Leading advocates in health and social care policy call on Commissioners to do more on community care

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Today leading advocates for health and social care policy in Europe called on European Commissioners to develop a dedicated and holistic policy on community care. Eurocarers, European Forum for Primary Care, European Social Network and Health First Europe, together call European Commissioners for health and food safety and employment, social affairs and inclusion, to support Member States in their efforts to make person-centred community care a reality.

Community care has the potential to support smarter spending, generate greater investment in the local communities, and reduce inequalities for citizens who want and need to access care and technologies outside of the hospital. In order to support sustainable healthcare and social welfare systems in Europe, the partners called upon the Commissioners to develop a Commission Communication on Community Care as well as share best practices in community care, establish funding for community care projects in health and social care programmes, and promote a joint action on community care.

Executive Director for Eurocarers, Stecy Yghemonos, explained the importance of such policy, stating “Research shows that there are more than 100 million carers in Europe today and that these people provide 80% of care. Informal carers both complement and supplement the work of formal caregivers and patients often prefer informal care to formal care. It is therefore essential to approach informal carers as core partners in the care pathway and to address their needs and requirements as part of a holistic policy on primary care. This implies the recognition of their important role, the provision of financial and in-kind assistance and the opportunity to have access to information, training and counselling.”

Professor Jan De Maeseneer, Chairman, Europe Forum for Primary Care, stated, “We believe that governments need to move quickly in reforming the way that primary care services are organized and funded – toward interprofessional, team-based care and toward funding for integrated programs, within Community Health Centers, that help improve individual, family and community solidarity, equity and health. However, the need for this reformed approach to first line health and health care is not limited to the wealthier countries of Europe. One might argue that the Community Health Centre model is perhaps the only reliable way that resource-poor countries will ever be able to reverse the overwhelming odds that are faced within and by their fragile health systems.”

John Halloran, Chief Executive, European Social Network, highlighted the key role of community care in people's lives. “If we want to improve people's wellbeing and life chances we really have to develop integrated community strategies and services across the health, social and economic spectrum. This means moving from reactive to preventative, from compensation to investment and from entitlement to partnership.”

“A dedicated EU policy on community care is imperative to ensuring genuine shifts away from treatment-driven systems towards preventive care. A Commission Communication at EU level should be developed that would help to enable citizens, carers and innovation to work together towards a common goal of citizen well-being,” said John Bowis, Honorary President, Health First Europe.

To read full letter go to www.healthfirsteurope.org