New European Parliament committee on COVID approved

(11 March 2022) The European Parliament has voted by an overwhelming majority to establish a special committee on ‘COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learned and recommendations for the future’. The vote gives the committee a clear mandate to look at “the impact of the pandemic on care services, care-home residents, workers.”
In July 2020, EPSU together with European Disability Forum and Age Platform Europe formally called on the Parliament to launch an investigation into the failures of authorities in addressing and managing the crisis in the long-term care sector during COVID-19. 88 MEPs supported our call for clarity, considering it “absolutely necessary to examine what happened at European level with all the means at our disposal [...] so that we can change course immediately.”

The care sector, its workers and its users were hit extremely hard by COVID-19. Many previously existing problems, such as understaffing and under-preparedness, were exacerbated by the pandemic. In many cases, care workers on the frontline felt that their calls for better protection were ignored and that, despite their best efforts, they were often unable to protect those persons they care for. As a consequence, half of the deaths related to COVID-19 in Europe have so far occurred in residential care and support services.

The Parliament’s vote is therefore not only a victory for long term care workers and users, but also a new beginning. The committee should serve as a starting point to shed light on what happened and correct those structural problems that for too long have been overlooked or ignored, from staff shortages to poor working conditions. We thank those MEPs who walked with us to the establishment of the special committee. Now, we promise to walk with you for its success.

The UK government has also published the draft terms of their public inquiry into the handling of COVID-19 pandemic. The response of the health and care sector across the U.K will be examined in this inquiry. Preparedness; capacity and resilience; the management of the pandemic in hospitals; workforce testing; and the impact on staff and staffing levels are all factors that will be considered. The government’s management of the pandemic in care homes and other care will be investigated. These terms are now open for public consultation.
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