



MEETING REPORT

HEALTHY AGEING AND LONG-TERM CARE NETWORK MEETING

Vienna, 11-12 May 2017

On 11-12 May 2017 fifteen participants from Eurodiaconia member organizations gathered to discuss issues of common interest on elderly care and ageing, with a focus on services for persons with disabilities, and share experiences and good practice in the field while identifying challenges and potential solutions. The network meeting was hosted by Diakonie Österreich and welcomed participants from Austria, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Serbia.



Thursday, 11 May 2017

Martin Schenk opened the meeting and welcomed participants on behalf of Diakonie Österreich. He presented an overview of the organization's action in the field of long-term care. In 2016 Diakonie Austria in fact carried out several flagship initiatives around the topic of dementia; for instance, a research on the ethical challenges linked to dementia ([A good life with dementia](#)) published by the Institute for Public Theology and Diaconal Ethics. His introduction then gave way to a devotion led by Maria Moser.

Next, Alexander Elu from Eurodiaconia welcomed participants, offered a broad overview of the main challenges linked to ageing and long-term care in a European context and presented the agenda of the event. As regards disability, nowadays over 80 million people with disabilities live in the European Union, but the translation of their legal rights into practice, including those embedded in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, calls for enabling social services which are accessible and have adequate quality standards. Participants then introduced themselves and their work on healthy ageing and long-term care, and shared their expectations on the meeting.



Eurodiaconia is a federation of 46 social and health care organisations founded in the Christian faith and promoting social justice.

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Anneliese Gottwald – Johanniter caring service: presentation of projects ‘Superhands’, ‘Pflegenotdienst’ and the ‘Mobile Palliative Team’



Anneliese Gottwald, Johanniter Austria

Anneliese Gottwald presented three projects carried out by Johanniter Austria (member of Diakonie Austria).

Superhands: Young Carers project

Anneliese Gottwald from Johanniter Austria offered a presentation on the link between chronic illness and family care in the project “[Superhands](#)”, an online tool created by Johanniter Austria in 2012 and addressed to young carers (including children), their families and social care workers.

According to a recent survey, there are currently 42700 young carers in Austria, of whom 70% are girls. “Superhands” is a service for children (young carers) that provides information on emergency and nursing services, Superhands is structured as a platform to share knowledge, case studies, photo stories and first aid tips. It also provides legal assistance and contacts with care professionals. The aim of the website is to inform carers about health care services carried out in a family context, while providing individual counselling and sensibilisation initiatives to fight against the stigmatisation sometimes faced at school and other environments. Anneliese underlined that most care duties are carried out by girls, reflecting a traditional division of gender role in the care sector (both at formal and informal levels). In most cases, teachers play the role of intermediaries, matching young carers and their families with service contacts.

Emergency care service - Pflegenotdienst

The emergency care service (*Pflegenotdienst*) offered by Johanniter Austria includes such services as ambulatory care, transport from the place of accident and information to caregivers and assistance in organising sustainable long-term care. It represents a unique case in the country as it offers a wide range of quality services based on a comprehensive approach to healthcare, while providing a valuable alternative to hospital care. In particular, the service provides care for people in acute care, care assistance for people affected by chronic and incurable diseases (palliative care), care services for people in the interface between hospital care and home care, and healthcare assistance during day and night performed by certified nursing staff.

According to statistics, the emergency care service receives approximately 2500 requests per year, nearly 1600 requests during the day and 900 during the night. On the other hand, the main challenges faced by the service are the increasing number of requests compared to the small size of the staff, and the difficulties encountered when dealing with people affected by dementia and incurable diseases.

Palliative Care: the way from the Waidhofners

The palliative care service of Johanniter Austria provides counselling services to people affected by incurable illnesses, their caregivers and relatives, other nursing professionals, home doctors and nursing houses. The palliative care team is composed by the head of nursing, four general practitioners, one voluntary doctor, one



social worker, five nurses and one back office assistant. The main goal of the service is to provide a bridge between hospital care and home care, while contributing to reduce hospitalisation, ensure the highest quality of life and care, and support users in facing fear and uncertainty linked to pain and illness.

