



THE EUROPEAN QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LONG-TERM CARE SERVICES

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On 14 November 2012, AGE Platform Europe⁸ together with eighteen partners⁹ from twelve European countries launched in the European Parliament the European Quality framework for long-term care services¹⁰. This document is one of the main results from the WeDO Project, a European Partnership for the wellbeing and dignity of older people (2010-2012), awarded by the European Commission DG EMPL call for proposal for a pilot project on preventing elder abuse.

The project builds on the results from the EUSTACEA project (2008-2010) which developed a European Charter of the rights and responsibilities of older people in need of care and assistance¹¹. Both projects helped to identify existing good practices to support the development of innovative solutions across the EU in fighting elder abuse and improving quality long term care. They contributed to build an opened community of stakeholders committed to improve the wellbeing and dignity of older people in need of care and assistance in Europe. The EU Quality framework and the European Charter aim to become reference documents at EU level and in the member states, and to influence

ongoing reforms on long-term care so these include quality development.

Introduction to the eu quality framework for long-term care services

Challenges for quality long-term care in the eu

One of the key challenges for Europe is to transform the longer life expectancy into longer active and healthy life years. It is also to ensure that our ageing population will receive the care and assistance they need to age in dignity and be protected from elder abuse. In the last years the fight against elder abuse and the improvement of the life and care quality of older people have gained importance at international and European level with the support of several EU Presidencies, the European Parliament and the European Commission. Answering a call for proposals from DG Employment and Social affairs on 'Preventing Elder abuse' in 2010, AGE Platform Europe and eighteen partners were involved in the development of the WeDO project.

The EU Quality framework for long-term care services (EQFL) states that

“ensuring high quality and dignity in care should contribute to improving the quality of life for all older people receiving care and assistance and to preventing elder abuse. We can and need to develop care models that are socially and financially sustainable in the long term and fair to all generations and social groups. All relevant stakeholders i.e. public authorities, service providers, older people’s and carers’ organisations, funders, need to be responsive, proactive, and innovative. They need to be aware of existing practices which offer older people high quality social and long-term care services while improving their cost efficiency.”

A first step: the european charter of the rights and responsibilities of older people in need of long-term care and assistance

The European Charter of the rights and responsibilities of older people in need of long-term care and assistance is the result of the EUSTAcea project (a European Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse, 2008-2010). Based on existing French and German charters, this EU Charter aims to become a reference document at EU level concerning the rights of older people in need of care and assistance in Europe. It includes a set of ten articles including rights such as self-determination, privacy, redress, communication, etc. and an article on responsibilities.

The Charter claims in the preamble that:

“Age and dependency cannot be the grounds for restrictions on any inalienable human right and civil liberty acknowledged by inter-

national standards and embedded in democratic constitutions. Everybody, regardless of gender, age or dependency is entitled to enjoy these rights and freedoms and everybody is entitled to defend their human and civil rights.”

Some countries already used the Charter as a reference document in the care sector like in Slovenia, while in other countries (Austria, Sweden) the Charter became a key lobbying tool to claim for dignity and wellbeing of older people in need of care and assistance. At EU level, the Charter is becoming a useful tool for ongoing discussions on the rights of older people by the Council of Europe and the United Nations in which AGE Platform Europe is involved, and on the long-term care topic.

Introduction to the eu quality framework for long-term care services (eqfl)

Based on a common vision and analysis on long-term care services throughout Europe among the project partners, the EQFL is inspired from the Social Protection Committee ‘voluntary quality framework for social services’ and the EU Charter for the rights and responsibilities of older people in need of long-term care and assistance, and proposes eleven quality principles and seven areas of actions where quality of long-term care services can be improved. For each of them, an explanation (‘What does it mean?’) and a case example from different EU countries are provided. Guidelines for implementation, including recommendations and examples for quality tools, as well as a methodology to develop a participatory ap-

proach in improving quality long-term care are provided in the second part. Finally, a list of twenty-eight good practices and useful resources is available in the end.

The Quality framework is available in ten languages in its longer version (forty-eight pages) and in twelve languages in its shorter version (four pages)¹².

