



Dear readers,

Almost a year after the EU elections and six months after the appointment of a new Commission, this edition of our newsletter sheds light on the revisited EU approach towards active and healthy ageing as well as innovative health and social care systems. These political adjustments build on the 10 political guidelines described by President Jean-Claude Juncker in his programme 'A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth Fairness and Democratic Change'.

The transition phase between the two political mandates has allowed the Commission's services to assess the steps taken by member states in modernising their social protection systems. Below, you will therefore find information about very informative stock-taking reports, which also take the situation and needs of carers into consideration. In addition, you will also be presented with the results and key messages from the recent European Summit on Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing and the recently-published background paper 'Growing the Silver Economy'.

As always, the newsletter also provides information about potentially relevant research outcomes and outlines the events and activities we have actively contributed to, on behalf of the network.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to our website, which has gone through a first revamping phase. In addition to a slightly new layout, the homepage now includes a link to the [InformCare](#) platform – which has been developed in the framework of the Innovage project. InformCare is the very first European one-stop shop for information on informal care. It provides carers with key information on their rights and entitlements in Europe as well as with advice on how to best deliver and cope with caregiving activities. The platform also offers a variety of interactive communication tools to encourage peer to peer support and the exchange of experience and good practices. Please note that a second online resource, developed through another research project (CARICT) will soon be added to our website. The CARICT database consists in a repository of successful ICT-based solutions targeted at carers, older people and stakeholders. These new tools should help us convert the Eurocarers website into a key online information hub for those involved and interested in carers' issues.

We hope that you will enjoy this edition, bear with us for more exciting updates and developments!

Stecy Yghemonos

Executive Director

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EU Policy Developments

Taking stock of progress at EU level to support the implementation of the Social Investment Package



In 2013, the European Commission adopted the Social Investment Package (SIP), which urged Member States to modernise their social protection systems to adapt them to the societies and economies of the 21st century. The SIP has fostered the acceptance by the Council and European Parliament that social policy reforms were needed. The academic debate on social policies indeed supports the idea that social investment is the best way towards reforming European social models.

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The European Commission publishes a social investment synthesis report

In order to complement the above-mentioned stock-taking document, the European Commission has asked the European social policy expert network to assess the overall approach to social investment across 35 countries (all EU Member States plus IS, RS, MK, TK, CH, NO and LI). The findings of the national experts were compiled into a synthesis report, [Social Investment in Europe: A Study of National Policies](#).



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Friends of Europe report: Adapting EU health policy to an evolving Europe



The Brussels-based think tank 'Friends of Europe' has come forward with a report on required changes to Europe's health systems and policymaking. This report was elaborated by a working group bringing together health stakeholders representing policymakers at EU and national level, international organisations, academia, health-related industries and non-governmental organisations.

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Recent report sheds light on the situation of families with disabled children in different European countries

Couples who rear a disabled child are more frequently unstable, more often forego their fertility intentions, more frequently suffer from economic difficulties, show more traditional gender role arrangements, are more frequently in bad health, and have lower well-being than families without disabilities. The consequences are also different for mothers and fathers: fathers of disabled children have fewer emotional exchanges, while mothers tend to suffer more in terms of social contact.



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My PD Journey : Urgent action needed to address the challenges of Parkinson's disease in Europe with numbers set to double by 2030



My PD Journey, an unprecedented multi-stakeholder initiative led by the European Parkinson's Disease Association (EPDA), gathered high-level EU officials and stakeholders from across Europe on the 20th April in Brussels to discuss ways to drive positive progress for people with Parkinson's disease.

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The Active Ageing Index releases its 2014 analytical report

Using the right tool to adequately monitor the impact of a wide range of policies is necessary to manage population ageing. This is the purpose of the Active Ageing Index (AAI) which measures the extent to which older people can realise their full potential in terms of employment, participation in social and cultural life and independent living, as well as the extent to which the environment they live in enables seniors to lead an active life.



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Publication of the European Reconciliation Package



Reconciling work and private life is an area where the European Union can and must make more progress. Reconciliation requires more flexibility in terms of what kind of jobs are offered, but also the availability of a much wider network of childcare facilities. Besides, there is a need for measures that ensure that care responsibilities are more fairly shared between men and women. However, the protracted economic crisis of the recent years has just increased the burden on many working parents.

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Growing the Silver Economy Background Paper

At the European Summit on Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing (see events section below) a background document was launched on 'Growing the Silver Economy'. The paper was developed by a team bringing together representatives from different Directorates-General within the European Commission. The document is a first attempt to chart what the Silver Economy has to offer to the EU and what EU is doing already to grow it.



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Innovative Health Systems Reform Meeting the Needs of Patients Carers and Professionals - 1st meeting of the EP Interest Group on Innovation in Health and Social Care



As the EU continues to develop policies on the management and performance of health systems, the Interest Group meeting on the 5th May in the European Parliament will focus specifically on the critical needs of patients, carers and professionals in the ongoing dialogue on how to improve effectiveness, accessibility and resilience of European Healthcare systems without compromising quality of care and caregiver safety.

