
COVID-19 Coronavirus: COMECE, “during most acute phases, hospitals were forced to give priority to younger patients over older ones”

Almost half of the people who died of Covid-19 in Europe are elderly people and many of them were residents of care homes. “It is time to stop the ‘culture of waste’ and focus on more public policies supporting families”. The General Secretary of COMECE (Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union) Manuel Barrios Prieto said this as he reflected on the pandemic sweeping the continent. “In the current pandemic, elderly people represent the most vulnerable part of our societies”. According to COMECE, the recent statistics published by the World Health Organization paint a dramatic reality: over 95% of fatalities due to Covid-19 in Europe have been of people 60 or older, and up to half of them were residents of long-term care facilities. As COMECE points out, “old people have the same rights to life and to health as everyone else”. Article 35 of the EU Charter states that “everyone has the right of access to preventive health care and the right to benefit from medical treatment under the conditions established by national laws and practices”. However, as the document released by the COMECE Secretariat goes on to say, “due to the lack of a sufficient number of intensive care units in many EU Member States, during the most acute phases of the ongoing pandemic, hospitals were forced to give priority to younger patients over older ones”. “Difficult decisions around life-saving medical care - Fr. Barrios Prieto stated - will be avoided in the future only if we invest substantially in our health systems and implement policies that are truly supportive of families”.

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