The wedo eu partnership for the dignity and wellbeing for older people in need of care and assistance

The WeDO project was developed with the active involvement of eighteen partners working with twelve national coalitions, one in each partner country. The success of the WeDO project can be explained by the active participation of these coalitions which gathered a wide range of stakeholders: older people's organisations, service providers, carers organisations, local and national policy makers, research centers, etc. The coalitions actively worked on the different draft versions of the EU quality framework for long-term care services, gathered good and bad practices in their countries, and reflected together on how to improve the situation of long-term care in their country. They developed national strategies to be developed after the end of the project.

Some countries already used the WeDO EU quality framework at national level:

- In Slovenia, the EU quality framework for long-term care services and the European Charter for the rights and responsibilities of older people in need of

long-term care and assistance are used as reference documents in care workers contracts

- In Sweden, the EQFL was used to inspire the ongoing reform on long-term care
- In Ireland, the EQFL will become a reference document for upcoming legislations and action plans: the positive ageing strategy, the dementia strategy, the national carers' plan, etc.

At EU level, a pool of EU-wide organisations was gathered in an EU coalition, which contributed to the EQFL and developed an EU strategy for the wellbeing and dignity of older people. The Strategy is based on four main objectives:

1. The adoption of a European Quality framework for long-term care
2. Age-friendly environments across the European Union
3. An EU legal and policy framework for the elimination of all forms of discrimination in care, including ageism and elder abuse
4. The promotion of adequate protection and support to older people in need of care, formal and informal carers and volunteers across the EU, including the smooth cross-border provision of services

Each objective is illustrated by a list of actions that the European Commission mainly, but also the Council and EU agencies should take to reach the objectives. This EU Strategy is used by the WeDO partnership as a lobbying tool targeting

EU policy makers and member states, but also as a common reference to monitor progress at EU level.

During the project, the partners gathered more than 200 good practices which are now available on an online database; twenty-eight were selected to be included in the EQFL. Each good practice is associated to a country and to a quality principle or area of action, to facilitate the research. A great variety of ideas is therefore available online, on the WeDO website, such as initiatives on informal carers support, prevention, improvement of older people with cognitive impairments' quality of life, the fight elder abuse (at home and in residential care homes), initiatives to improve quality of end-of-life care, on how to involve older people in decisions, etc.

What's next? Join the wedo eu partnership!

All the organisations, involved in the national and EU coalitions or not, are now invited to continue to contribute to the WeDO EU partnership, which will open to new organisations and new countries.

The WeDO partnership is setting up a follow up strategy to be developed in all countries already involved in the WeDO project. This strategy is based on the involvement of all partnership members, who will contribute by providing news, good practices, resources and other relevant information to the partnership. Some virtual meetings will be organized, and all efforts will be gathered to make representatives from each country meet again in 2013 and 2014 to share experiences, and monitor the progress made and decide on

follow up strategies. New countries can step in and contribute to this follow up strategy.

The WeDO partnership is a great opportunity to share knowledge, meet other organisation working in long-term care issues and to exchange experiences. So the WeDO project has not ended. It is just a start, so join us!

More information:

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Join the LinkedIn group WeDO partnership!

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- ⁸ European Platform of older people's organisations – more information : www.age-platform.eu
- ⁹ To see the list of partners, go to www.wedo-partnership.eu – Section “13 coalitions”
- ¹⁰ <http://www.wedo-partnership.eu/european-quality-framework-long-term-care-services>
- ¹¹ www.age-platform.eu/en/daphne
- ¹² For more information, see www.wedo-partnership.eu, Section “EU quality framework for long-term care services”
- ¹³ All the national strategies are available on the WeDO website: www.wedo-partnership.eu, section “Events”.
- ¹⁴ The EU strategy is available on the WeDO website : www.wedo-partnership.eu, section “Events”.
- ¹⁵ To see the database: www.wedo-partnership.eu, section ‘good practices’
- ¹⁶ More information on www.wedo-partnership.eu, frontpage section « Join us ! »