

Event Report

## **Breakfast Event: Investing in Quality Social Services for Sustainable Care in Europe – Recommendations for the new European Parliament and European Commission**

3 October 2019  
European Parliament, Brussels

### Welcome & Introduction

Eurodiaconia, together with **Tomáš Zdechovský** ([MEP, EPP, Czech Republic](#)), invited policy makers, care providers and key stakeholders, to discuss challenges and recommendations associated with the investment and the provision of social services in Europe. Mr. Zdechovský opened the event by stating that the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) calls for affordable, high-quality long-term care service and the inclusion of people with disabilities and that the pillar is the EU's main policy tool to achieve this goal. He stressed the importance of the European Institutions in this process, while calling on organisations like [Eurodiaconia](#) and [AGE Platform](#) to provide the institutions with additional expertise and to help bridging the gap between European citizens, grassroots organisations and the EU.

**Heather Roy** (Eurodiaconia) stressed in her welcoming words that human dignity and long-term sustainability are crucial when speaking about investment in quality social services. Although there are voices calling for a new strategy tackling the challenge of investment in quality social services, it would be more important to implement what is already there and waiting to be put into practice: The European Pillar of Social Rights.

**Romana Bělová** ([Slezska Diakonie](#), Czech Republic) reminded participants, that quality care is essential in providing sustainable services that respect human rights of users and aim for the highest standards. She stressed that especially the most disadvantaged should have access to quality social services and that investment is needed all over Europe not only to provide basic care to everyone, but also to put everyone's dignity and human rights at the centre of service provision.

## Inputs on the need of investment in quality social services

**Elisabetta Gualmini** ([MEP, S&D, Italy](#)) opened the first round of inputs from the perspective of policy makers stating that our social infrastructure is indeed a common good of European citizens and that our welfare state is not only a tool that needs to react to upcoming challenges, but to pro-actively ensure social cohesion. She hopes that the EPSR will be the instrument to do so during the upcoming mandate of the European Parliament and that the EU will actively approach the needs of citizens to support them and to do even better in their every day lives. Ms. Gualmini also talked about increasing home care for elderly people, which is good. But to ensure the highest quality in provision of this service big investment and structural improvement is important and needed. Additionally, the partnership between the public sector and private NGOs needs to be strengthened to push investment.

**Ana Carla Pereira** ([DG EMPL](#), Head of Unit, Modernisation of social protection systems) opened her statement, that the topic of social investment indeed has been under the political radar for some time, one could even say it has been ignored. The [European Quality Framework](#) (EQF) was a tool to pave the way into the right direction and brought added value, but also didn't address all problems. And above all, not everyone knew about the EQF, which she described as "symptomatic". The European population is rapidly aging and the access to services is already not ideal, while in 20 years time the situation will be even more concerning. Quality will become more and more important for the beneficiaries of services, but also for staff. Still, the working conditions are far from being attractive, so is the remuneration. At the same time working ours are challenging and the gender dimension is evident as women are far more affected than men. Decision-makers need to understand that the care economy will be a huge and further growing economic sector in Europe and therefore needs prominent attention. When speaking about quality it is also important to consider the role of public procurement, which is also an important vehicle to foster or neglect quality in service provision. Ms. Pereira announced that the European Commission will produce a report together with member states on current challenges in LTC. This report will be a starting point for active dialogue also with the EPSCO Council and to raise awareness of the topic. Also, a Green Paper on Ageing is expected from future Commissioner Dubravka Šuica. The EC also actively is involved in reforming LTC service provision and launched a call for project proposals receiving a record number of 44 applications from across Europe, which are currently being assessed. EU funding and especially the new ESF+, the main tool to implement the EPSR, will be play an important role in this context. Now is also to time to act on member states levels through contributing to the national programming of the ESF+ and to make sure that the solutions to the challenges we are discussing today, find their way into the national programming for the ESF+.

## Recommendations for the future of investment & quality

**Borja Arrue Astrain** (AGE Platform) opened the session on the perspective of NGOs at the event. Firstly, he pointed out that human rights do not diminish with age and that a rights-based approach is the way to go forward, since ageism is an increasing problem touching upon isolation, loneliness, exclusion and discrimination. Distorted perceptions about age and older people can lead to ageist views and societal ageism.

While LTC is often viewed from an economic perspective, human dignity and human rights should be at the core of the discussion. Mr. Arrue Astrain explained that such an approach is easier to communicate in the equally important field of children rights or people with disabilities, while it only seems possible for older people “when we can afford it”. What is needed is a systematic preventive approach in LTC for older people. Institutional care e.g. is still problematic in terms of human rights and human dignity. There are many examples where facilities use wheelchairs for mobile residents, which eventually leads to reduced mobility and hence to increased funding for those facilities to treat immobile residents.

AGE Platform welcomes the new European Commissioner also responsible for demography as well as the planned Green Paper on Ageing. It shows that there is a growing interest in the European Commission and the willingness to increase investment, which according to Mr. Arrue Astrain “is still the big elephant in the room”.

