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Guaranteed access to health care for migrants/foreign nationals

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Mr Giacomo SANTINI and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The World Health Organisation defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Most countries consider that their health obligations in respect of non-nationals barely extend beyond basic or emergency care.

The European Social Charter provides that the entire population must have access to the health care system. States must adopt as their main criterion genuine access to health services for all, without discrimination, as a fundamental individual right. This means that once a social benefit is provided for in national legislation, the principle of non-discrimination must apply, whatever the administrative status of the person concerned.

In practice, though, foreign nationals, even when they are in the country lawfully, have a much lower level of access to care than citizens of the country. There are also disturbing signs of attempts to limit entitlement to a residence permit to foreign nationals with a serious illness who cannot be treated in their own country.

The situation regarding irregular migrants' access to health care, especially that of women, is particularly dramatic. Several aspects make their situation worse, such as particularly unfavourable housing and working conditions, isolation, which leaves them more vulnerable, and ignorance of their rights. This is without taking into account a whole barrage of obstacles to access to care and the fear of being reported to the authorities.

The result is often a decision to do without or postpone treatment, and this includes the children.

The Parliamentary Assembly should turn its attention to the question of access to health care for migrants/foreign nationals, whether or not in a regular situation, as a fundamental individual right.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

SANTINI Giacomo, Italy, EPP/CD
ACKETOFT Tina, Sweden, ALDE
AGRAMUNT Pedro, Spain, EPP/CD
CILEVIČS Boriss, Latvia, SOC
DARCHIASHVILI David, Georgia, EPP/CD
DENDIAS Nikolaos, Greece, EPP/CD
DÍAZ TEJERA Arcadio, Spain, SOC
EGOROV Sergey, Russian Federation, EDG
FRAHM Pernille, Denmark, UEL
HANCOCK Mike, United Kingdom, ALDE
HUSS Jean, Luxembourg, SOC
IWIŃSKI Tadeusz, Poland, SOC
KANDELAKI Giorgi, Georgia, EPP/CD
KOSZORÚS László, Hungary, EPP/CD
MEMECAN Nursuna, Turkey, ALDE
MENDES Ana Catarina, Portugal, SOC
MIHALOVICS Péter, Hungary, EPP/CD
OSBORNE Sandra, United Kingdom, SOC
SAVVIDI Ivan, Russian Federation, EDG
STRIK Tineke, Netherlands, SOC
TÜRKEŞ Tuğrul, Turkey, EDG
TÜRKÖNE Özlem, Turkey, EPP/CD

1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democrat Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left