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Access to care

EP calls on EU to improve access to care of vulnerable groups

The European Parliament today adopted a report by Green MEP Jean Lambert on access to care for vulnerable groups. With access to healthcare and other social support services threatened by budget cuts, the report uncovers important findings and proposes measures to improve the access to care, support services and healthcare of the most vulnerable in society. After the vote, **Jean Lambert**, member of the employment committee, said:

"We welcome the Parliament's support for this report which speaks out on the effects of the crisis on the most vulnerable in our society in terms of access to care, support services and healthcare. This vote sends a message to the European Commission and EU governments on the need to ensure that austerity measures don't undermine EU values and prevent the most vulnerable citizens, such as undocumented migrants, children from poor families and the homeless, from being able to access healthcare, care services and basic living support."

"As the report reveals, the crisis measures put in place by EU governments are leading to a disproportionately negative affect on vulnerable groups. For example, cuts in disability benefit are affecting disabled peoples' ability to live independently, while the long-term unemployed face increasing difficulty in gaining access to healthcare and other social support systems. Groups such as the Roma, poor women and migrants also face obstacles in obtaining adequate health and care services. The report calls on the Commission and EU governments to carry out social impact assessments to ensure policies don't run counter to the EU's Anti-Poverty Strategy and close the gaps in existing schemes to ensure their affordability, availability and quality. In addition to this, any financial aid to another EU member state must include a social protection and care dimension and accompanying policies should be evaluated to ensure they do not worsen conditions for groups already seen as vulnerable."

"Furthermore, the report calls on the European Commission to propose a Directive on carers' leave. With cutbacks leading to increased care costs and many vulnerable people forced to make difficult decisions on whether to cut back or even cancel the care services they receive, the Commission and Member States should explicitly recognise the work of informal carers and provide tailored measures for both voluntary and paid"

carers, such as on work-life balance, better coordination between informal and formal care providers as well as social security policies and training. This is particularly relevant in the context of changing demographics in Europe.

"The report also calls on the Council to do what is long overdue and adopt proposed legislation on anti-discrimination. While EU law already outlaws employment discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, age, disability or religion, there is currently nothing in place to prevent people from being discriminated against in their access to healthcare, education or housing."

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Jean Lambert

Member

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