

47th SESSION

Ageing communities – ensuring access to quality social care for older persons

Recommendation 517 (2024)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. the explanatory memorandum on “Ageing communities – ensuring access to quality social care for older persons” (CG-SOC(2024)3-02);

b. Resolution 2168 (2017) Europe “Human rights of older persons and their comprehensive care” of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe calling upon member States to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of health care and long-term care for older persons;

c. Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the promotion of human rights of older persons” making recommendations concerning the autonomy, participation and care of older persons, based on a number of practices identified across Europe;

d. the European Social Charter (revised; ETS No. 163) guaranteeing rights of access to the highest possible standard of health, to social and medical assistance, and to social welfare services, and encourages measures to ensure elderly persons can remain full members of society for as long as possible, choose their lifestyle freely and lead independent lives in their family surroundings;

e. Recommendation COM(2022)441 of the Council of the European Union on “Access to affordable high-quality long-term care” recommending that EU member States “continuously align the offer of long-term care services to long-term care needs”;

f. the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) and the Age-Friendly City Framework of the World Health Organization (WHO) as international frameworks promoting older people’s rights, health and well-being;

g. the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular SDG 3 promoting healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages, and SDG 11 promoting inclusive and sustainable cities and communities.

2. The Congress notes with concern that:

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2024 (see document CG(2024) 47-17, explanatory memorandum, co-rapporteurs Carla DEJONGHE, Belgium (R, ILDG) and Joanne LABAN, United Kingdom (L, ECR).

- a. most Council of Europe member States are experiencing an overall trend towards an ageing population and ageing local communities;
- b. local and regional authorities are in the frontline of institutions facing the challenges of an ageing population and growing demand for long-term care services in different settings;
- c. in particular local and regional authorities are confronted with new challenges in the area of long-term care, including increasingly higher costs for home-based and institutional care arrangements, staff shortages, maintaining quality standards in long-term care, the need for better interagency co-operation and changing family patterns;
- d. to address such challenges and cities and make cities and communities more age-friendly, subnational authorities will need better legislative, policy and financial support from national governments first, and through European programmes where available;
- e. while individual local and regional authorities have started developing effective and innovative responses to some of these challenges, these are not yet sufficiently known and applied across Council of Europe member States to guarantee access to quality social care for all older persons.

3. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers to invite the respective national authorities of the member States to the Council of Europe to:

- a. create a favourable national context for the development of age-friendly cities and communities, including through measures in a range of relevant policy areas, according to the WHO Framework for Age-Friendly Cities, including community and healthcare, transportation, housing, social participation, outdoor spaces and buildings, respect and social inclusion, civil participation and employment, communication and information;
- b. develop specific support programmes for local and regional authorities to develop long-term care services in different home-based and residential settings;
- c. co-operate with local and regional authorities and their associations to develop the necessary legal, policy and administrative frameworks for enabling and fostering age-friendly cities and communities in different territories;
- d. set-up special support measures and appropriate equalisation funds for individual territories that are excessively affected by current trends and challenges ;
- e. support local and regional authorities, including by providing appropriate platforms and networks for exchanging about experiences and good practices, for supporting each other in spreading innovative approaches across the country and for building the professional capacities needed;
- f. provide sufficient funding to cover local and regional authorities' expenses for long-term care, which in many countries is a statutory duty for subnational authorities;
- g. provide funding for innovative programmes that enable older people to continue living in their local community and own homes, preserving their autonomy for as long as possible;
- h. support the design and implementation of community-based services and encourage providers to put such services in place at local and regional levels, for instance through financial incentives;
- i. improve coordination between health and social services at all levels by promoting and funding approaches of integrated care and investing into research and model approaches in this area;
- j. improve the working conditions for long-term care workers through legislative, political and awareness-raising measures (notably those related to working times, salaries and psychosocial support), to increase the appreciation and attractiveness of the sector, and to facilitate access for workers coming from abroad and from other professional sectors, including through the mutual transnational recognition of degrees and qualifications.

4. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities concerning ageing communities and older persons' access to quality care as a human right.

5. The Congress invites the Committee of Ministers in particular, to pay renewed attention to older persons' human rights in undertaking a review of CM/Rec(2014)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the promotion of human rights of older persons and in stepping up its promotional activities related to the relevant paragraphs of the European Social Charter (revised), including in co-operation with the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly to support relevant multilevel policy and legislative action.