



Republic of Cyprus

**Reporting on the implementation
of the Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022
on access to affordable high-quality long-term care**

June 2024

Abbreviations

MoH	Ministry of Health
MLSI	Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance
DMSW	Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare
SID	Department of Social Insurance Services (MLSI)
SWS	Social Welfare Services (DMSW)
WBAS	Welfare Benefits Administration Service (DMSW)
DSID	Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (DMSW)
HIO	Health Insurance Organisation
GHS	General Healthcare System
SHSO	State Health Services Organisation
PWD	Persons with Disabilities

1. Context and baseline

1.1. Diagnosis of the gaps and remaining challenges

Cyprus has every trait of an ageing western society with increasing needs, particularly with respect to dependency ratios. Over the next few decades, a significant increase in the number of dependent people is expected.

The current LTC system is divided into two distinct parts, one under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health (MoH)/ Health Insurance Organisation (HIO) and the other under the responsibility of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare (DMSW). While the DMSW is in charge of managing the majority of cash and in-kind benefits regarding social care as well as the governance of the social protection system, the HIO is in charge of providing all healthcare services, including LTC. The Social Welfare Services (SWS) of the DMSW are in charge of the regulation and supervision of social care. Furthermore, the Department for Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities (DSID) of the DMSW provides a wide array of benefits for persons with disabilities.

Social care benefits/services are often means-tested and are provided mainly to people with a high level of dependency (often older people) and those with chronic diseases and disabilities. The introduction of the new General Healthcare System in 2019, which is partially financed by contributions, and the gradual inclusion of services in it, has significantly improved the accessibility and affordability of healthcare services.

Moreover, Cyprus has developed a Revised National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2024-2028 and a National Strategy for Autism 2024-2028, in which actions in relation to LTC have been developed. A Strategy for Active Ageing is also currently being developed, which will also address the topic of LTC among others. Finally, on the 1/7/2024 a large reform of the local authorities took place, which is expected to also bring changes to the responsibilities of local authorities regarding the provision of social care services and social protection.

Having assessed the current situation, the main identified challenges for the LTC sector are:

- Comprehensiveness between health and social care.
- Accessibility and affordability of social care.
- Lack of legislation/ Need of modernization of the legislative framework (rehabilitation centres, palliative care, care homes, home care etc.).
- A network of adequate care providers (need to improve working conditions and skills of the workforce).
- Integrated approach to address the needs of people in need of LTC.

1.2. Stakeholders' involvement

The government has established regular consultation mechanisms with the civil society. For the field of LTC the main actors are:

- Advisory Body on the Third Age (Decision of the Council of Minister no 85.229, 26/8/2018): It is composed of representatives of organizations involved with elderly issues and has an advisory role to the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare. The Body's primary objective is the development of a strategy for the elderly that will concern. At the Body's meetings participate representatives of the MoH, the MLSI, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the DMSW.
- Pancyprian Council for Persons with Disabilities: It is established as the supreme advisory body on disability issues in the framework of Persons with Disabilities Laws 2000-2007. It is composed by the competent public authorities, representatives of the organisations of persons with disabilities, the employers' organisations and the trade unions, and independent individuals.
- Cyprus Confederation of Organisations of the Disabled: It is established by law (Law 143(I)/2006) as the social partner of the state in matters concerning persons with disabilities.
- Elders' Parliament: The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordination Council, in collaboration with the House of Representatives, runs the Elders' Parliament since 1999. The Elders' Parliament has 56 members, representing civil society and aims to promote issues related to the elders' social welfare and health, especially through its annual plenary session.
- Advisory Body under the Law for the Elders' and Disabled Persons' Homes: It has been re-established on the 1/1/2024. Its role is to assist the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare for the application of the above-mentioned law. It is composed of representatives of the competent authorities and the civil society.

At a government level a National Coordination Mechanism was established with regards to the implementation of the Council's Recommendation on LTC, in which participate the competent ministries/deputy ministries (MoH, MLSI, Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, DMSW). The coordination of it is the responsibility of the DMSW.

2. Policy objectives and measures (to be) taken

2.1. Overall policy response

The developed policy measures aim to improve the comprehensiveness, affordability and quality of provided services in LTC. The LTC sector is broad and encompasses different groups of care recipients, various professional profiles and competent authorities. It is also correlated with pensions adequacy and healthy ageing.

The below mentioned taken or planned measures constitute the first step in the discussion about a more comprehensive LTC system in Cyprus encompassing all competent authorities.