Study visit - *Diakoniewerk "Hausgemeinschaft Erdbergstrasse"*: diaconal residential care setting for elderly people



Interiors of the Diakoniewerk's Hausgemeinschaft Erdbergstrasse centre

In the afternoon, participants took part in a study visit at the centre for elderly people *Hausgemeinschaft Erdbergstrasse* in Vienna with capacity for 40 elderly people in need of long-term care. The centre, which is partly funded by the Social Welfare Fund and is owned by Diakoniewerk, functions as a community centre for elderly people and provides a wide range of social services and entertainment activities. It is also suitable for the care of elderly people with dementia who need specific supervision and constant monitoring that can no longer be provided by family members.

The centre was opened in 2008 and is the first nursing home of this type in Vienna based on the community house model. Its main goal is to enable elderly people, including those affected by dementia, to live a peaceful, decent and independent end of life by building a family-life atmosphere in a safe and stable domestic environment. Through several daily activities, such as cooking, painting and recreational activities, also involving children in school age, the house offers a unique opportunity for those who are no longer able to actively engage in community and social life to take part in group activities according to their individual interests and capacities.

In this regard, the *Hausgemeinschaft Erdbergstrasse* centre represents a unique example of long-term care supplier that offers a new and alternative approach to conventional residential care in Austria. Diakoniewerk is also the owner of several community centres in other Austrian cities.

Friday, 12 May 2017

The second day started with a devotion led by Szilárd Haris from the Diaconal Center of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia. Following this, the first morning panel focused on the dependency challenge in the Austrian context, its implications for long-term care and the role that not-for-profit providers of services have in this framework.

Dr. August Österle – The Austrian long-term care system: developments and characteristics in a comparative perspective



Dr. August Österle, researcher from the Institute for Social Policy at the WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, began his address with a look back at the institutional development of long-term care policies in Austria.



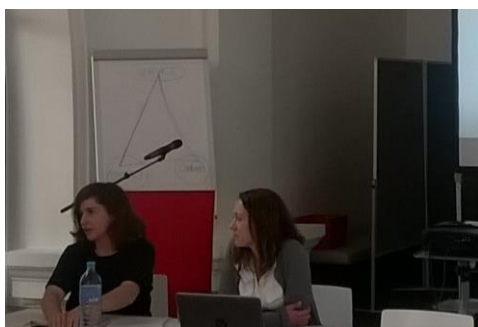
Dr. August Österle, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business

He stressed the contrast between a system with a non-institutionalised approach up until the 1980s in which long-term care was mainly a family responsibility, and the adoption of the first long-term care policies in the country -among the first in Europe-. These policies were accompanied by a stronger emphasis on home care over institutional care, increasing employment of migrant care workers in private households and a focus on public management and marketization issues. The major reform in Austria took place in 1993, largely driven by the disability rights movement. The reform introduced two main changes: a cash for care approach (*Pflegegeld*) and the agreement between national and regional levels on the development of long-term care services. The *Pflegegeld* or “cash for care” is usually paid according to seven levels of dependency directly to the user, does not have any age limits and is conceived as a public contribution to long-term care costs. Moreover, beneficiaries are free to use the benefit as part of the household income, for family care or for buying services on the market.

Prof. Österle’s contribution also touched upon the difference between the main long-term care services, namely residential care, home care and 24-hour care. According to 2015 statistics, most users in Austria

tend to choose home care services, which are generally supported by public funding and provided by non-profit organisations or public institutions. However, major challenges faced by the Austrian long-term care system include demographic and socio-economic changes and their implications, changing employment and work conditions, migration and the availability of financial support.

