

Report on the Implementation of the Council Recommendation on Access to Affordable High-Quality Long-Term Care

Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania

Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania

1. Context and baseline

1.1. Diagnosing gaps and remaining challenges

Recommendations identified in the EPSCO 20210614 (9144/21) report:

- A system of coordination and cooperation is required between the various quality systems for long-term care services, both existing and newly introduced;
- A coherent and integrated legal and governance framework is needed to clearly define the responsibilities of public authorities in the provision of long-term care services.

The report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development “Integrating Services for Older People in Lithuania”, published in 2022, identifies the following key conclusions:

1. Low and unequal access to long-term care services;
2. Improving the management of integrated long-term care;
3. Growing demand for care and insufficient supply;
4. Developing sustainable care financing;
5. Ensuring access to sufficiently trained nurses¹.

Key recommendations from the European Commission and the OECD for 2021-2030:

- To develop long-term care services, especially community-based services;
- To address the shortage of health workers, including territorial distribution;
- To support the reskilling, upskilling and retention of healthcare and long-term care workers;
- To ensure access to personal healthcare for special needs groups;
- To develop digital health solutions².

To develop outpatient nursing services and integrate them with social services to ensure

the need for long-term care in the community. To develop inpatient care, palliative care and palliative treatment services, increasing access to social services, developing and providing integrated home care during the transition period:

1. *Modernisation/adaptation of infrastructure –*

- the project implementation agreement for the provision of integrated support was signed on 09/12/2022 (project runs until Q4 2026);
- projects (57 in total) entered into CPVA on 31/03/2024 for equipping (long-term care) LTC mobile teams and upgrading day-care centres; (implementation until Q2 2025).

Remaining work:

- Regional progress measures “Ensuring implementation of long-term care services” agreed with the Ministry of Health in Q3 2024; (implementation of projects until Q3 2029);
- Regional progress measures “Reducing territorial disparities in the well-being of vulnerable groups” agreed with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in Q3 2024; (project implementation until Q3 2029);
- Description of the progress measure “Developing a system of support for the elderly” will be developed and adopted in Q3 2024.

2. *Upskilling/reskilling human resources –*

- Guidelines for the content of the qualification development programme for the fundamentals of long-term care services approved on 21/07/2023;
- Project implementation contract for the training of 1,000 LTC professionals signed on 28/02/2024 (project runs until 31/12/2024);
- Contract for the implementation of the project “Competence development space for social services workers” was signed on 02/04/2024 (the project runs until Q3 2029).

Remaining work:

- Description of the funding conditions for the professional qualification improvement project for nursing specialists (1,000) will be approved in Q3 2024 (project implementation until Q1 2027).

3. *Working tools for mobile services –*

The provision of equipment and vehicles to mobile teams is essentially the provision of equipment and tool kits and vehicles to existing teams of professionals providing outpatient care at home (ASPN) services.

4. *Infrastructure for care homes for the elderly³ –*

Modernisation of day-care centres providing long-term care services in district centres (palliative care day-care centres for adults and/or palliative

day-care centres for children). Infrastructure for palliative care and nursing services has been modernised to cater for people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. The infrastructure needed to provide palliative care services has also been modernised.

Funding is provided for the modernisation and expansion of the infrastructure of care homes for the elderly, and for the adaptation of the environment of care homes and community services for people with Alzheimer's disease, senile dementia, and people with disabilities.

The strategic work of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania "Establishment of a model for the provision of long-term care services" has been included in the Prime Minister's portfolio of strategic works/projects by the resolution of the consultation of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 March 2021. The strategic objective of the project is to satisfy the needs of the ageing population, to increase the availability of coordinated social and health care services to residents by creating and implementing a sustainable long-term care service delivery model.

Current situation. Description of the procedure for the provision of long-term care services, approved by Order No A1-492/V-836 of the Ministers of Health and Social Security and Labour of 21 July 2023 "On the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Provision of Long-Term Care Services and the Guidelines for the Content of the Qualification Development Programme for the Provision of the Basics of Long-Term Care Services", which defines the concept of long-term care, the basics of the provision of outpatient and inpatient long-term care services, the persons who are to be provided with long-term care services, the institutions authorised to provide LTC services, the specialists providing LTC services, the procedure for the organisation and provision of LTC services, and the sources of financing of LTC services.

A system of coordination and cooperation is required between the various quality systems for long-term care services, both existing and newly introduced

Expected benefits:

1. Effective management of public resources –

The proportion of patients receiving outpatient care services out of the total number of patients receiving outpatient and inpatient care services to change from 56% to 60% (Q4 2024) and 70% (Q1 2026);

The share of avoidable hospitalisations in active inpatient admissions (excluding day hospitals) to change from 14.6% to 12.6% (Q1 2026).

2. Quality assurance in long-term care –

The target for the proportion of long-term care recipients who rate the quality of the services they receive favourably – 80% (Q4 2029);

3. Access to long-term care services is ensured and the volume of informal long-term care services is reduced –

Persons receiving integrated support services (nursing care and social day care); target – 4,018 persons (Q4 2026);

Persons receiving long-term care services (for dementia and Alzheimer's disease); target – 6,000 persons (Q4 2029).

