

European Union of Women

REPORT FROM FAMILY & SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
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Integration of Social Care and Health (preliminary)

This report is based largely on information from the British section.

"Every hour that passes, life expectancy in Britain extends a further 15 minutes. It is increasing about 2.5 years every decade and providing for extending old age is increasingly expensive" (Prospect Magazine UK)

This situation applies to Western Europe too: it is an individual and state problem. The cost of increasing longevity is a pressing concern. More people have to be supported in retirement. Medicine and hospital treatments have hugely improved but the quality of life deteriorates in old age very often. The tradition of families (now smaller) looking after their older dependants is breaking down - even in Mediterranean European countries. Greece and Turkey are experiencing this and taking steps much like Britain (integrating health and social care) - also in France. The local authorities are stating loudly that the present system is massively under funded and unable to cope with the pressures of this rapidly ageing population.

Up to the present, Health services have been separately funded from Care Services. However, as hospitals concentrate on acute cases and not convalescence, they discharge patients as quickly as possible; Geriatric wards are closing; there are fewer residential and care homes. It is thought preferable and better to keep older people in their homes for as long as possible with 'care packages' which include 'Careline' and 'Telecare' This costs the social care system more and more. Thus to integrate health and social care into one funding stream would seem fairer and be simpler to administer as well as easier for the users to understand. It should produce the best possible outcomes and hopefully provide a seamless care pathway.

This integration is taking place in different ways and stages both in Britain and Europe. It is 'work in progress' and details of how it is working are not known.

This report will be extended once it is know what Germany, Spain and Scandinavian countries are organising - also our Eastern European friends. We also look forward to working with the Health Commission on the progress of integration and learn their findings on dealing with the pressures of longevity in society."

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