2.2 Detailed description of the measures

	Action	Aim	Type	Results and impact	Timeline	Financial Resources (national/ EU)	Implementing body
1	Subsidy Scheme for care services (social care) under the Guaranteed Minimum Income Law	Subsidize through monthly cash benefit the provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Home care by certified natural or legal person or by domestic worker (max. €400 + €52 for diapers, in extraordinary cases possibility for a higher amount)- Daily care (€137 + €50 for transport)- Residential care (€745 + €40 for diapers)- Respite care Subsidization of social care is means-tested.	Cash benefit	2023: 4.664 beneficiaries (monthly average)	ongoing	national	WBAS SWS DSID
2	Cash benefits for the care of persons with disabilities	Provide monthly care allowance to persons with paraplegia or tetraplegia (€400/ €900 respectively or in the case of intensive care €500/ €1100)	Cash benefit	12/2023 beneficiaries: Paraplegia:1335 Tetraplegia: 951	ongoing	national	DSID

	(paraplegia/tetraplegia)	respectively). It is provided independent of income and age. It is provided by free choice of the carer or carers and independent of employing formal carers or using informal carers.					
3	Care in kind for persons with disabilities	<p>Care in kind is provided to persons with disabilities through schemes that subsidize the cost of purchasing wheelchairs and a variety of technical equipment and assistive technology for care at home, Parking Card for priority parking, European Disability Card for specific benefits in the areas of transport, tourism and culture, Subsidization of the purchase of cars.</p> <p>Lending of technical equipment and wheelchairs for persons with disabilities.</p>	In kind benefit	<p>2023 beneficiaries: Car: 309 technical equipment: 1193 wheelchair: 478 parking card: 2935 Eu disability card: 1303</p> <p>Technical equipment lending: 130 Wheelchair lending: 200</p>	ongoing	national	DSID
4	<p>Health homecare (GHS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal doctors' home visits - Community Nursing and Mental Health Nursing 	<p>Personal Doctor's home visits to permanently bedridden beneficiaries for the provision of health care services. GHS covers up to six (6) home visits per year.</p> <p>Provide home services with the aim of helping people and their families to deal with problems arising after a sudden illness, relapse of chronic illness or disability.</p> <p>Provide a wide range of services including primary prevention and mental health promotion in cooperation</p>	Services	<p>2022(6 months):</p> <p>Personal doctors' home visits: 6879 beneficiaries, 1250 visits</p> <p>6/2024: 103 nurses of general nursing, 107 nurses of mental health</p>	Since 6/2022 ongoing	national	HIO

		<p>with psychiatrists, primary healthcare teams, government and non-government services, counselling and supporting the families and elderly people.</p> <p>Health Nursing is provided by the GHS after a doctor's referral. Patients are entitled to 12 visits within the GHS.</p>					
5	Services provided by specialized doctors and other health professionals (GHS)	Through the GHS, the beneficiaries are entitled to receive services provided by specialized doctors and other health professionals (e.g. physiotherapists, clinical psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists).	Services	6/2024: 1055 physiotherapists , 267 clinical psychologists, 292 speech pathologists, 32 occupational therapists	ongoing	national	HIO
6	Pharmaceutical and health care provided by pharmacists (GHS)	Through the GHS, the beneficiaries are entitled to receive pharmaceutical and health care provided by pharmacists.	Services	6/2024: 1141 pharmacies	ongoing	national	HIO
7	Palliative care to cancer patients (GHS)	<p>Provide palliative care to cancer patients.</p> <p>Although palliative care is not regulated, there is a special provision for it in the GHS.</p>	Services		ongoing	national	HIO
8	State Aid Scheme to NGOs/Local Authorities for social care programmes	State Aid Scheme, for the provision of services of general economic interest where NGOs and Local Authorities may receive state aid, for the development and functioning of quality social care programmes at local level. The State Aid Scheme is published annually and	State Aid	<p>2023: 27 programmes for Residential Care</p> <p>15 programmes for Home Care</p> <p>18 programmes for Day Care</p>	ongoing	national	SWS

		<p>NGOs and LAs submit their applications for the operation of social care programmes and after evaluation they receive state aid according to their needs, which covers part of their operational and other expenses.</p> <p>In addition, assistance, guidance and support is provided to the NGOs and the LAs receiving state aid through the district and local Social Welfare Services Offices.</p>		49 programmes for Day and Residential Care for Adults PWD			
9	New State Aid Scheme for community-based care centres for people in need of LTC (Cyprus RRP)	Provide State Aid to NGOs/Local Authorities for the establishment of new or the upgrade/renovation of existing LTC structures that provide 24h care services and community integration for people in need of LTC. The aim is to have 6 new structures for up to 10 persons, integrated into the community.	Infrastructure	6 new structures	Completed by 6/2026	Co-funded (RRF)	SWS
10	Residential Care for persons with disabilities	In 2017 the Council of Ministers approved the new Scheme for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Independent Living Support Programs in the framework of the Project "Creation of Independent Living Support Houses/Programs", which is co-financed by the European Social Fund. The outcomes of the implementation of the project are the provision of supported independent living to people with disabilities, following their own choice and request, in order to empower them by choosing where, with whom and how they want to live. This provision requires access	Services	12 houses, 7 personal programmes (around 86 beneficiaries)	Ongoing (Programming period 2021-2027)	Co-funded (ESF+)	DSID

