Gaps in the provision of long-term care services in Lithuania
Gaps in the provision of long-term care services in Lithuania

Romas Lazutka, Arunas Poviliunas and Laima Zalimiene
Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers to your questions about the European Union.

Freephone number (*):

00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).
Theme(s):
Long-term care

Title:
Gaps in the provision of long-term care services in Lithuania

Category:
Key developments in implementation

Abstract:
Municipalities are lacking the competencies and resources which they need to overcome the legacy of residential long-term care services for the elderly and to implement strategically recognised priorities enabling the elderly to live at home and manage their households independently for as long as possible.

Description:
The rapid ageing of Lithuanian society has resulted in a growing need for care for the elderly. Between 1994 and 2014, due to a low birth rate and high levels of emigration among the younger population, the proportion of the population aged 65+ has increased from 11.9% to 18.4% (Eurostat 2015).

The National Strategy for Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing (the “Strategy”), the Law on Local Self-Government, and the Law on Social Services state that social services should be provided to the elderly by creating conditions for them to live at home, in their own families and manage their households independently as long as possible. Assistance should be organised in coordination with employment, personal healthcare and special assistance measures, helping to maintain social relationships with the family, relatives and society.

In 2008-2009, decentralisation of the residential social care sector began and the former state residential care institutions were transferred to the jurisdiction of municipalities. Immediately after the reform (in 2010), the number of residents in care institutions for the elderly decreased by 20%, but later the number of residents started to grow anew.

The National Audit Office has discovered that nowadays only three (out of 60) municipalities are able to provide all kinds of social services for the elderly. The majority of municipalities are not able to offer a set of social services, which enable an elderly person to live at home as long as possible. In these cases, municipal social services cannot compete with the infrastructure of residential care, and older people are forced to wait to get a place in a residential inpatient institution. In 2014, 47% of the elderly in need of long term-care were on a waiting list, with an average waiting time of 6 months.

In all the cases of long-term residential care for the elderly examined by the auditors, the possibility of alternative care in the patient’s home was not proposed.

Outlook & Commentary:
In order to provide social services for the elderly more effectively, municipalities should redistribute their own and allocated state resources according to the priority established in the Law on Social Services – to provide social services to the home wherever possible, rather than investing in expensive and less attractive institutional care.
Social services for the elderly should be integrated with healthcare services, with more coordination of actions between the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Ministry of Health. Since amendments were made to the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents, municipalities have saved the allocations provided for social issues. Some of these resources could be reallocated to the strengthening and promotion of social services provided for elderly people at home.

**Further reading:**


**Authors:**

Romas Lazutka ([romas.lazutka@fsf.vu.lt](mailto:romas.lazutka@fsf.vu.lt)); Arunas Poviliunas ([arunas.poviliunas@fsf.vu.lt](mailto:arunas.poviliunas@fsf.vu.lt)); Laima Zalimiene ([laima.zalimiene@fsf.vu.lt](mailto:laima.zalimiene@fsf.vu.lt))