Health care and care to the elderly: supporting national strategies for ensure a high level of social protection

2003/2134(INI) - 11/03/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Karin JONS (PES, D) on health care and care for the elderly: supporting national strategies for ensuring a high level of social protection. Parliament is calling for the Open Method of Coordination to be applied to health care and long-term care. MEPs welcome the exchange of information and experience, and the identification of best practice, which has taken place between the Member States. On the other hand, they believe this cooperation should be reinforced, with the Member States setting objectives and common indicators for the period to 2006. They should take account of three fundamental objectives: universal access regardless of wealth and income, the need for high quality care, and financial viability. They also emphasise the importance of prevention and health promotion, which are at least as important as treatment and rehabilitation. MEPs favour a European Charter of patients' rights, which they say the Commission should draw up after an exchange of experience. The Member States are each asked to adopt a law on patients' rights or a Patients' Charter, guaranteeing the right to receive appropriate and comprehensive advice and information from their doctor, the right of access to treatment records and the right to make a complaint. MEPs note that even if there is limited cross-border use of health services, this is constantly growing for certain groups of people and in certain regions. They therefore invite the Commission to review, on the basis of Court of Justice case law, ways to enhance legal certainty for patients regarding their rights to use health services in another Member State, and to present appropriate proposals on the subject. They are concerned that in many Member States, waiting times for certain treatments are too long and call for Member States to take steps to reduce waiting times.