



**Expert Group Meeting in preparation for the
30th anniversary of the International Year of Family, 2024**

Population ageing and family well-being in Europe

Torun, 29-30 May 2023

Recommendations

A. General

Raise awareness of the importance and the value of care in society including informal care in families and formal care by professionals.

Promote government-led working groups to advance a multi-sectoral approach to the development and delivery of services for family welfare & care.

Allocate adequate funding for efficient and coordinated community-based and integrated preventive services to support families, especially those in vulnerable situations by focusing on accessibility and poverty reduction.

Provide human-centered social services that meaningfully involve families, children, and older adults and are based on mutual respect and dignity, and building on existing capabilities; through

- a. an effective case management system that includes careful decision making and accompaniment on support services for families at risk
- b. a case management which builds strong and trusting relationships with families, and have the responsibility to address their situation
- c. shared case management procedures and tools to assess the needs of children and families in a participatory manner
- d. development of procedures to guide social workers to decide when there is a risk of harm in the family

Invest in social services workforce and professional development, including a national regulatory framework that gives details of roles and responsibilities as well as competencies and qualifications; opportunities for training; clear guidelines for volunteers and paraprofessionals; qualified supervisors; adequate salaries and good working conditions.

Promote data and evidence-informed programming strengthening national and local data collection systems that bring together information from various sectors, ministries, and agencies. Foster transparent data sharing among governmental, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, develop monitoring and evaluation systems to measure impact of social services.

B. Families and ageing in Europe

Foster the notion of ageing as a stage of life rather than a problem; a natural process with an aim to be active and healthy and independent as long as possible and living in the place of choice for every individual.

Consider the evolving role of families and adequately prepare for changes of the family structure due to ageing.

Adjust policies and measures for those who do not have enough network connections (family, other) to be supported in old age.

Identify the most vulnerable families and their specific needs.

Assess the difference between desired and actual fertility in order to close the fertility gap.

Consider a gradual but sustainable transition to an actuarially fair pension system.

C. Families, ageing, poverty and work-family balance (SDG 1)

Develop policies and services that enhance recognition (monetary and social) of informal care contributions and address the social and physical barriers to accessing and seeking services.

Promote intergenerational community-based and integrated services to tackle social exclusion from early childhood care to community volunteering and engagement of older people.

Ensure that people-centered social services that meaningfully involve families, children, and older adults are based on mutual respect and dignity, building on existing capabilities.

Promote awareness campaigns for the general public to counteract shaming and negative stereotypes surrounding poverty, age, and gender as more positive social recognition of informal care work in the family is needed.

Foster generation of transfer and eligibility accounts taking unpaid care work into consideration.

Foster intergenerational activities to promote intergenerational exchanges.

Develop preventive measures for older persons living alone, and/or at risk of poverty.

D. Families, ageing and health (SDG 3)

Strengthen healthcare systems by adopting a family-centered approach recognizing the importance of family involvement in healthcare decisions while providing support for caregivers, and promoting effective communication between healthcare professionals and families.

Enhance access to family-friendly services such as affordable and high-quality childcare, parental leave, and flexible working arrangements. These measures can support parents in maintaining a healthy work-life balance and provide opportunities for active family engagement.

Invest in mental health services, including prevention, early intervention, and treatment, with a particular focus on supporting families. Raise awareness about mental health issues, reducing stigma, and providing accessible and comprehensive mental health support to individuals and families.

Develop comprehensive policies and services that address the specific needs of the ageing population, through active ageing strategies, long-term care, home-based care, healthy diet, and support for family caregivers. Provide resources and training for family members to care for elderly relatives and ensure access to quality healthcare services for older adults.

Enhance health education initiatives that target families and individuals across all life stages. Promote health literacy, raise awareness about healthy habits, healthy diet, disease prevention, and the importance of regular screenings and check-ups.

Encourage the creation of community-based support networks that provide social connections, resources, and assistance for families. Support initiatives that strengthen social cohesion, reduce social isolation, coordinate territorial community medicine, and build community resilience.

Address health inequalities by focusing on disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations. Ensure equitable access to healthcare services, including preventive care, territorial community medicine, and address social determinants of health such as poverty, education, and housing.

Foster collaboration between European countries to share best practices, innovative approaches, and research findings related to family and health. Promote knowledge exchange and cooperation to improve policies, programs, and services across Europe.

Support research efforts and data collection on family and health to better understand the challenges and needs of families in Europe. Use evidence-based approaches to inform policy development and decision-making processes

Take action to prevent dementia-related challenges in families through, inter alia, early detection, and screening.

Promote cooperation through alliances among the stakeholders (policy makers, public health care, social help, social economy, media, communities and their facilitators, families and individuals) organized by evidence-based models.

Recognize possibilities and resources with a top-down and bottom-up approach to address real needs in various types of frameworks (funding, quality assurance, etc.) shaped according to policy-makers.

Ensure efficient use of existing local resources before launching new services (including activation of cooperation, information channels), and only the recognized missing services, capacities should be added to ensure cost effectiveness.

Support local communities in prevention (providing possibilities of active and healthy life for ageing people), rehabilitation activities, by supporting them in implementing the funding of evidence-based practices. The local people must have the right to choose between the possibilities.

