



Social Protection Committee:
Adequate social protection for long-term care needs in an ageing society

Briefing for Eurocarers members

Introduction

The 'Social Protection Committee' has recently produced an extensive report on Long term care provision in the EU. As part of the funding received under the PROGRESS programme, Eurocarers is expected to produce a commentary on the report, as well as on the annexes, which contain long term care profiles for each of the individual member states.

This document provides information on the Social Protection Committee as well as on the main content of the report, and outlines how Eurocarers members can get involved with this commentary.

A. What is the Social Protection Committee?

The Social Protection Committee (SPC) is as an EU advisory policy committee, which:

- Monitors social conditions in the EU and the development of social protection policies in member countries. It reports on social inclusion, health care, long-term care and pensions
- Promotes discussion and coordination of policy approaches among national governments and the Commission.

It prepares discussions for the Ministers responsible for social protection ('the council of Ministers) and on country-specific recommendations in this area. It also produces reports and opinions on its own initiative or at the request of the Council of Ministers or the Commission.

It consists of (high-level) civil servants from relevant Ministries from all Member States.¹ The SPC has put in place various Working Groups, one of which **Social Protection Committee Working Group on Ageing (SPC-WG-AGE)**.

¹ for a full membership listing : file:///C:/Users/user/Desktop/SPC_Member_list_Dec_2013.pdf

B. What is the report on Long term care?

Aims

Despite the vast differences between EU Member States when it comes to demography, economy, traditions and the development of systems for Long Term Care (LTC), the SPC-WG-AGE is trying to find common ground for cooperation and action. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to cope with the increasing demands resulting from the ageing of our societies, it is felt that there is much value in mutual learning between Member States.

Therefore, the aim of this report is;

- to re-emphasize the case for social protection against the risk of Long term care needs;
- to identify existing evidence about possible ways to contain and address present and future demands on long term care provision;
- to identify where there is lack of knowledge and need for further evidence;
- to give examples of good practices around the EU that could be considered also in other Member States;
- to suggest to the SPC where policy action could be taken to increase EU support to the efforts of Member States

It consists of two parts:

- A general part where an overview of the challenges and potential solutions is being provided
- An annex consisting of 28 Member States country profiles

The report does not claim to be completely comprehensive, but it is hoped that it will lead to constructive discussions within the SPC and in single Member States and stimulate further cooperation between EU Member States in this important area.

Content

The report contains seven key messages:

1. Social protection against the risk of long-term care dependency is needed for equity and efficiency reasons

- ✓ Dependency on long term care (LTC) is a significant health-related economic and social risk for individuals and for their families. Often social care needs are not covered as comprehensively as the health care needs of LTC dependant people with the **primary responsibility of obtaining the required care shifted to the dependent persons and their relatives.**
- ✓ With little to no social protection against the risk of needing LTC, the living conditions of the dependent will hinge on his/her means and **the family's ability and willingness to provide or pay for care.** This may have negative impacts both on equity, as some families will be much more affected than others, and on overall economic performance, as relatives may need to withdraw from employment to provide informal care. In addition, neither the quality nor the efficiency of informal care can be guaranteed.

2. A large and widening gap between the need for and the supply of long-term care is likely to develop

- ✓ There are three major challenges:
 - *A huge increase in need*
 - *A threat to the supply of long term carers*
 - *The pressure that rapid growth in demand on ensuring care quality.*
- ✓ There are solid equity and efficiency reasons for Member States to establish social protection against the risk of LTC dependency, and for ensuring adequate access to affordable quality care, as well as support to informal carers, including through a better recognition of care duties in labour law and corporate practice. Member States, who are responsible for LTC provision, can collaborate on achieving these aims with the support of the EU including through mutual learning.

3. Closing this gap requires proactive approaches to contain the growth in needs and to meet them in the most efficient way

- ✓ Member States need to *from a reactive to an increasingly proactive policy approach* seeking both to prevent the loss of autonomy and thus reduce care demand, and to boost efficient, cost-effective care provision in homecare and in residential institutions.
- ✓ The main elements of such a proactive response relate to
- ✓ *preventing* people from becoming dependent on care, by promoting healthy life styles, tackling the major causes of dependence and promoting *age-friendly* environments;
- ✓ *early detection of frailty; rehabilitation and re-enablement*
- ✓ realising the *full potential of technology* to help older people remain at home, to *raise the productivity of care services* and to compensate for the decline in the number of carers;
- ✓ *fully integrating* the health care and social elements of LTC provision;
- ✓ *enhancing support for informal carers* and making it easier for them to *reconcile employment and care* responsibilities;

4. There are many examples of good proactive practices: a more systematic assessment of what works and what is most cost-effective will add further value

- ✓ Several Member States are already experimenting with innovative and proactive approaches. The investment in the development of these approaches can contribute to tackling ageing related challenges in LTC. However, to enhance the possibilities of mutual learning, a more solid knowledge base is needed on what works and what is most effective.

5. Adequate social protection against LTC dependency is a major aspect of gender equality in old age as well as in working age

- ✓ LTC is an issue that affects men and women differently. Most LTC recipients are women; the vast majority of informal and formal carers are also women. If not accompanied by appropriate support services; can represent an impediment to female labour force participation.
- ✓ Many more jobs for women and men could be created in the LTC sector, notably where formal services are least available, and as result of the rising demand for goods and services for older people, including assistive technology.

6. Given the diversity of LTC policies there is scope for better mutual learning and for a common European knowledge base

- ✓ Differences between Member States in the way LTC needs evolve and services are provided are larger than in any other area of social protection offering possibilities for knowledge transfer.
- ✓ The EU can help by facilitating the exchange of best practices, by researching and testing new solutions and fostering technical and social innovation.

7. There is a need to further clarify the common objective of adequate social protection against LTC dependency and to set out how EU support for the LTC efforts of Member States can be enhanced including through better collaboration between ministers of health and ministers of social affairs

- ✓ The Social Protection Committee has a key role to play in the development of collaboration. A crucial step would be to develop a better understanding of the effectiveness and efficiency of current LTC provisions in the Member States and improving the portfolio of indicators to assess progress in relation to the common objectives of access, quality and affordability.
- ✓ It needs to be borne in mind that the responsibility for designing LTC systems and securing their financing remains fully with the Member States.

C. What Eurocarers members can do

The PROGRESS work plan for 2014 explicitly states that Eurocarers will provide feedback on and input into the SPC report, as this will support sound policy and knowledge development. In other words, responding to the report is a requirement for this year's funding.

Therefore, your input and feedback is important as well as invaluable and we would like to ask you the following:

- **Comment on the attached draft position paper, prepared by the secretariat, which addresses the general part of the report. Suggestions for changes to the wording of the document should be made in tracked changes.**
- **Comment on the specific country profile for your country, as you will be able to identify gaps and omissions and may have data to add.**

You can send your comments and input to Christine Marking at cmarking@skynet.be, and the deadline is XX.

If you have any questions, you can address these to Christine as well.

We would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and engagement!



John Dunne
President