



# European Quality Framework for long-term care services

*Principles and guidelines for the wellbeing and dignity  
of older people in need of care and assistance*

**This is a summary of the EU Quality Framework for long-term care services developed by the WeDO project (available in EN, FR, DE, IT, SE, SL, CZ, FI, EL, NL). It is aimed at any stakeholder at all levels (EU, national, local, regional) who would like to improve the quality of life of older people in need of care and assistance and contribute to a more efficient long-term care system.**

'WeDO for the wellbeing and dignity of older people' is a European project (2010-2012) co-financed by the European Commission. It was led by a steering group composed of 18 partners from 12 European Union (EU) Member States interested in working together to improve the quality of life of older people in need of care and assistance. The project's aim was to set up a lasting and open European partnership of European, national and regional/local stakeholders committed to improving the quality of services for older people and to fight elder abuse. This covers care both in the home and community and in various long stay settings. The project ended with the launch of the European Quality Framework for long-term care services, which is inspired by the European voluntary Quality Framework for social services developed by the Social Protection Committee.

**More information on the WeDO project website: [www.wedo-partnership.eu](http://www.wedo-partnership.eu).**

## Objectives

It seeks to:

- Ensure a **common analysis and vision** on long-term care and raise awareness of the need to fight elder abuse;
- **Increase the active participation of older people themselves** in the definition of their needs and the services they require;
- Help **develop fair and sustainable solutions** by facilitating the exchange of good practices within a country and cross border;
- Promote **better coordination and exchange of information** between the different stakeholders to improve the quality and efficiency of the services;
- **Improve quality of care of the long-term care systems by including a good balance between efficiency, cost saving and quality improvement;**
- Through these actions, **improve the quality of life of older people** in need of care and assistance.

## WeDO promotes:

**A rights-based approach to care** as stated in the European Charter for the rights and responsibilities of older people in need of care and assistance, and the right to age in dignity until the end of life;

**Age-friendly environments and active ageing** as key concepts to drive the evolution of long-term care systems;

**An integrated response to care and assistance** as the best way to ensure that care delivery is optimised and adapted to the needs of the users and their carers;

**The crucial role of informal carers** and measures to improve the quality of long-term care, including support for informal carers, particularly recognizing that they need professional support and time for respite.



## Quality principles

### A quality service should be:

- **Respectful of human rights and dignity**, i.e. respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of older people, their families and carers as outlined in national, European and international human rights instruments.
- **Person-centred**, i.e. address in a timely and flexible manner the changing needs of each individual, fully respecting his/her personal integrity with the aim of improving their quality of life as well as of ensuring equal opportunities.
- **Preventive and rehabilitative**, i.e. seek to prevent deterioration in – and to restore as far as possible – the older person's health, wellbeing and capacity to live independently.
- **Available**, i.e. be part of a wide range of services so as to provide older people in need of care and assistance with an appropriate response to their needs as well as, when possible, with freedom of choice among services, at a location which is most beneficial to the older person and, where appropriate, to their families and carers.
- **Accessible**, i.e. be easy to access by all those who may require them. Information and impartial advice about the range of available services and providers should be easily accessible to older people themselves and to their families and informal carers.
- **Affordable**, i.e. be provided either free of charge or at a price which is affordable to the individual without unduly compromising their quality of life, dignity and freedom of choice (the concept of universal access).
- **Comprehensive**, i.e. be conceived and delivered in an integrated manner which reflects the multiple needs, capacities and preferences of the older person and, when appropriate, their families and carers, and which aims to improve their wellbeing.
- **Continuous**, i.e. be organised so as to ensure continuity of service delivery for as long as it is needed and, particularly when responding to long-term needs, according to a life-cycle approach that enables older persons to rely on a continuous, uninterrupted range of services, from early interventions, care and support, to palliative care.
- **Outcome-oriented and evidence based**, i.e. focus primarily on the benefits for the older users, i.e. oriented towards improvements in a person's health, wellbeing and independence, taking into account, when appropriate, the benefits for their families, informal carers and the community. These benefits should be based on the best available evidence of what leads to such improvements.
- **Transparent**, i.e. provide clear and comprehensive information and advice to users and potential users about the services they offer, their cost to the user, and how to access or cancel the service(s). Information should be reliable, updated and available not only upon request but also through publicly accessible communication tools. Service users should be informed well in time about any change that will affect the service they receive and be provided with information about alternative solutions if they so require.
- **Gender and culture sensitive**, i.e. pay due attention to gender and culture in care, i.e. to the specific needs of women and men and to cultural differences among both staff and care recipients.