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Research in Action

Impact, policy orientation and qualitative research - Report on Social Sciences and Humanities in Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing

Social Sciences and Humanities research are woven ever more closely into all of priorities and areas within Horizon 2020. This is not an end in itself but a way to address societal challenges adequately. Recognising the importance of this idea for Societal Challenge No. 1, "Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing", the European Commission (DG CNECT, DG RTD and the Joint Research Centre) sought advice from diverse research and innovation communities to foster inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.

Societal challenges (27,05 bn. euro)		
1	Health, demographic change and wellbeing	6,81
2	Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research and the bio-economy	3,51
3	Secure, clean and efficient energy	5,41
4	Smart, green and integrated transport	5,78
5	Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials	2,81
6	Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies	1,19
7	Secure societies – Protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens	1,54

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AFE-INNOVNET - Launch of an EU-wide repository of good practices supporting active and healthy ageing



To address the challenges posed by demographic change, European local and regional authorities, universities, civil society organisations and industries, have already developed and implemented a large number of initiatives in the fields of public services, healthcare, ICT, transport, housing, accessibility, and social participation. The AFE-INNOVNET Network has launched a Europe-wide repository set up to gather and share interesting initiatives and help make population ageing an opportunity for Europe's economic and social growth.

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Caregiver's Vision of Bedding Textiles for Elderly

An ageing society has specific needs for more specifically designed clothes and textiles which must include the socio-cultural environment of the wearer. This is the assumption on which the FP7 TAGS – Textile for Ageing Society project is based. The aim of the four year programme is to improve and/or innovate products and processes to meet the specific textile needs of ageing people in the European population, including those related with bedding textiles.



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EMPATHiE Project on patient empowerment now finalised



The EMPATHiE project, analysing patient empowerment for patients with chronic diseases has come to a close.

Results of this project include:

- » A catalogue of best practices relating to Patient Empowerment, that has found promising strategies:

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Providing online support services to informal carers, care professionals and employers across Europe

On the 6th and 7th May, Eurocarers organised an EU event as part of the Innovage project in order to present and fine-tune its newly-created online information hub on informal care – InformCare. InformCare provides key information on the rights and entitlements of carers in Europe and advice on how to best deliver and cope with caregiving activities. The platform also offers a variety of interactive communication tools to encourage peer to peer support and the exchange of experience and good practices.



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Kick off meeting of the Eurocarers Research Working Group



On the 22nd April, Eurocarers held the very first meeting of its Research Working Group in Dublin. The event brought together 18 Eurocarers member organisations involved in research. It gave the Eurocarers Secretariat an opportunity to present the EaSI funding programme and what this means for the work and development of our network. It also allowed to present the information collated through the dissemination of a 'member tracking sheet' and explain how Eurocarers is proactively and responsively working to meet members' key expectations, interests and expertise in the field of research.

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Events and Calls for proposals

Innovative Financing Opportunities for Active & Healthy Ageing

DG SANTE is organising the Conference 'Innovative Financing Opportunities for Active & Healthy Ageing' on the 3rd June 2015. The Conference will look at the issue of how to practically leverage public and private financial instruments and maximise synergies in the area of active & healthy ageing. In particular, the Conference will focus on the EU financial instruments, on the Investment plan for Europe, on the joint-procurement of innovative solutions, and on new ways of public-private co-investments in health.



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Ambient Assisted Living Forum 2015



After a long wait, the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme (AAL) is delighted to announce that the upcoming Forum 2015 will be taking place in Ghent (Belgium) between 22 and 25 September. The event is supported by the AAL Programme and IWT, the Flemish agency for innovation by science and technology, and it is organized in collaboration with I Mnds.

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European Summit on Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing: Conclusions and next steps

The European Summit of Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing took place in Brussels on March 9 and 10. Over 1200 visitors swamped the Brussels Square meeting centre, took part in over 32 sessions, workshops, sandpits and the Pioneer Village with its 20 exhibition booths. More than 20 start-ups presented themselves in the speakers' corner. Exhibitors and participants blogged and tweeted. Businesses found customers, researchers met with consumers, patients with service-providers and visitors had encounters with robots.



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Tackling long-term unemployment – public consultation



Despite that Europe is slowly recovering from the crisis, long-term unemployment continues to increase. Long-term unemployment bears huge costs, at individual level, macro-economic level and societal level. The European Commission recently launched a public consultation on tackling long-term unemployment, one of the most urgent challenges that Europe faces today.

