life. People in need of care and their carers should have the right to make a real choice about the care services that are appropriate for them and their families, how they are provided (home care, community-based services, patient-centred care, personalised care or other), where they are provided and how often they are provided, with particular attention to providing care and ensuring access to it for people living in remote areas.

Parliament called on the Commission to present an **ambitious, robust and sustainable European care strategy** that builds on everyone's right to affordable, accessible and high-quality care, as well as on other principles set out in the EPSR and EU strategic documents, and the individual rights and needs of both care recipients and carers, and that **encompasses the entire life course**, targeting and responding to the needs of people at critical periods throughout their lifetime.

Members stressed that the strategy should be based on reliable, comprehensive and comparable data that is publicly available. They insisted that the strategy should include concrete and progressive targets with a timetable and indicators to assess progress and tackle inequalities, taking into account the care needs in European societies. Parliament has highlighted the need to consult all relevant stakeholders at European, national and local level, including representatives of informal carers and patient organisations, when developing the European strategy.

The Commission is invited to include comprehensive measures to combat violence and harassment, including **all forms of abuse of older persons** and abusive acts against carers in the European care strategy.

For their part, Member States should ensure that investment in the care economy is included in national recovery and resilience plans, in the Cohesion Fund and in all other relevant EU financial instruments.

Parliament recalled the commitments of the EU and the Member States to move away from isolated institutional care and towards community and family-based care, and to promote various models of care and independent living. It called on Member States to use available national and EU funds to accelerate this transition.

## *Quality care for every child*

Parliament called for encouraging upward convergence and investing more in quality public care for every child in the EU by revising the Barcelona targets and showing high ambition in the **accessibility of quality childcare services for all children**, including those under 3 years of age and those facing poverty, social exclusion and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Member States are invited to take all necessary measures to reach the target of providing childcare to at least 90% of children over three years of age under compulsory school age and at least 33% of children under three years of age as soon as possible.

Members called on the Commission, in its use of EU financial instruments, to promote investment in childcare services. Member States are called upon to provide comprehensive support to parents, including (i) promoting maternity and paternity rights and paid parental rights, (ii) ensuring the availability of easily accessible social services, such as childcare, professional counselling, mediation or psychological support, and (iii) encouraging men to take on more unpaid family and domestic responsibilities, including care of very young children.

### *Equal access to quality care services*

Parliament called on Member States to **recognise the right to care** and to reform and integrate their social services and protection systems so as to ensure effective, comprehensive, equal and timely access to care services and treatment throughout the life cycle.

Stressing the importance of ensuring that care is not commodified, Members suggested that the Commission and Member States develop the necessary tools to regularly assess the accessibility, availability and affordability of care services and treatment.

The resolution stressed the importance of timely investment in care structures, identification of skills gaps and evaluation of future staffing and training needs at the level of individual professions, sectors and regions, with particular attention to population density and care needs, in order to ensure a sufficient and sustainable workforce and to tackle inequalities in access to services and care.

### *Quality long-term care for a long and quality life*

Parliament called on the Commission to develop a comprehensive, ambitious and rights-based set of targets and corresponding indicators for long-term care. The Commission should set as a key objective **equal and universal access for all to quality long-term care services** based on the individual needs of people receiving care and support, with particular attention to the elimination of inequalities as well as to people in vulnerable situations, such as the elderly, people with disabilities and women in informal and undeclared care work.

### *Informal care*

Members noted that across the EU, **between 40 and 50 million people** provide informal care on a regular basis and 44 million provide long-term care at least once a week. The majority of these people are women, including women with disabilities. They account for around 60% of informal carers and spend more hours than men providing informal care, which is a barrier to gender equality and can limit the possibility of formal work, particularly for younger carers.

To ensure that people can continue to receive care in their own homes, mobile care and support should be extended to relieve family carers, especially women, of care tasks through awareness-raising activities, but also through adequate support, including financial compensation. Members urged the Commission to present to Parliament and the Council a European Carers Programme and as a part of it a **European Informal Carers programme** with a package of actions at EU level on informal care.

### *Decent working conditions for all care workers*

Parliament called on Member States to focus their action on care on **building up and financing an adequate workforce in the sector**. It called on Member States to increase the attractiveness of the care professions by ensuring social recognition, decent working conditions and fair pay, including appropriate working hours. This would help address labour shortages, especially in regions and Member States facing significant difficulties due to the care drain.

Members are concerned about the **working conditions of home carers**, mainly **women**, including migrant women, many of whom work under unclear pay conditions. Concerned about the high proportion of workers paid at or below the minimum wage among care professionals, the majority of whom are women, Members welcomed the Commission's proposal for a directive on a fair minimum wage.