



BRIEFING FOR MEMBERS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER: *LONG-TERM CARE IN AGEING SOCIETIES – CHALLENGES AND POLICY OPTIONS*

March 2013

Introduction

On the 20th February 2013 the European Commission published a “staff working document” entitled “[Long-term care in ageing societies - Challenges and policy options](#)”. Staff working documents do not bind the Commission but can provide analysis and useful proposals. It is one of the eight [Staff Working documents](#) that form the Social Investment Package (SIP) and is accompanied by the main SIP [Communication](#) and by a stronger “Recommendation” on Investing in Children. The SIP aims to help Member States use their social budgets more efficiently and more effectively, by promoting best practices and providing guidance on “social investment” – seen as the approach of investing in people and social protection systems to support them.

The EPSCO Council, made up of national ministers for social affairs and employment, will agree on conclusions on the SIP in June, making commitments on the topics covered in the package. However, the main impact of the SIP will be seen in how or if it is implemented at national level and the approach and initiatives mainstreamed through the Europe 2020 strategy and EU funds. The Commission says it will ensure the implementation of the SIP by reviewing Member States' performance on the basis of the employment and poverty targets of the Europe 2020 strategy and social protection reform. This would be based partly on a number of specific criteria that Member States have agreed should be included in a *Social Protection Performance Monitor*.

Summary of the document

The first section of the paper contains statistics and descriptions about ageing trends across the EU, in terms of expected growth in long-term care needs, ageing and dependency levels (to what extent people are dependent on others for activities in daily living) and the predicted future cost of long-term care (LTC). The next section gives an overview of what can facilitate independent living, followed by a description of the diversity of LTC provision across the EU.

The paper then analyses the advantages and drawbacks of different forms of delivery and financing of LTC, focusing on informal and formal care or systems that combine the two. The categories of analysis of the different systems or models are “risk pooling”, “equity in access” and “quality and efficiency”. After outlining the challenges of an emphasis on informal care, and that changing work patterns will mean increased pressure on informal carers, the paper concludes that “*it will not be possible to ensure equality of access to long-term care, guarantee its quality or develop productivity unless most of the current informal care is lifted into the formal sector*”.

Policy options to address future LTC challenges are then outlined under three approaches; productivity of care delivery, including how long-term care risks are organised, prevention and rehabilitation and

Page 1 of 2





independent living. A section outlines the EU-level programmes and initiatives that aim to support LTC. Good practices or innovations in LTC from different countries are then given.

Positive aspects of the working paper are outlined below, as well as some issues that Eurodiaconia finds are missing or concerning in the document.

What is positive in the working paper?

- ✓ The focus on the importance of **preventive measures and rehabilitation** at an early stage.
- ✓ The stress on the importance of “**comprehensive national approaches**” taking into account the three approaches mentioned above
- ✓ Useful overview of the advantages and disadvantages of ensuring LTC through informal or formal care – “strengths and limitations of different delivery models” (pp12-15)
- ✓ The paper notes the importance of **tailor-made home care services**
- ✓ Proposal to examine LTC insurance, and the **importance of developing social protection** to ensure there is enough financing available for the necessary services to be provided is stressed
- ✓ Mentions the **challenge of finding enough staff for the LTC sector** (p5)
- ✓ Raises the issue of a person’s perception of their ability to cope, and that people should be encouraged and enabled to use their capacities

What is missing / concerning?

- Lack of detailed policy or practice proposals to meet the challenges raised, issues are just outlined
- Lack of proposals to tackle the staff shortages in the sector and the link to developing skills of people working in the sector is not made
- A strong emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions, less on service provision innovation
- Little mention of social inclusion or poverty and rights
- No mention of the importance of coordinating the different services provided to older people to meet their LTC needs or of service planning with stakeholders
- No specific mention of dementia, the challenges associated with the rise in numbers of people with dementia or how to tackle these challenges

How is Eurodiaconia working on this? How can you use this document?

Eurodiaconia sent the European Commission messages from its members during the preparatory stage of the document but was unable to arrange a meeting with the relevant representatives – the section above shows which elements were not addressed in the document. Eurodiaconia will discuss it at the 2013 Healthy Ageing and Elderly Care Network meeting and the issues raised in the working document will be considered during the revision of Eurodiaconia’s policy paper “Demographic Change: Services and Social Inclusion”. Participants have been asked to examine the examples given from their countries, to see if they agree that the example is indeed good practice, what elements are transferable to other countries, and could form part of Eurodiaconia’s recommendations. Once the policy paper has been reviewed, members will be encouraged to use it for national and local advocacy.

Regarding the social investment approach in general, since the process of monitoring of the SIP documents should be done through the European Semester, you can try to contribute to the official process of your National Reform Programme (NRP) and National Social Reports (NSRs). The consequent country specific recommendations (CSRs) issued by the European Commission and the Council should identify the issues raised by the European Union to each government. For more on this, see our briefing on “[ENGAGING IN EUROPE 2020 AND THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER](#)”.