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[Press release](#) | 30.05.2013

Access to care

Vulnerable groups cannot be left behind by austerity policies

The European Parliament's employment and social affairs committee today adopted an initiative report on access to care for vulnerable groups by UK Green MEP Jean Lambert. With access to care threatened by fiscal contraction across Europe, the report reveals key findings and recommendations on how to ensure vulnerable groups are not hardest hit. Commenting after the vote, EP draftsman/rapporteur **Jean Lambert** stated:

"This report makes clear the disturbing impact of fiscal cutbacks across the EU on the most vulnerable groups in our societies and their access to essential care. Hopefully, the strong backing of the committee for the report today will be endorsed by European Parliament as a whole, so that we can send a strong political message to the European Commission and EU governments on the need to take action to ensure the most vulnerable people - such as those with disabilities, the elderly and long-term unemployed - are not even harder hit.

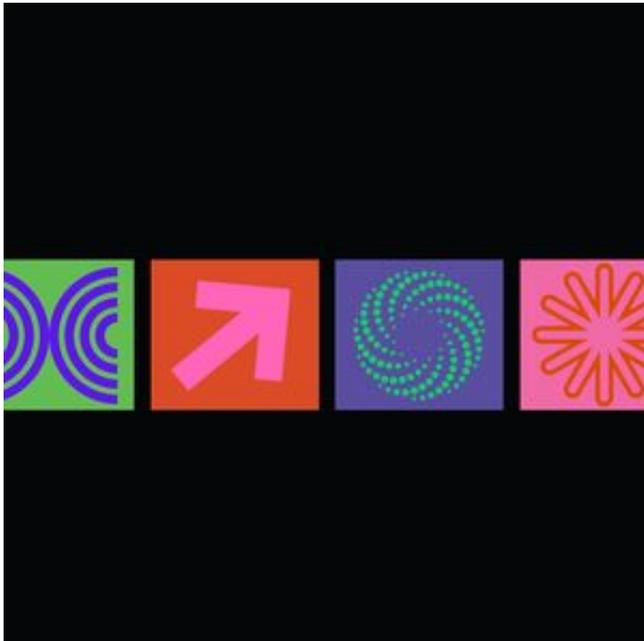
"Cutbacks have led to crucial care services being curtailed across Europe. There has been a move away from promoting independent living for people with disabilities, with increased pressure on informal carers for older people. The rising costs of care means many vulnerable people can afford less care or none at all. Provision of core health and care services to the long-term unemployed and other vulnerable groups is also coming under pressure and being curbed. Conversely, the increased numbers living in poverty has led to more children coming into care. It is a vicious circle that risks leaving people even further behind.

"The report adopted today has made a number of clear recommendations that EU governments and the Commission should immediately act on. We need whole-cost assessments of cuts or changes to care schemes to ensure short-term cuts do not increase costs in the long-term. Financial assistance programmes to member states must include an effective social protection and care dimension. All policies need to be scrutinised to ensure they pay particular attention to groups already seen as vulnerable and do not worsen their situation.

"There is also a need to provide greater protection for carers themselves, who are being hit by the crisis. The Commission should propose EU legislation on leave for carers, who work long hours in extremely demanding situations. Social partner dialogue with the care sector is also necessary to help raise standards in this key sector, which is continuing to grow due to changing demographics in Europe."

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Jean Lambert

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