Promote education and better communication among various 'health/unhealth' events over the life course and prepare them to be aware of consequences.

Communicate the implications of population ageing in terms of the prevalence of age-related health limitations.

E. Families, ageing and education (SDG 4)

Ensure the change of paradigm of active aging as a lifelong process that concerns all generations.

Promote lifelong education and life-cycle approach.

Promote functional digital literacy to avoid isolation, loneliness, social exclusion and poverty.

Support inter and intra-generational learning activities by active learning as informal rather than formal education.

Promote a paradigm shift from a focus on eliminating weaknesses to a focus on improving strengths.

Promote transition from a one-size-fits-all all education system to an education system that recognizes the uniqueness of students and addresses their specific needs.

Promote lifelong learning by involving families in initiatives. (The family is of great interest here as a place of socialization that can participate in the integration of all family members. The family can take its place in this learning dynamic both to transmit information, to contribute to limit the risk of social exclusion of older people, to participate in actions with grandparents).

Create opportunities to link several generations in a learning context, especially at work as of transmission of knowledge via mentoring, collaboration on projects, or participation in the same training courses during professional transitions.

F. Families, ageing, equality and care (SDG 5)

Promote policies that facilitate more female employment at younger ages and also promote greater possibilities of re-entering the labor market at older ages.

Address income inequality during working years and improve support (benefits, allowance, affordable housing options) for single households.

Improve policies that facilitate late-life divorce while targeting older individuals who are living alone (divorced/separated/widowed) in health care and other facilities using tools such as family (history) mapping.

Discuss, design and organize more targeted, available and affordable support for caregivers taking into account their resources and needs.

Invest in raising awareness and better information access for families to know how to prepare for care and where to look for assistance.

Contextualize depending on the place of residence differentiating between cities and rural areas to evaluate the effectiveness of care offered and delivered.

Improve the data collection methods to make them visible in indicators as the contribution of family (informal) caregivers.

Reduce barriers to accessing professional healthcare - also part time.

Prevent age discrimination by means of a EU law to be transposed into national law.

Support families in their caregiving role: Acknowledge that it is crucial for promoting the well-being of individuals and building resilient communities.

Ensure that families have easy access to information, resources, and guidance.

Offer financial assistance programs and tax benefits, establish respite care services, and promote parenting education.

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work: As established by Target 5.4 of the 2030 Agenda, provision public services, infrastructure, social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family.

Invest more in early childhood education and care services: governments should take into account dimensions beyond the mere availability of places, such as the time-intensity of participation, the share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, as well as the accessibility, affordability, and quality of the services provided.

Ensure that people at the end of life and their relatives participate in the care choices as part of a patient-centered approach. Guarantee that people's wishes are respected when they approach death, especially for those who are affected by dementia or other cognitive diseases, who might not be able to express their wishes in their last period of life.

Strengthen primary healthcare: Increase the number of professionals, improve access to primary care facilities, and promote comprehensive and coordinated care. This includes investing in preventive care, early detection, and chronic disease management.

Foster greater integration and coordination between primary care, specialized care, and social care services to provide seamless and person-centered care. Encourage collaboration between healthcare providers, social care providers, and community organizations to ensure continuity of care across different settings.

Prioritize preventive healthcare measures by implementing effective public health campaigns, promoting healthy lifestyles, and increasing awareness of disease prevention strategies. Invest in screenings, vaccinations, and health education programs to reduce the burden of preventable diseases.

Develop sustainable and person-centered long-term care systems that address the needs of aging populations. This includes expanding home care services, improving nursing care facilities, and enhancing support for informal caregivers. Ensure adequate funding and staffing for long-term care services.

Embrace digital health technologies to enhance healthcare delivery, improve access to care, and empower patients. Develop robust health information systems, telemedicine platforms, and remote monitoring tools to support remote consultations, health data exchange, and remote patient monitoring.

Promote health equity: Address health disparities and inequalities by ensuring equal access to healthcare services for all population groups, including vulnerable and marginalized populations. Implement policies to reduce health inequalities and promote equitable distribution of healthcare resources.

Promote research and innovation in healthcare to drive advancements in medical treatments, technologies, and care delivery models. Support collaborations between

academia, industry, and healthcare providers to accelerate the translation of research into practice.

Invest in the education, training, and professional development of healthcare professionals to ensure an adequate and skilled workforce. Address workforce shortages and maldistribution by implementing strategies to attract and retain healthcare professionals in underserved areas.

Foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among European countries to exchange best practices, benchmark outcomes, and learn from successful healthcare models. Promote cross-border collaboration on research, health policies, and healthcare workforce mobility.

G. Families, ageing and migration (SDG 10)

Support and acknowledge migrants in family work (including care), especially for receiving countries.

Recognize the role migrants play as a resource for families in their organization of everyday life, including care.

Support controlled and managed migration taking into consideration the characteristics and needs of the migrants and the resident population.

Offer better and targeted integration of migrants.

Promote social inclusion programs of older persons, especially migrants through basic educational programs education and workshops for migrant elders considering language as the first step for integration.