

7 November 2022

Dear Social Affairs Attachés,

Ahead of the adoption of the recently announced Council Recommendation on the Revision of the Barcelona targets on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and on Access to Affordable High-quality Long-term Care, Eurodiaconia would like to highlight the need to maintain specific aspects of the proposals.

Eurodiaconia is a European network of 58 social service and healthcare providers founded in the Christian faith, fighting poverty and promoting social justice in 32 countries across Europe. We bring together over 30 000 providers of services and advocates for social justice who have long-standing expertise in addressing social exclusion and meeting all types of care needs across our societies.

We welcome the publication of a timely policy framework - the European Care Strategy - which clearly recognises the main challenges in the care sector and points Member States in the right direction regarding the actions needed. The European Care Strategy is a crucial building block in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. In particular regarding principle 11, giving children the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality, as well as principle 18 which states that everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home care and community-based services.

For those objectives to be realized, we call on Member States to adopt both proposed Council Recommendations, maintain the recommendations as proposed by the European Commission and move swiftly to implement the reforms laid out in this framework.

Regarding the Barcelona Targets Recommendation, our network is highly concerned that the currently discussed introduction of dynamic targets for those Member States that have not reached the original ECEC target, would have dramatic effects in the life of many children.

For instance, for countries with the lowest ECEC participation such as Slovakia and Czechia, the dynamic targets proposed would mean that by 2030 only 6.9% and 12% of children respectively would be enrolled in ECEC. Counting only the countries in which an actual increase is expected, we would only register an overall 11% increase of ECEC participation. Counting all the EU countries, the number would decrease to as low as 7%. Moreover, 16 countries out of 27 would be exempted of reaching the 45% target. These numbers are too low and not ambitious enough for a topic as crucial as this one.



Therefore, we urge you to maintain the Commission's proposal on a new target establishing the percentage of children under 3 years old participating in ECEC to reach 50%.

The provision of long-term care is largely fragmented across Member States, sometimes subjected to allocation of responsibilities at different administrative levels. This leads to gaps and differences in the quality and availability of long-term care, making it difficult to collect comparable data and monitor the situation adequately. We believe that it is of great importance to monitor progress made in addressing challenges in the long-term care sector besides the framework laid out in the European Semester. The submission of the proposed national action plans therefore allows Member States to formulate concretely their planned measures, which provides greater transparency and possibilities to easily monitor achievements.

Therefore, we call on Member States to maintain the Commission's recommendation to establish national long-term care coordinators equipped with adequate resources and mandate, who will effectively coordinate and monitor the implementation of this recommendation and act as contact points at EU level.

A national coordinator is needed to bridge the gap between different actors and levels of administration and facilitate sharing of experiences with the relevant stakeholders as well as providing an avenue for mutual learning. Undisputedly, national LTC coordinators will act as the liaison between civil society organisations, social ministries, people receiving care and other stakeholders. Moreover the presence of these coordinators will show the commitment of Member States in the implementation of the European Care Strategy.

We thank you for your interest in our work and for the attention you will be giving to this letter. Eurodiaconia remains available to discuss further these points.

Yours Sincerely,



Anne-Sophie Wislocki

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Eurodiaconia