Dr. Gudrun Bauer – Meeting LTC shortages in Austria



Dr. Gudrun Bauer (right), European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research and Sara Scheiflinger, Diakonie Österreich

Dr. Gudrun Bauer, Researcher from the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, offered a presentation on long-term care shortages with particular focus on the Austrian context and staffing in the sector. There is a growing demand for long-term care professionals and forecasts estimate a rise of 50% by 2050. Dr Bauer stressed the differences between nursing (qualified nurses and care assistants) and social care (more recent development, which involves social care competences) in terms of functions, financing and public support. Also, the long-term care sector is facing a growing tension between increased demand, quality pressures, whilst working conditions remain problematic in terms of work organisation, staff shortages or salary levels. Very often, workers are also not employed according to their qualifications, which eventually leads to frustration and limited career prospects.



In that regard, a recent reform implemented in 2016 in Austria brought about some major changes to the curricula of care professionals as it allowed qualified nurses to develop higher competences and introduced a third profession (care assistants) to the existing categories of qualified nurses and qualified care assistants. Dr. Bauer identified useful approaches to help the long-term care sector meet staff shortages, such as the harmonization of social care professions, opportunities for specialisation of care workers in long-term care services for people with disabilities, and the development of a coordinated strategy for social care professions. Dr Bauer also touched upon the issue of migrant 24-hour care, which has become a substitute to family care over the last years. Even though it has failed to be integrated into the regular long-term care system in Austria, migrant 24-hour care mainly takes the form of self-employment arrangements with few or no working regulations in terms of social security coverage due to its lack of official recognition. Also, there are no specific qualification requirements.

Soňa Kantorová – Mobile café: voluntary service for elderly and disabled people in Czech Republic



Soňa Kantorová, Slezska Diakonie

Soňa Kantorová presented the “Mobile Café” project implemented by Slezska Diakonie in the Czech Republic. The project is aimed at providing a valuable response to loneliness faced by elderly people and persons with disabilities, allowing them to take part in group activities over a coffee, developing their social skills and a sense of belonging. Soňa stressed the relevance of volunteering as one dimension of long-term care, which very often functions as a means to fill the gap left by absent school or family roles.

The project represents a unique opportunity to broaden volunteers' knowledge and understanding of key aspects of human life such as ageing or disability, while bringing social and economic value. Soňa noticed how the role and added value brought by volunteers in the long-term care sector is sometimes undervalued. After decades of state monopoly and regulation of social welfare, volunteering is slowly becoming recognised and integrated into the provision of social services.

Szilárd Haris – Home care service in Ukraine: achievements of a pilot project and next phase

Szilárd Haris, from the Diaconal Center of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia, presented the organisation's Project for Supporting Homecare Service in Slovakia, started in December 2015 and expected to end in April 2018. The pilot project included three training sessions and involved 54 caregivers. During a period of six months, participants took part in the homecare service project and 19 of them received targeted training by the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia. As of January 2017 the project had involved 70 service users and 63 caregivers



Szilárd Haris, Diaconal Center of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia

The project has also been implemented in Ukraine to support people in need living in the Transcarpathian region and provide humanitarian aid through funds raised by the Church. In 2017, the Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia organised two trainings for caregivers supported by Eurodiaconia and HEKS (Hilfswerk der evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz) and involving 58 participants. Szilárd underlined the main achievements of the pilot project in the Ukrainian context. These include enhanced cooperation with public institutions and civil society organisations, meaningful exchange of experience and best practice between different diaconal service providers, and

combination of targeted training on long-term care with an evangelical approach.

Szilárd summarised the main challenges faced by care (and homecare) services as witnessed through their activity. Among these, the rising demand for long-term care in contrast to the limited availability of services and service providers and the high number of care professionals migrating abroad. Among the project's next steps, the organisation aims to develop resources for training targeting caregivers dealing with dementia, children, elderly people with disabilities and people living in hospices. It also plans to increase financial support for users with economic difficulties and establish two warehouses to stock equipment needed by service users. The Church will continue to prioritise improving neighbouring relations to ensure quality long-term care services to all people in need, prevent the brain drain of local care professionals and the breaking of family relations as a result of it, and to strengthen the exchange of practice.