Key results achieved and targeted.

I. Development of LTC services (hereafter – the long-term care project) and modernisation of the infrastructure required for the LTC.

- the project implementation agreement for the provision of integrated support was signed on 09/12/2022 (project runs until Q4 2026);
- projects (57 in total) entered into CPVA on 31/03/2024 for equipping (long-term care) LTC mobile teams and upgrading day-care centres; (implementation until Q2 2025).

Ongoing:

- 1) Regional progress measures “Ensuring implementation of long-term care services” agreed with the Ministry of Health in Q3 2024; (implementation of projects until Q3 2029);
- 2) Regional progress measures “Reducing territorial disparities in the well-being of vulnerable groups” agreed with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in Q3 2024; (project implementation until Q3 2029);
- 3) Description of the progress measure “Developing a system of support for the elderly” will be developed and adopted in Q3 2024.

II. Digital solutions developed for the LTC administration

- Analysis of the needs of teams providing outpatient LTC at home was carried out on 30/06/2023
 - Mapping of care/nursing facilities was prepared on 30/05/2024; Ongoing:
- 1) Digital solutions ESPBI and SPIS for the common questionnaire for the identification of the need for LTC implemented in Q3 2024;
 - 2) Clarification of collaboration needs of teams providing LTC services and implementation of digital solutions in SPIS and/or ESPBI in Q3 2024;
 - 3) Other solutions required to optimise the work of LTC teams will be implemented in Q1 2025.

To create a coherent and integrated legal and governance framework to clearly define the responsibilities of public authorities in the provision of long-term care services.

Key results achieved and targeted.

I. Regulating the provision and organisation of LTC services

- 8 legal acts (Orders of the Ministers of Health and Social Security and Labour) were drafted and approved in Q4 2023;
- Minimum working time costs for social care workers approved on 20 June 2024.

Ongoing:

- 1) The description of the LTC procedure will be updated with the addition of an annex to the LTC model in Q3 2024;
- 2) The conditions for the provision and financing of temporary respite will be regulated in Q4 2024;
- 3) The procedure for identifying and allocating the need for social services will be revised in Q4 2024;
- 4) The procedure and price for the financing of general nursing care by the CHIF will be confirmed in Q4 2024.

Key challenges:

The implementation of the long-term care model has been delayed by the ambition to integrate care and social services for the elderly and people with disabilities at both outpatient and inpatient level. The intention was to fundamentally change the way such services are identified, organised, provided and financed, by defining them in a separate law. To create a separate long-term care fund to finance long-term care, with stable funding from additional charges, the CHIF, the state budget, and the municipal budget. However, this model was not compatible with the planned tax reform. Thus, other ways of implementing the Long-Term Care model were sought. Therefore, a coordinated model of care and social services for the elderly and persons with disabilities has been chosen to better respond to the needs of people and to achieve synergies within the available resources.

1.2. Stakeholder involvement

The following stakeholders are involved and taking action in the review of the National Long-Term Care Policy in relation to the recommendations on long-term care and the identification of national measures to address the challenges identified:

1. The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania – presentation of the objectives of the reform, provision of information and analytical materials, and invitations to discussions on reform implementation issues;
2. Government of the Republic of Lithuania and management of the Chancellery of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania
– provision of quality and timely information and documentation related to the implementation of the reform and involvement in project planning and implementation activities;
3. Service recipients – publicising the expected benefits and results of the reform through local government, associations,

- etc., involving organisations uniting or representing service users, people with disabilities and the elderly in the public consultation on the reform;
4. Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania – cooperation in planning and implementing the reform;
 5. Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania – cooperation in planning and implementation of the reform;
 6. Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania – involvement in reform implementation and sustainable financing;
 7. National Health Insurance Fund under the Ministry of Health – involvement in reform implementation activities;
 8. Municipal administrations – involving in planning of reform implementation. Organisation of meetings, presentation of the objectives and benefits of the reform, with emphasis on job creation opportunities, and the potential for financing investments in modernising service infrastructure;
 9. Personal health care facilities – presenting the objectives and opportunities for reform, with an emphasis on the need for nurses and nursing assistants, the potential for job retention and creation, and wage increases;
 10. Institutions providing social services (all forms of legal entities) – presentation of the objectives and possibilities of the reform, with emphasis on the need for social workers, the possibilities of preserving and creating new jobs, and the possibility of increasing salaries;
 11. Businesses involved in the provision of long-term care services – publicising the objectives of the reform, publicising and coordinating the implementation documents; engaging in discussions on the implementation of the reform;
 12. Non-governmental sector – publicising the objectives and benefits of the reform, with an emphasis on addressing the economic and social problems of society.
 13. Other potentially interested natural and legal persons.

