



PRINCIPLES FOR QUALITY DIACONAL SOCIAL SERVICES

Introduction

This document outlines what Eurodiaconia and its member organisations believe to be quality in diaconal social care and services and what they commit to strive for in the services they provide. It also outlines what Eurodiaconia believes to be essential preconditions and principles of quality that funding, supervising and legislating authorities should strive for in order that social service providers can provide care that attains this quality.

This document was drawn up based on discussions in Eurodiaconia working groups, the 2008 Annual General Meeting and through open consultation with Eurodiaconia member organisations. It also takes into account quality principles as defined by the European Commission, particularly from the 2008 Recommendation on Active Inclusion¹ as well as those drawn up by the Social Platform². This document will be reviewed regularly, taking into account feedback from member organisations and relevant developments in the field.

Eurodiaconia works from the biblical tradition of “*diakonia*”: service for and with people in need. The belief that all humans are created in the image of God with equal worth and dignity forms the basis for all our work. Access to social services is necessary to uphold human dignity and “care should be given in such a way that this dignity is recognised and respected”³. We also believe that access to social services is a fundamental right. This is supported by Part 1 article 14 of the European Social Charter⁴ and Article 34 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights⁵.

We stress that quality should lead to improvements in the lives of those who use the services and also in the lives of those *providing* the services.

These quality principles should be communicated to and used in the training of all staff and volunteers involved in providing diaconal social services.

¹ [COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market](#). EU Member States have been called on to implement these principles and have committed to do so.

² Social Platform, “[Nine golden quality principles for social and health services of general interest](#)”.

³ Eurodiaconia, “[To be and to Do](#)”

⁴ *Everyone has the right to benefit from social welfare services*. [European Social Charter](#)

⁵ *The Union recognises and respects the entitlement to social security benefits and social services providing protection in cases such as maternity, illness, industrial accidents, dependency or old age, and in the case of loss of employment, in accordance with the rules laid down by Community law and national laws and practices*. [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)





Principles for Quality Diaconal Social Services: Preconditions

Public responsibility and solidarity

Public responsibility, and therefore public financial commitment is necessary at all levels of government to ensure access to social services and that service providers are able to provide quality services. Health and social services are not provided within a “normal” supplier/consumer relationship, and often those with the least financial means have the most needs and life risks are often structural rather than individual, such as unemployment. Therefore it is essential to ensure social and health services are provided on the basis of solidarity, publicly funded, as opposed to within a pure market, which would not guarantee access to services for all.

The Lisbon Treaty states with reference to “services of general interest”, which include social services, that “*The Union and Member States...shall take care that such services operate on the basis of principles and conditions, in particular economic and financial conditions, which enable them to fulfill their missions*” (Article 14).

Everyone should have the right of access to *quality* services. Where services are provided for remuneration they must be affordable to all. The scenario in which a two-tier care system develops, whereby in some areas only low-quality care is accessible because quality services are not affordable should be avoided by sufficient funding. Improving the quality of services can lead to an increase in cost but investment in social services, particularly in preventive services, reduces need in the long-term and therefore expenditure.

The relevant funding, supervising, and legislating authorities and institutions at all levels must adhere to the following preconditions and principles:

- To ensure the financial, social and regulatory environments are such that providers are able to fulfill their missions
- To ensure that services are available to the user as locally as possible to ensure no-one is unable to access the services because of location
- To ensure that services are physically accessible to all
- To involve all stakeholders including providers in social planning and the formulation of services including the assessment of a community’s needs
- To involve all stakeholders in the evaluation of services
- To involve all stakeholders in dialogue about policy affecting services
- To facilitate coordination with and between providers to ensure integrated service provision, including health services
- To facilitate easy comparison of services for users, including in the quality of services



Principles for Quality Diaconal Social Services

Characteristics of the services provided

- Services enable people to live in dignity
- Services are person-oriented: the individual's needs are catered for through comprehensive, personalised services
- Services enable the user to recognise his or her own resources and to use those resources to fulfill their potential
- Services cater to the individual's culture, faith and spiritual needs
 - Pastoral care is available for users
 - In particular, opportunities to attend Christian services are provided
- Services complement each other:
 - Where the user receives multiple services, including health services, they should be coordinated,
 - Where the user's services are provided by multiple providers, these providers should work in collaboration
- Services are flexible and responsive to new needs
- There is timely, continuous, uninterrupted provision of services
- There is human interaction with the service provider
- All, including people with disabilities, can physically access a service for example through adaptation of buildings, or documents with large print
- Community living is facilitated where possible

The relationship of the provider and staff with the user

- Staff are trained in human rights issues
- There is respect for the individual's culture, faith, age, gender, ethnic background
- Staff commit to a relationship of trust with and respect of the user
- Users are informed of their rights
- There are procedures in place to ensure user protection such as carrying out dynamic risk assessments
- Complaint mechanisms are easily accessible and understandable
- Users are informed of the services available (especially those who are less capable of informing themselves)
- Users are informed in the appropriate manner of the methodology of the service given and the choice of services available, including their rights to and information on secondary follow up services
- Users can participate in creating and carrying the service they receive
- Users can participate in evaluating the service they receive
- The aim should be independence and self-determination for the user as far as possible or feasible



The relationship between the provider, staff and volunteers

- Providers invest in Life Long Learning and skills development for staff
- Staff training includes a diaconal-theological aspect
- Staff have access to pastoral support
- Providers identify career pathways which allow care workers to move between care and support disciplines becoming multi-skilled
- Staff are guaranteed fair wages, flexible and respectable working hours and conditions
- Volunteers are given the training necessary to ensure they can carry out their tasks and have appropriate supervision

The relationship between the provider and other stakeholders

- Transparency rules concerning services, including prices of services are observed
- Services are provided with a link to and in cooperation with the local community
- There is contact and cooperation with the user's family