Valentina Tousijn – Asilo dei Vecchi: an answer to ageing population in Piedmont



Valentina Tousijn, Diaconia Valdese

Valentina Tousijn from Diaconia Valdese framed the residential care work carried out by "Asilo dei Vecchi" within the ageing context in Italy and the Piedmont region, where the Asilo is located and 25% of the population is 65+. In spite of such demographic trends, Valentina underlined the traditional bias of the Italian social protection systems towards pension expenditure rather than long-term care services.

"Asilo dei Vecchi" was built in 1893 and is one of the oldest care facilities of the Diaconia Valdese. It underwent renovation works in the 1980s to increase its capacity to host residents.



Nowadays, the community house hosts 94 users, either self-sufficient or with a dependency. The institution offers a wide range of care services including a residential service, a relief service, a day care service and homecare services (e.g. meals and baths). The “Asilo dei Vecchi” adopts a holistic approach to long-term care, which is focused on service users, their needs and their full participation in service provision. Its activities, aimed to preserve and improve residents’ abilities and encourage their socialisation, include manual activities, visits from school-age children, pet therapy and group excursions. In 2014, it implemented a “Brainer” project focusing on neurological rehabilitation for people affected by dementia, people with disabilities and elderly people in general.

Regarding challenges, Valentina mentioned the decreasing number of admittance requests (linked to the impact of the economic crisis on out of pocket contributions), the ageing of caregivers and the increasingly complex needs of users as a result of longer life expectancies leading to more acute conditions than in the past.

The last session of the meeting explored the contribution of migrants -present and potential- as staff employed in the care sector. This reflection is framed against the EU Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals aimed at promoting the labour market integration of migrants legally residing in the EU.

Sara Scheifflinger – the “Migrants Care” project



Sara Scheifflinger, Diakonie Österreich

Sara Scheifflinger from Diakonie Austria offered a presentation on the “Migrants Care” project, which was implemented in 2013. The project provides a wide range of services to migrants and refugees living in Austria, such as individual coaching sessions and training courses aimed to acquire or improve German language skills to boost their labour market integration potential.

Most service users are migrants with recognised status of refugees. Among the main challenges faced by the project there is the difficulty to collect reliable data on the number of arrivals, the age of migrants, the identification of qualifications, as well as their needs in terms of health care and psychosocial support.

Participants then split into three groups and discussed different members’ experiences and views on the integration of migrant care workers in their respective countries, along with main achievements and challenges. In that regard, participants underlined the crucial role played by migrant care workers in ageing societies facing an increasing demand for eldercare. Notwithstanding this, some Eastern Europe members pointed at the limited experience of their countries as recipients of with migrant care workers.

Participants highlighted some challenges linked to the integration of migrant care workers. Among these, the differences in the patterns of migration (short-term in some cases, long-term in others), the lack of language abilities as a barrier to interact with users, inequalities in treatment at the workplace and discrimination faced



by (national) colleagues or service users, or the mismatch between migrants' actual qualifications and the ones recognised in hosting countries (and pay levels).

Members identified some key steps to be taken in response to these challenges, namely the provision of individual psychological support services for migrant care workers, and the availability of language and training options for them. Training was mentioned as a mutual opportunity when also national workers increase their understanding of their colleagues' experience as migrant professionals and make progresses towards a community of peers. Members also identified the need for more effective monitoring of workplaces to avoid unfair work conditions.

Eurodiaconia then addressed a few concluding words, stressing the importance of members' input to steer and feed into the network's work on the topic of healthy ageing and long-term care. The Secretariat thanked the hosts and members for their contributions and active participation throughout the two days.