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Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia

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**To: United Nations focal
point on ageing**
E-mail: ageing@un.org

*Guiding Questions for the focus
areas of the IX Session of the
Open-ended Working Group
on Ageing: Long-term care
and palliative care*

The Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia has received a letter of Chair of Open – Ended Working Group of Ageing Mr. Martin Garcia Moritan (15 December 2017) with request to share information on long-term care, palliative care, autonomy and independence of seniors. The Ombudsman will share information regarding long-term care institutions in Latvia.

1) In your country/region, how is long-term care for older persons defined and provided for in legal and policy frameworks? What types of support and services are covered?

Law on Social Services and Social Assistance defines social care system in Latvia. Law on State Social Insurance regulates social insurance issues. Thus the state guarantees assistance in cases of sickness, disability and also agedness. However there is not one specific long – term care system (hereinafter – LTC) in Latvia. LTC organization is divided between health and welfare systems. It is possible to receive more than 20 different services, including care at home, day care centre and services in long-term social care and social rehabilitation institutions (hereinafter - LTC institutions).

2) What are the specific challenges faced by older persons in accessing long-term care?

The Ombudsman monitors situation in LTC institutions for many years, thus further in the text will be shared information regarding LTC institutions. Usually the most important challenge is the quality of services provided in the LTC institutions. The Ombudsman has informed national and international institutions, including UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017),¹ on issues which shall be settled in LTC institutions:

¹ Alternative Report on the Initial Report of the Republic of Latvia Regarding Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 13 December 2006 in the Republic of Latvia Between 31 March 2010 and 31 December

- Assessment of the compliance of the amount of personnel must be performed, taking into consideration full provision of the LTC institution's functions to provide all clients with opportunity to receive services compliant with their needs and required care;
- Improvement of knowledge level of the personnel, especially the care-takers for example, on client positioning aspects, auxiliary means, catering process and reasons of behavioural disorders must be provided. Additionally, it is necessary to develop guidelines in order to improve the work of social care and social rehabilitation;
- Lack of information exchange on matters regarding provision of the objective needs of clients can be observed between the responsible employees in separate LTC institutions;
- Important information for clients should be posted on a special information stand in each unit, including the easy language version, to provide equal understanding opportunity for all;
- Daily walks outdoors are not being provided for all clients of the LTC institution;
- Monotony of the offered food, lack of fresh fruit and vegetables on the menu;
- Poor, worn clothing of clients;
- Medical documentation still shows that the clients are being prescribed excessive neuroleptic medication;
- Lack of purposeful, meaningful activities;
- Quality of drawing up of clients' individual rehabilitation plans must be improved to develop both the client's self-care abilities, and their further integration into society.
- LTC institution does not follow the requirement to ensure LTC institution's environment similar to the family environment. Clients are not provided with the necessary support to personalize their rooms to create a pleasant environment in the LTC institution.
- The availability of hygiene products (toilet paper, towels and soap) for sanitary facilities is not provided to the clients.

3) What measures have been taken/are necessary to ensure high-quality and sustainable long-term care systems for older persons, including for example:

Issues mentioned in previous answer shall be ensured for older persons in LTC institutions.

4) What other rights are essential for the enjoyment of the right to long-term care by older persons, or affected by the non-enjoyment of this right?

The Ombudsman considers that right to LTC for older persons includes several aspects, such as:

- a) LTC services which suits the needs of the clients.
- b) Access to services (including universal design, accessible information) near the place of residence or at place of residence.
- c) Access to LTC services within a reasonable time.
- d) Professional (and kind) LTC service providers.
- e) Affordable LTC services.
- f) Family care type in LTC institutions.

The Ombudsman draws attention to necessity to ensure that older people are seen as equal part of society. People who have been active in their lives after reaching

retirement age do not want to be less active or isolated from society. The Ombudsman suggests to improve the rights of older people outside of long-term care systems, for example, rights to receive health or travel insurance (non-discrimination principle) or participate in surveys. Older people are not satisfied that surveys often do not include age group over 64. Thus, they feel excluded from society.

Yours sincerely,
Ombudsman

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