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News from the network

CARER+ final conference - Smart Homecare, Investing in skills and service delivery

Digital use transforms our lifestyle, influences our way of thinking and our communication, work and learning. ICT opens up many possibilities, in particular for well-aging at home and requires new skills for household carers. Technology can provide useful tools to break down the social and digital barriers in Europe. Promoting access to ICTs can improve the quality of life and of social services, it can also be a powerful source of enrichment of relationships between carers and those who are being cared for, associating the human added value and the use of ICT.



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Parliamentary Question: EU action in the field of long term care



Eurocarers worked with the Interest Group on Carers co-chairs to table a Parliamentary Question to the European Commission. This Question refers to last year's Social Protection Committee report entitled 'Adequate social protection against long-term care needs in an ageing society', which explicitly recognised the issues faced by carers.

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EU consultation on the Working Time Directive

Eurocarers responded to the European Commission's stakeholder consultation on the review of the EU Working Time Directive, in order to 'reflect on how to best meet the needs of workers, businesses, public services and consumers'.

In its response, Eurocarers highlights the enormous resource represented by carers as well as the current pressure on this resource, due to a combination of various demographic and socio-economic developments.



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EU consultation on long term unemployment



Eurocarers also responded to the European Commission's consultation on long term unemployment, which aims 'contribute to an impact assessment preparing a **proposal for a Council Recommendation** on the integration in the labour market of the long-term unemployed'.

Again, Eurocarers underlines the potential impact of caring responsibilities on labour market participation as many carers of working age are either forced to reduce or give up work altogether.

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Eurocarers addresses Latvian Presidency

Latvia holds the EU Presidency during the first half of 2015 and the Presidency agenda includes a number of topics which are relevant for carers, i.e. inclusive and well-functioning labour markets, the gender gap on pensions and deinstitutionalisation and high quality social services.

This is why Eurocarers wrote a letter highlighting the need to include informal carers and their specific issues in these deliberations and conferences, emphasizing the importance of:



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European Parliament Interest Group on Carers meeting on family vs. state responsibility for long-term care across the EU



The Interest Group on Carers and Eurocarers met on the 6th May and addressed family vs. state responsibility for long-term care across the EU. Despite the huge variety of approaches, challenges and levels of progress, all Member States are engaged in political discussions on this topic. While the EU cannot legislate in this area, it can facilitate discussion and exchange of good practice and experience and the area of long term care seems to lend itself well for this type of informal cooperation.

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Greece - Panhellenic Interdisciplinary Conference of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders

The Greek Association of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders, in cooperation with the Panhellenic Institute of Neurodegenerative Diseases organizes the biennial, well-established, Panhellenic Interdisciplinary Conference of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders, on 14-17 May 2015, at the "Grand Hotel Palace", in Thessaloniki Greece.



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Greece – Event on current treatments against psychosis



KINAPSI, the Association of siblings of people with Mental Health Problems in Greece, is organizing a workshop on current treatments against psychosis, in Athens, Greece on the 11th May 2015.

Psychosis is a syndrome which emerges during the course of several psychiatric, neurological and general medical disorders and primarily comprises symptoms such as thought disorder (e.g. delusions) and perceptual disturbances (auditory hallucinations).

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Greece - Greek Dementia Action Plan

According to the latest figures, there are 200,000 people living with dementia in Greece and 400,000 family carers looking after them. Due to rising life expectancy worldwide and in Greece, this number could almost triple by 2050, making dementia one of the most important medical, social and economic future challenges in Greece.

In Greece, there is no National Dementia Strategy in place.



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The Netherlands – A helping hand, an exploration of the opportunities and limitations for (more) informal help



Long-term care and support for people with impairments is set to change in the Netherlands over the next few years. The Dutch government has put forward several reasons for these reforms, including people's raised expectations in terms of quality of life, the financial sustainability of care provision and greater societal engagement. In a recent policy letter to the Dutch Parliament, the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport, Mr. Martin van Rijn, described how he intends to strengthen the position of informal carers and volunteers, how he aims to ease their burden by providing additional support and how he wishes to strengthen the links between informal care and formal care and support.

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Italy – the International Festival of Different Abilities



As every year, C'ENTRO's associate and founding Member Scuola Centrale Formazione is co-organising the International Festival of Different Abilities, taking place in the town of Carpi between the 14th and 26th of May. Within the Festival Programme, Scuola Centrale is organising a 3-day event open to international networks.

On Friday 23rd, a specific focus will be placed on "The role of informal care and active citizenship in the future of European Welfare", capitalising on the outcomes of the LLP-Grundtvig Project "ACTI for Dependent People

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Eurocarers signs a collaboration agreement with the European Patients Forum



The Eurocarers secretariat is delighted to announce the signature of a collaboration agreement with the European patients' Forum (EPF). EPF is an umbrella organisation that works with patients' groups in public health and health advocacy across Europe. Their members represent specific chronic disease groups at EU level or are national coalitions of patients. Their aim is to ensure that the patients' community drives policies and programmes that affect patients' lives to bring changes empowering them to be equal citizens in the EU.

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