**Romana Bélová** (Slezska diakonie, Czech Republic) presented the [Q-Europe project](#), supported by the [Erasmus+ programme](#). The project aimed to assess and develop quality management systems and impact measurement in providing LTC especially looking at managers in social care and care staff. The project was led by Slezska diakonie in Czech Republic as an active service provider together with Diaconia Valdese in Italy and supported by academia represented by the University of Trnava (Slovakia) and Eurodiaconia. The main objectives of project were sharing best practices in quality management systems for LTC, improving knowledge and sharing experience and developing new approaches in measuring social impact in LTC while developing a handbook as a tool for further training in quality management.

The project ran for more than two intensive years and gathered project partners in four European workshops in Czech Republic, Italy, Slovakia and Brussels to exchange best practices, discuss current challenges and develop new approaches to quality for LTC provision in Europe. The “Q-Handbook” [has been published in December 2019](#) and is structured around the following chapters: (1) Systems of quality management, (2) Key quality principles, (3) Measuring quality principles and impact measuring, (4) Quality & Staffing in LTC, (5) Trends & Challenges in LTC, (6) Good practice examples, and (7) Training in quality principles.

The quality principles that are at the core of the handbook's approach are based on the European Quality Framework: (1) Respect for user's rights, (2) Participation and Empowerment, (3) Accessibility, (4) Person-centered, (5) Comprehensive, (6) Continuous, and (7) Outcome-oriented. The handbook discusses each principle in detail using practical examples for LTC managers. It compiles measuring tools and indicators for each quality principle, case studies and short videos on the implementation of the principle, and a facilitator's guide for trainers on how to communicate the principle with the staff members in direct care. The handbook will be available in English, Czech, Italian and German. Please have a look at the already available [English version of the handbook](#).

## Questions and Answers

After the presentations **Tomáš Zdechovský** (EPP, Czech Republic) opened the floor for questions and remarks from participants. The keynote presentations received positive feedback from the audience, notably from **Michaela Šojdrová** (EPP, Czech Republic) and **Tomislav Sokol** (EPP, Croatia), both stressed that the topic has been ignored for too long and that at the same time it is also an opportunity for the EU to act now. The European Quality Framework was highlighted as a milestone, while also the introduction of a Commissioner for demography was mentioned favorably. Both MEPs stressed the importance of EU funds (like the [European Solidarity Corps](#)) and the necessity of European investment.

Answering a question from **Mike Stannett** (The Salvation Army Europe), **Romana Bélová** explained that the Q-Europe Handbook is not limited to be used on quality principles in LTC, but to apply its rationale also easily to other contexts, e.g. working with migrants and integration. Ms. Bélová also added in response to Ms. **Šojdrová's** question, that volunteering plays a big role in LTC e.g. in supportive roles but also in the context of informal carers: Previously, the European Voluntary Service was a great support and will be hopefully succeeded by the European Solidarity Corps in the same valuable way.

**Heather Roy** (Eurodiaconia) stressed that there is no need for a new EU strategy on the topic, but that there has been already a lot of strategic work done, which needs to be implemented properly; also the European Pillar of Social Rights needs to be put into practice through alignment with EU funds. She expressed her gratitude of being a project partner in the Q-Europe project as it gives a great example of how transnational exchange can be facilitated in Eastern and Southern Europe and how to develop innovative approaches to pressing issues that have the potential to be scaled-up.

**Tomáš Zdechovský** closed the Q&A session by thanking the participants for their questions, and the speakers for their time and inputs to spark an important discussion on a topic that will be a major challenge in the future. He therefore expressed his gratitude to Eurodiaconia and all the speakers to come together and work on solutions.

## Event Programme

### **08:00-08:15** Welcome & Introduction

- **Tomáš Zdechovský**  
Member of the European Parliament & Vice-Chair of the Committee on Employment & Social Affairs, EPP, Czech Republic
- **Heather Roy**  
Secretary General, Eurodiaconia, Belgium
- **Romana Bélová**  
Deputy Director Social Work, Slezská diakonie, Czech Republic

### **08:15-08:45** Inputs on the need of investment in quality social services

- **Elisabetta Gualmini**  
Member of the European Parliament & Member of the Committee on Employment & Social Affairs, S&D, Italy
- **Tomáš Zdechovský**  
Member of the European Parliament & Vice-Chair of the Committee on Employment & Social Affairs, EPP, Czech Republic
- **Ana-Carla Pereira**  
Head of Unit, European Commission, DG EMPL, Unit C2 (Modernisation of social protection systems)

### **08:45-09:15** Recommendations for the future of investment & quality

- **Borja Arrue Astrain**  
Project & Policy Officer, AGE Platform, Belgium
- **Presentation of the Q-Europe Handbook on Quality Long-Term-Care**  
Romana Bélová, Erasmus+ project leader “Q-Europe”

### **09:15-09:30** Q & A

*If you have further questions or need more information about the event or the Q-Europe project, please get in touch with our Senior Policy, Projects & Research Officer Florian at [florian.tuder@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:florian.tuder@eurodiaconia.org).*