

Public health: prevention of injury and promotion of safety

2006/0106(CNS) - 12/12/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Kathy **Sinnott** (IND/DEM) and made some changes to the proposal. It wanted to see eight priority areas instead of seven, and inserted the area of safety at the workplace. It also made special reference to the prevention of violence, particularly violence against women and children and pointed out that domestic violence against women is the main cause of death and invalidity among women between the ages of 16 and 44. Parliament also pointed out that people over 65 years of age represent 16% of the total population in the EU, but suffer a disproportionate 40% of fatal injuries; thus the elderly run more than double the risk of encountering a fatal accident, and long bone fractures are the main cause of hospitalisation among the elderly.

Parliament inserted the following in its recommendations to Member States:

- carry out scientific studies, particularly on self-harm and risk taking behaviour;
- pay particular attention to the social determinants that provoke injuries and insecurity: the biggest difference in injury, mortality and morbidity rates is between poorer and wealthier countries, and between social classes within countries. The gap is growing, due to factors such as increased road traffic, worsening inequalities in terms of income, higher unemployment, decreasing social support, market liberalisation and increased availability of alcohol, and poor regulatory and enforcement mechanisms. The unemployed, ethnic minority groups, migrant workers, refugees, and disabled and homeless people are particularly at risk;
- take measures so that databases on good practice in injury prevention are based on sound data taking into account local circumstances, and are supported by research that indicates the specific social, economic, infrastructural and cultural circumstances within which successful policies are implemented;
- raise public awareness on causes and consequences by highlighting the responsibilities of both individuals and society as regards the prevention of injuries and the promotion of safety;
- ensure that insurance companies that have access to injury data provide all relevant data to the Member States in order to facilitate the definition of the mechanisms and places where accidents most frequently occur and use this information to improve prevention.

MEPs called for the Commission to submit a legislative proposal for the establishment of a Community-wide injury surveillance system, for the exchange of information on good practice and for the dissemination of information, including precise details of financial implications. Furthermore, all future programmes on the prevention of injury and the promotion of safety should take into account health inequalities, bearing in mind that lack of access to social support, poor community cohesion and social exclusion reduce people's capacity to withstand social conflict without resorting to violence, including self-harm.

