

14th session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

Guiding questions on the normative content related to right to health and access to health services

Policies for social care and elderly protection intersect with health policies as they aim to safeguard the physical and mental integrity of older individuals, prevent social exclusion and isolation, and ensure they live with dignity.

According to the Law no. 2646/1998, social care is defined as protection provided to individuals or groups through prevention and rehabilitation programs to facilitate equal participation in economic and social life and ensure a decent standard of living.

It is a State responsibility, ensuring that every legally residing person in Greece in need is entitled to social care through the National Social Care System, comprised of public sector bodies and certified private non-profit bodies.

Recent legislation recognizes that the protection of the elderly and the chronically ill includes open social care programs and institutional care, to improve their quality of life and ensure decent living standards. These programs may be implemented by public sector bodies, local authority enterprises, or private for-profit bodies focused on social development and welfare.

Uninsured and economically weak elderly people are granted the Social Solidarity Allowance for Uninsured Elderly Persons which aims to ensure the **material conditions necessary for their health and a decent general standard of living**, to protect their financial, physical and psychological security and to prevent their social exclusion and isolation.

The allowance is granted to uninsured older people, and to those who do not meet the conditions for retirement, provided that they have reached the age of 67 and do not receive or are not entitled to receive a pension from abroad or any insurance or welfare benefit from Greece, in excess of the full amount of the allowance.

As for access to health care, social care services for the older persons' are provided through the following residential and non-residential entities:

a.) Elderly Care Units:

They provide residential care for elderly individuals, whether capable of self-care or not and operate as non-profit or for-profit private law bodies, licensed by regional authorities. With over 310 units nationwide, they cater to around 16,000 people.

b.) Therapeutic centers for the Chronically Ill:

They are public or licenced private non-profit residential care units. and operate as units of the Social Welfare Centres.

c.) C.O.P.E. Structures - Centers for the Open Protection of the Elderly for the entertainment and recreation for people aged 60 and above living in the area where each center operates, without any distinction.

Established in 1982, C.O.P.E. Structures are managed by local authorities and offer:

- preventive medicine,
- instructions for medical and hospital care,
- prescription of medicines and medical examinations,
- physiotherapy, occupational therapy,
- excursions, lectures, reading clubs, entertainment and other activities.

d.)Municipal Medicines

They are implemented in the context of primary care and health promotion and provide services such as:

- Treatment of health problems not requiring admission to hospital.
- Counseling guidance to seek appropriate medical help.
- Preventive interventions on high-risk groups.
- Family planning, preventive examinations (Pap test), preventive dentistry and vaccinations.
- Information and health education actions

e.) The "Help at Home" programme

It is part of the primary social care services. It is mainly addressed to older persons, people with disabilities and those underserved and in need of help and supportive services who live alone and whose income is low. The provided services are free of charge in the following areas:

- Counseling and psycho-emotional support
- Ensuring services, benefits and social protection measures.
- Nursing primary care
- Family - Domestic auxiliary care and satisfaction of practical living needs.
- Care of personal hygiene and cleanliness.
- Health Education and Prevention.
- Interconnection with other agencies
- Facilitating travel, information and communication needs.
- Facilitation of cultural, religious and social participation and activity.

Concerning State obligations, taking into account the commitments arising from EU Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on access to affordable high-quality long-term care (C 476/01), Greece is preparing a relevant National Action Plan. The National Action Plan aims to enhance accessibility, availability, and quality of long-term care services through a cross-sectoral approach and to implement the right to health and social well-being of older individuals.

Measures to address challenges related to the relevant institutional framework include securing necessary financial support for economically vulnerable older people within

budgetary constraints, ensuring continuity of care across different areas of competence and services and responding to the social care needs arising from population ageing while ensuring sustainability of relevant social protection systems. Promoting independent living for older people and enabling them to stay in familiar environments is crucial.

This necessitates strengthening open care and home care services, developing regulatory frameworks to support informal carers in balancing family and professional life, and establishing certification frameworks for professional carers to ensure quality and accountability in care provision.