



Older women: Parliament calls for positive discrimination

EU Member States should take positive discrimination measures to improve the lives of older women, including paid leave for carers, says Parliament in a resolution voted on Tuesday. Member States should also run campaigns to raise awareness of the fundamental role older people play in society, it adds.

Women live longer than men, and face a greater risk of ending up in poverty, note MEPs, who say innovative policies should be devised, say MEPs, to support "informal carers" (most of whom are women) with benefits and social security rights.

Workers with dependent older relatives should be able to choose whether to be paid to care for themselves or to call on social services instead, and new types of paid leave from work should be introduced for caring duties other than parental leave, says the resolution.

Governments should also ensure that workers whose income is temporarily lower owing to their caring duties can continue acquiring pension rights, add MEPs.

Basic services for everyone

Every man and woman in the EU must have a right to adequate, affordable and quality social and health services of general interest, say MEPs, who therefore call on the Commission to propose a directive on basic services. The Commission should also consider a system whereby all men and women in the EU are granted the right to a basic income, they add. Finally, members called for a proposed EU anti-discrimination directive (on the grounds of age) to be approved as soon as possible.

Action plan

MEPs ask the Commission to come up with an action plan, by the end of 2011, providing inter alia for:

- yearly reporting on violation of older people's rights and on measures to be taken at EU and national level to abolish direct and hidden discrimination,
- measures to ensure the quality of care and the quality of carers' working conditions,
- more coherent social security measures, including pension schemes, care leave and part-time working arrangements,
- a plan to support women who care for grandchildren while the parents are at work.

"Ageing is very often seen in a society as a burden. However, ageing also enriches society: ageing people take care of our children, they have silent knowledge in workplaces and in society, and also ageing population is very important as consumers", said rapporteur Sirpa Pietikänen (EPP, Finland).

The Pietikänen report was approved with 562 votes in favour, 78 against and 29 abstentions.

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