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Equal access to health care

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 2020 (2013)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2020 (2013) on "Equal access to health care", which it has transmitted to a number of intergovernmental bodies for information and possible comments.[2]

2. In direct response to the recommendation, the Committee of Ministers would echo the call of the Parliamentary Assembly to member States to consider ratifying the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163) and the protocols thereto and to take measures to ensure rapid progress towards the implementation of the European Social Charter in line with the conclusions and decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights.

3. Recalling that member States should provide equitable access to health care systems and services to all citizens without any discrimination, the Committee of Ministers would also like to draw attention to Article 3 of the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention) on "Equitable access to health care", "Parties, taking into account health needs and available resources, shall take appropriate measures with a view to providing, within their jurisdiction, equitable access to health care of appropriate quality".

4. The Committee of Ministers would inform the Assembly that the current Council of Europe Health Project "Citizens' consultation on the right to the protection of health" (2012-2013), carried out under the aegis of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS), is supported by Article 11 of the European Social Charter (1961) and the Revised European Social Charter (1996) "The right to protection of health". It would also draw attention to the fact that in the context of this project, the CDCS is preparing a "Council of Europe Training Programme on Health Literacy for Elderly People" in order to increase their capacity to understand and process relevant health information, to make appropriate use of the health care system, to adopt healthy life styles, and to take informed decisions on issues affecting their own state of health.

5. Finally, the Committee of Ministers, in line with the Assembly's recommendation, would encourage other sectors of the Council of Europe to include health-related issues in their work, where appropriate, based on a cross-sectoral approach.

1. Adopted at the 1187th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (11 December 2013).
2. European Committee on Social Rights (ECSR), the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and of the European Code of Social Security, the Consumer Health Protection Committee (Partial Agreement) (CD-P-SC) and the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS).