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Promoting universal health coverage

Motion for a resolution

tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

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

Universal Health Coverage means that everyone, everywhere should have access to the health services that they need without risk of financial hardship. Its achievement constitutes the UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 3.8 and covers the full range of essential health-care services, of appropriate quality, including access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

Public health emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic have exposed the consequences of underinvestment in health care. Despite efforts to strengthen national health systems, it is believed that more than half of the world's population still has no access to essential health services. In Europe, many people still have to pay out-of-pocket for needed health services, in particular medicines. The pandemic and the effects of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have further worsened the existing socioeconomic and health inequalities, including in Europe, thus putting more obstacles in the way of the achievement of Universal Health Coverage.

Urgent action is thus needed. The three UN High-Level meetings on health taking place in 2023 at the UN General Assembly in New York provide us with a unique opportunity to put Universal Health Coverage high on the agenda and make it a reality by 2030. As the leading human rights organisation of the European region, the Council of Europe should take an active role in promoting universal health coverage within member States and globally, and advocate for equity-driven and people-centred health policies, primary healthcare-oriented health systems, and adequate public spending for health.

Parliaments play a crucial role in contributing to the achievement of this goal through legislation, budget allocation and oversight, as well as ratification of international agreements. In this regard, the Parliamentary Assembly should strive to promote Universal Health Coverage, and co-operate with WHO, UHC2030 and other key stakeholders to achieve this goal.

