



Bern, 09.04.2024

## Call for inputs of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing

### **The right to health and access to health services of elderly people Switzerland's inputs**

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Demographic change is presenting some major challenges. The task of preserving health and quality of life in the elderly is the main focus of the Federal Office for Public Health (FOPH)'s efforts. It is guided by the "Healthy Ageing" strategy published by the World Health Organization (WHO). It is important to take a differentiated view of old age and ageing at all times.

No other phase of life is more heterogeneous in terms of capabilities and state of health. Some elderly people are fit, others are frail. The WHO created the concept of Healthy Ageing to take account of this diversity. It defines healthy ageing "as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age". Functional ability in this context refers to all the health-related capabilities that enable people to lead the life that is important to them or that they feel is worth living. These are the physical and mental capacities of the individual and relevant environmental factors. The goal is well-being in old age.

A number of the measures described in the WHO strategy are already being implemented in Switzerland. As part of the NCD strategy, for example, the FOPH, the cantons and the Swiss Health Promotion Foundation are pursuing joint objectives in health promotion and preventive healthcare. Activities to coordinate care and achieve health equity are also helping to implement healthy ageing (see after). The FOPH is also turning its attention to family caregivers, seeking to provide them with support and relief wherever possible. The FOPH is promoting an exchange between the stakeholders involved in palliative care.

And at the federal level various institutions are working on age-related questions with relevance for health – the aim being to implement a comprehensive public health policy. Social security, living in old age, adult protection legislation, environment and spatial development are just some of the topics they are looking at. Health-policy efforts are being flanked by activities organised by the cantons, the communes and organizations in civil society. One of the factors necessary for a successful health policy for elderly people, in addition to the cross-sector approaches mentioned above, is effective coordination of these activities – and that means involving those affected directly, the elderly living in Switzerland.

The Federal Office of Public Health uses various measures to promote coordinated or integrated care with a focus on older people, as required in the WHO Action Plan. As part of the containment costs measures with regards to the compulsory health insurance (package 2), the Federal Council has proposed to promote coordinated care networks. In doing so, it aims at strengthening the quality of care, especially for older people with multimorbidity. <http://www.bag.admin.ch/koordinierte-versorgung> The coordinated care project launched in



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2015, the FOPH has already put a focus on coordinated care for (very) old, multimorbid people. Together with the relevant stakeholders, an action plan was developed and implemented to improve synergies and increase the quality of care for this group of patients. The special attention given to people with dementia is emphasized several times in the WHO Action Plan. To this end, the FOPH operates the National Dementia Platform together with the cantons, Alzheimer Switzerland and other relevant actors. Its aims at improving the quality of life of people with dementia and their relatives. All people with dementia should have access to high-quality, low-threshold and continuous psychological, medical and nursing care in all phases of their illness. One objective of the National Dementia Platform is to disseminate the existing knowledge, to anchor it in practice and to further develop it. In order to promote such practice-oriented projects, the platform has successfully campaigned for dementia to be taken into account in the project funding round of “Prevention in Health Care” [Cycle de soutien 2024 | Promotion Santé Suisse \(promotionsante.ch\)](#)

Additionally, the Federal Council wants to address the growing need with regards to the healthcare sector and to strengthen the quality of long-term care by quickly implementing the “nursing initiative”. The first stage of implementation includes a broad training offensive. The training to become a nurse specialist will be funded by the federal government and the cantons with up to CHF 1 billion over the next eight years. The legal basis for the implementation of the funding measures will be drafted by the cantons. The corresponding federal law on promoting the training in the field of nursing was adopted in December 2022. [Bundesrat will die Ausbildungsoffensive im Pflegebereich Mitte 2024 starten \(admin.ch\)](#)

The WHO action plan points out the great importance of ensuring that “no older people are left behind, including indigenous elders, older people with disabilities and older refugees and migrants”. Hence, the FOPH supported several studies in this area, namely a film and the development of an “Age and Migration” action plan. The aim is to promote the health of socially disadvantaged people in old age and ensure their equal access to health care. The FOPH is also a partner of the National Forum on Age and Migration, which is committed to improving the health and social situation of older migrants [Gesundheitliche Benachteiligung im Alter \(admin.ch\)](#)

For more information or specific questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

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