## Areas of action

### A quality service should also contribute to:

- **Preventing and fighting elder abuse and neglect**, i.e. do its utmost to ensure that older people, their carers, family members and staff are free from abuse, harassment and neglect.
- **Empowering older people in need of care and creating opportunities for participation**, i.e. encourage the active involvement of the users, and, when appropriate, of their families or trusted persons and of their informal carers in the decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of services. The service provision should empower users to define their personal needs and to keep control of the care and assistance they receive.
- **Ensuring good working conditions and working environment and investing in human capital**, i.e. be provided by skilled and competent workers under decent salary and stable working conditions and according to a manageable workload. Workers' rights should be respected and confidentiality, professional ethics and professional autonomy protected.
- **Developing adequate physical infrastructure**, i.e. be provided within adequate physical infrastructures respecting health and safety regulation for users, workers and volunteers, accessibility standards following "Design for All" approaches as well as environmental and energy-saving requirements.
- **Developing a partnership approach**, i.e. be developed with the active involvement and cooperation of all stakeholders from both the public and the private sectors: local authorities, service users, their families and informal carers, users' organisations, service providers and their representative organisations, social partners and civil society organisations operating in the local community.
- **Developing a system of good governance**, i.e. operate on the basis of openness and transparency, respect for international, European, national, regional and local legislation, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability to service users and public authorities for organisational and financial performance and the quality of service delivery.
- **Developing adequate communication and awareness-raising**, i.e. contribute to ensuring better communication between all relevant actors as well as promoting a more positive image of older people in the society.

### In the longer version:

- The quality principles and areas of action are illustrated by **case examples**.
- **Recommendations** for policy makers, service providers, professional carers and older people's and informal carers' organisations and **examples of good practices** are included.
- A **methodology** is proposed to implement the quality framework **with a partnership and participatory approach**, illustrated by examples. It is based on four steps: planning, implementation, progress evaluation, continuous improvement.

The **WeDO website** is a useful tool which gives access to more examples of good practices and examples of quality tools.



This publication was co-financed by the European Commission. Sole responsibility lies with the author and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that maybe made of the information contained in the publication.

## Together, We can DO more!

**The implementation of the European Quality framework requires a partnership and participatory approach where all relevant stakeholders work together to deliver quality care. It is an invitation to build on what already exists to improve the LTC system, getting inspiration from each other.**

**Policy makers:** Create the conditions for implementing the Quality Framework, develop fair, sustainable and efficient long-term care systems and services; identify good practices and consult systematically with other stakeholders such as older people's organisations and carers' organisations.

**Service providers** (for different care settings: residential care homes, home care, community services for older people, etc.): Consult systematically other stakeholders such as older people's organisations and carers' organisations, assess your activities base your internal quality management system on the quality principles and areas of action, organise training programmes for your staff around the Quality Framework, look for good practices.

**Professional carers:** Use the Quality Framework as a basis to discuss quality care with your colleagues, managers and the older person in need of care and his/her informal carer as well as any other relevant stakeholder, assess the gaps and reflect together on solutions to overcome them.

**Older people's and informal carers' organisations:** Use the Quality Framework to raise awareness on the need to improve the quality of life of older people in need of care and assistance and their carers and fight elder abuse, to start/increase networking on this issue, and to communicate the needs and expectations of older people, professional and informal carers.



## WeDO Project partners

- AGE Platform Europe (coordinator)
- EDE (European Association for Directors and Providers of Long-Term Care Services for the Elderly)
- Austria: Austrian Red Cross
- Belgium: Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgian Ageing Studies)
- Czech Republic: Zivot 90
- Finland: National Institute for Health and Welfare and University of Helsinki Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education.
- France: National Foundation of Gerontology and UNCCAS
- Germany: Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Senioren-Organisationen (BAGSO), German Center of Gerontology (DZA) and ISIS
- Greece: 50Plus Hellas
- Ireland: Third Age
- Italy: Anziani e non solo, FIPAC
- Netherlands: ANBO
- Slovenia: MZU
- Sweden: Swedish Association of Senior Citizens (SPF)

**For more information and for the full version of the EU quality framework:**

email: [info@age-platform.eu](mailto:info@age-platform.eu)

Tel: +32 2 280 14 70

[www.wedo-partnership.eu](http://www.wedo-partnership.eu)