		to a number of services among which the care services.					
11	State homes for elders and persons with disabilities	Provide residential care for elders and persons with disabilities, especially for persons with very limited means.	Services	10 state homes for the elderly and PWD	ongoing	national	SWS
12	Social Pension	Provide a retirement income to older people residing in Cyprus who are not entitled to any other pension. Most of the beneficiaries of this scheme are women who have been excluded from the labour market because of their care responsibilities and therefore have not accumulated the minimum social contributions required to qualify for a pension.	Pension	Dec 2022: 16.386 beneficiaries	ongoing	national	SID
13	Allowance for Low Income Pensioners	The allowance for Low Income Pensioners is granted in accordance with the provisions of the New Plan as approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers dated 30/11/2022 to households of pensioners with incomes below the income limit decided by the Council of Ministers, with at least one pensioner who receives a Social Insurance Fund pension and/or a Social Pension and/or an Occupational Pension Scheme pension applicable in Cyprus.	Cash benefit (related to pension)	around 26.000 beneficiaries	ongoing	national	WBAS
14	State (social) home care programme	Provide home care services to a small number of families that have cooperation with the SWS, within the framework of the programs for the provision of supportive and advisory services.	services	15 carers	ongoing	national	SWS

15	Acquisition through the Recovery and Resilience Plan of five houses to accommodate people with disabilities in programs to support their independent living	Assignment through an agreement from DSID to Cyprus Land Development Corporation of the construction and purchase of five houses which will be allocated for the housing needs of up to 25 people with mental disabilities or autism.	infrastructure	5 houses, up to 25 persons	2026	co-funded (RRF)	DSID
16	Design of a new Subsidy Scheme for persons in need of LTC (residential care)	Provide a more adequate subsidization and to a larger number of beneficiaries for the provision of residential care services. In parallel, this new Scheme will aim to improve the quality of the provided services.	legislative framework / cash benefit		2024-2025		WBAS
17	Deinstitutionalization and rehabilitation in the community of patients treated at the Athalassa Hospital in collaboration with the MoH, the SHSO and other public and private sector bodies	At Athalassa Hospital there are still chronic patients with chronic mental health problems who need deinstitutionalization and integration into the community in sheltered or semi-sheltered hospices, who have been assessed as being able to be deinstitutionalized but there is no family or community system to take them on.	services		2024-2028	national	SHSO
18	Online platform gathering all social care structures	Development of an online platform gathering information about all social care structures under the responsibility of the DMSW to facilitate access to information.	online platform		Completed by 9/2024	national	DMSW
19	Registration and inspection of social care services (home carers, Adult Centres, care homes)	SWS are by law responsible for the registration and supervision of Adult Centres and Homes for Elders and PWD. SWS are also responsible for the registration of home carers under the scope of the GMI law.	legislative framework	47 Adult Centres, 1000+ places 100 Homes,	ongoing	national	SWS

				7 small homes integrated in the community, around 3000 positions			
20	Neighbourhood social worker programme	The Programme contributes substantially to the development of a local support network, that directly identifies and assists key individuals and families in need of psycho-social support, people in need of long-term care, and in the designing of the necessary social intervention programmes in order to respond effectively to the social challenges of the community. The programme is implemented by the local authorities and SWS provide technical expertise to the Local Authorities.	services	2023: pilot programme (5 Municipalities, 3 Clusters of Communities) 2024: pan-Cypriot expansion	Programming period 2021-2027	Co-funded (ESF+)	Local Authorities, SWS
21	Modernization of the legislative framework of residential care (care units)	Improve provisions of the existing Law and introduce new provisions that promote respect for the human rights of persons residing in adult care units and prevent any negligence in their care.	legislative framework		2024-2028	national	SWS Law Commissioner
22	Legislative regulation for rehabilitation centres	Expansion of the provision of rehabilitation services based on legislative regulation for rehabilitation centres.	legislative framework		2024-2028	national	HIO MoH
23	Consultation and drafting of new legislation on social services and benefits for people with disabilities	Increase and expansion of social benefits to people with disabilities in combination with an increase in services provided in kind and disconnection of disability benefits from	legislative framework		2024-2025	national	DMSW

		the legislation of the Guaranteed Minimum Income.					
24	Legislative regulation of the Establishment and Licensing of Community Nursing and Community Midwifery Services	Introduction of an effective service provision framework for the out-of-hospital care of people in need of community nursing and community midwifery.	legislative framework		2024-2025	national	MoH

3. Remaining challenges and needs for EU support

3.1. Remaining challenges

The above-mentioned measures address various issues in relation to the Long Term Care sector and the Recommendation. Nevertheless, some issues, especially the ones requiring a more intense collaboration between the competent authorities, need to be further examined. This observation concerns especially the issues in relation to comprehensiveness between health and social care, as well as the workforce.

3.2. EU support

In the upcoming months of 2024, Cyprus will examine the possibility of submitting a TSI request in relation to the comprehensiveness of its LTC system.