



EAHSA's Response Green Paper on the European Workforce for Health March 2009

The European Association for Housing and Services for the Ageing EAHSA brings together providers of care and housing for the elderly as well as organisations who provide services to providers of care and housing with the aim to connect and support care and services providers to improve the quality of life for the ageing and to contribute to the quality, accessibility and financial sustainability of the care systems for the elderly in the European Union and associated states.

The European Ageing Network EAHSA welcomes the publication of a Green Paper on the healthcare workforce.

We wish to commend and provide recommendations on the following specific matters with relevance to EAHSA's aims.

Promotion of a sustainable health workforce (section 4.1 of the Green Paper)

Investments in staff motivation and moral are a key element in a successful strategy towards a sustainable workforce. New approaches on care for the elderly have a positive effect on staff satisfaction and motivation.

The Eden Alternative (<http://www.eden-europe.net/>) is based on the belief that aging should be a continued stage of development and growth, rather than a period of decline. Eden promotes de-institutionalizing the culture and environment of today's nursing homes and other long term care facilities. The Eden Alternative is also about changing the culture of long-term care organizations. The departmentalized, task-orientation of the current institutional model has created a culture that is characterized by pessimism, cynicism and stinginess. By moving away from the top-down bureaucratic approach to management and moving decision making closer to the Elders, Eden does not only see ageing differently, it also makes care-work visible, valued and has therefore the potential to decrease workforce problems. This ultimately will "pay off" in decreased staffing problems and costs.

The Planetree model of care (<http://www.planetree.org>) is a patient-centered, holistic approach to healthcare, promoting mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and physical healing. It empowers patients and families through the exchange of information and encourages healing partnerships with caregivers. It seeks to maximize positive healthcare outcomes by integrating optimal medical therapies and incorporating art and nature into the healing environment. The number of European healthcare organisations who work with the Planetree approach is rapidly growing.

EAHSA would very much welcome European cooperation in agreeing high level principles for the care for the elderly, in line with these new approaches on care. EAHSA also encourages further exchange of information on the state of the art in long term care for the elderly.

Data to support decision making (section 4.6 of the Green Paper)

EAHSA's affiliated partner IAHSA (<http://www.iahsa.net>) is working together with the Institute for the Future of Aging Services (IFAS) to conduct a cross-national study of the long-term care and home care paraprofessional workforce in countries throughout Europe. The project has two primary goals: (1) To help better describe this sector of the European aging services workforce and to better understand the issues these workers face and how these issues differ across countries; (2) to examine the ways in which health care products and equipment can aid and enhance the daily tasks of this workforce as they care for elders.

We will of course share this information with our members and stakeholders. In general however we see that there is a great shortage on data in this area. Sharing data on workforce related issues is vital for care providers, as it is for the European Commission. EAHSA therefore welcomes Community involvement in promoting networking and exchange of information and good practices.

The impact of new technology (section 5 of the Green Paper)

A majority of people aged over 65 in the EU are homeowners. Evidence shows that old people often want to stay in their flats as long as possible. Moreover, even if they want to move from home, they would rather be in an accommodation where they can still live independently. New technology is essential to support the elderly in living as independently as possible. EAHSA welcomes the efforts of

the European Union in this field. In the past years EAHSA has participated in the EU funded project (Middleware Platform for eMPOWERing Cognitive Disabled and Elderly) to define an open platform to simplify the task of developing and implement technological advances. EAHSA offered input on the user requirements for the technologies and provides a forum through which the results of the research can be distributed globally.

New technologies changes the way long term care - especially homecare - is being organised and provided. These technologies not only affects the quality of care, it also affects the quality of work. Given the importance of technology for a sustainable healthcare- system we have to carefully monitor the effects on both training skills and professional standards as on job satisfaction and motivation.

If you have any questions or remarks, or if you want more detailed information, please let us know.

Kind regards,

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