2. Policy objectives and measures to be taken

2.1. Overall policy response

Measures to make Long-Term Care more integrated:

1. A new legislative framework defining LTC, the organisation and provision of LTC services and financing – a joint order signed by the Minister of Health and the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, which defines the concept of LTC, the grounds for LTC, the persons who receive LTC, the institutions authorised to provide LTC, the professionals providing LTC, the procedure for organising and providing LTC, and the sources of financing of LTC. Supplement with annex by 04/11/2024 to define the scope of the LTC model to be

implemented. Legislation on: requirements for long-term care services, assessment of the need for the services, funding arrangements, payment arrangements, etc. have been drafted;

2. To transition to integrated needs assessment;
3. To digitalise the assessment of the need for and provision of long-term care services to make reusable data available – digital solutions for a common questionnaire to identify the needs of the LTC and digital solutions to meet the collaboration needs of the LTC teams to be implemented by 30/09/2024; digital solutions to optimise the work of the LTC teams to be implemented by 31/03/2025;
4. To create a single benefit with different levels of care¹.

2.2. Detailed description of the measures

The concept of long-term care services, prepared by the Ministry of Health together with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, was submitted to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on 18 October 2019. The concept includes the integration and development of social services (e.g. social services provided at home and in institutions) and personal health services (outpatient home care and inpatient palliative care, palliative care) for people who need these services because of their health condition or age or disability⁴.

Description of the procedure for the provision of long-term care services, approved by Order No A1-492/V-836 of the Ministers of Health and Social Security and Labour of 21 July 2023 “On the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Provision of Long-Term Care Services and the Guidelines for the Content of the Qualification Development Programme for the Provision of the Basics of Long-Term Care Services”, which defines the concept of long-term care, the basics of the provision of outpatient and inpatient long-term care services, the persons who are to be provided with LTC services, the institutions authorised to provide LTC services, the specialists providing LTC services, the procedure for the organisation and provision of LTC services, and the sources of financing of LTC services.

1. EU investment to improve the availability and quality of LTC services; setting up LTC day care centres and equipping mobile teams with equipment and vehicles;
2. Training for long-term care professionals;
3. Modernisation of personal health care facilities providing LTC services for dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

Problem to be solved: An ageing population and the increasing care and social service needs of people who have lost their independence, which are expected to be met through the overall provision of integrated care and social services.

In summary, the integrated provision of complex nursing and social services is not being achieved for the following reasons:

- 1) insufficient legal preconditions for the integration of care and social services;
- 2) public policy on care and social services is formulated by different ministries and implemented by different institutions, which complicates the management, coordination and organisation of these services;
- 3) nursing and social services are funded from several different sources;
- 4) there is no uniform methodology for determining the need for nursing and social services, which undermines the comprehensive availability of nursing and social services. Different legal frameworks for nursing and social services.

Expected benefits from implementation of the following:

- 1) Increased access to outpatient services and declining demand for inpatient personal health care services;
- 2) Reduction in avoidable hospitalisations;
- 3) Changes in the number of nurses and nursing assistants to ensure the demand for the required professionals and therefore the availability and quality of care of the LTC;
- 4) Ensured access to long-term care services and the reduced volume of informal long-term care services.

The objectives of the measures envisaged to achieve the objective of the planned reform are the following: to establish a long-term care system, laying down the framework for the organisation and management of long-term care services, the conditions and procedures for the provision of long-term care services, the types of long-term care services and categories of beneficiaries, and the system of financing and payment for long-term care services.

It is proposed to address the care and social needs of an ageing population and people with disabilities by regulating the social relations of long-term care at the legislative level.

The planned reform includes the following key measures, including the preparation of the legal framework, the provision of the infrastructure and the necessary expertise:

1. Preparation of legislation governing the LTC system;
2. Improving existing infrastructure;
3. Developing an integrated health and social services information system;
4. Developing and implementing a programme for training, reskilling and upskilling long-term care professionals;
5. Preparation of legislation on the financing and payment of the LTC services.

3. Remaining challenges and needs for EU support

3.1. Remaining challenges

The implementation of the long-term care model to integrate care and social services for the elderly and people with disabilities at both outpatient and inpatient level poses challenges in the future as well, due to:

- sustainable financing of long-term care; There is a need to develop a financing mechanism for LTC that ensures sustainable financing of long-term care from different sources (personal payment, CHIF, state budget, municipal budget).

- ensuring the need for professionals to provide long-term care; Not only is it important to ensure the continuous training of long-term care professionals, but also to reskill and upskill them;

- digital solutions; given that the process involves two different sectors, IT specialists must be involved in all the planned processes in order to prepare the digitisation part as soon as possible;

- cooperation; in order to achieve effective and timely decision-making in the field of long-term care, it is important not only to have cooperation between the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Ministry of Health, but also the active involvement of municipalities and the non-governmental sector.

3.2. EU support.

Lithuania welcomes the European Commission's mutual learning seminars for the exchange of knowledge and good practice between Member States, the high-level initiatives and networking opportunities organised by the Commission, and supports maintaining the current intensity and frequency of these events. The exchange of good practice and experience between EU Member States is essential to achieve the highest possible level of long-term care services. Addressing the lack of statistical data is crucial, as there is a lack of comparable data on key aspects of long-term care. While most Member States face similar challenges related to an ageing population and increasing care needs, the specific challenges faced by different countries and the differences identified by national legislation need to be taken into account.

References

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