

EUROPEAN CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OLDER PEOPLE IN NEED OF LONG TERM CARE

Newsletter

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2009

Why a European Strategy to combat Elder Abuse against Older Women (EUSTaCEA)?

by Anne-Sophie PARENT, AGE Director



implemented.

Our EUSTaCEA project aims at developing a European Strategy to combat elder abuse against older women which will include a European Charter and toolkit to be used as awareness raising tools by AGE members and partners to prevent abuse against older women and vulnerable older men, and to promote quality guidelines for eldercare services. Our project has evolved a lot since it started in December 2008. The first year of the project was devoted to the drafting of the European Charter of rights and responsibilities of older people in need of long-term care and assistance. The work has now started on the accompanying toolkit which will explain how the rights included in the Charter can be

Why a European Charter?

Elder abuse is a widespread phenomenon which affects a significant number of very old people, among whom a high percentage are older women. The purpose of our “European charter” and toolkit is to explain what elder abuse is, how it can be prevented and to provide guidance and recommendations on measures that have proved useful to tackle elder abuse, using examples of good practice across the European Union.

What will be the ‘European added value’ of the Charter?

With the entry into force of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, we feel that the European Union has a duty to tackle the problem of elder abuse to ensure that the growing number of very old and dependent elderly women and vulnerable older men are protected against elder abuse. With the opening of a single market of LTC services and free movement of care professionals and patients within the European Union, action becomes necessary at European level to set principles for eldercare across the EU. AGE members and partners will then use these instruments to lobby policy makers to achieve compulsory quality standards for LTC at European level.

At the end of our project we will present the outcome of our work to the new Commissioner for Justice,

Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Ms Viviane Reding, and hope to get her support for our call for European mandatory quality standards for elder care services.

Meanwhile I am very pleased to present you with the first edition of our EUSTaCEA newsletter which will provide you with regular updates on our project and interesting news on other initiatives aimed at fighting elder abuse. As we are now working on the toolkit, I encourage you to send us any good examples of initiatives developed to protect the rights of older people in need of long-term care and assistance. I hope that this newsletter will become a useful platform for the exchange of information on the fight against elder abuse.

Introduction to the EUSTaCEA Daphne project

Project background : the phenomenon of elder abuse

Elder abuse is a violation of an elderly individual's civil and human rights. Elder abuse is described, 'as a *single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.*' (World Health Organization definition). Elder abuse can take various forms: psychological (mental, emotional), physical (also medical) financial or material, sexual or discriminatory, or simply reflect intentional or unintentional neglect. Although the phenomenon has begun to receive increasing attention in recent years, **research into its causes, its prevalence, and means to tackle it remains scarce and diffuse.**

Any instance of elder abuse is an unacceptable violation of the most basic human rights and an infringement of Article 25 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which recognizes and respects the rights of older people to lead lives of dignity and independence, and to participate in social and cultural life.

The EUSTaCEA Daphne project : A European Strategy to combat elder abuse

The **EUSTaCEA** project – **European Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse** against Older Women, aims at building a **European Charter of rights and responsibilities of older people in need of long-term care and assistance** and a toolkit to explain the articles of the Charter, and provide some recommendations on measures that have proved useful to tackle elder abuse, using examples of good practice across the EU.

AGE – The European Older people's platform- leads the project with a **network of 11 partner organisations** in Netherlands (ANBO), Germany (BIVA), France (FNG), in Italy (FIPAC), Greece, Slovenia (Mestna zveza upokojencev Ljubljana), United Kingdom (NIACE), Sweden (SPF), Czech Republic (Zivot 90) and Belgium (Commune de Saint-Josse), and the European Organization E.D.E.

Reaching a European framework of quality standards on elder care

At the end of the project, the Charter and toolkit will be presented to EU and national policy makers. They will be disseminated across the EU and taken up by AGE members as awareness-raising tools that can be used to encourage the adoption of strong guidelines at EU level, as well as national and local strategies to prevent and tackle elder abuse. Convinced of the importance of high quality social services of general interest for the fulfilment of the EU values and objectives, **the European Commission is working on the development of common EU “voluntary quality guidelines” for social services including elder care.** We will encourage stakeholders to support the implementation of these guidelines, and develop ways to assist victims, setting up reporting mechanisms to the relevant authorities for instance.

See a **discussion paper** (pdf format) of the **European Commission** on elder abuse on its [website](#).

More information on the project is [available on AGE website](#).

Project news

FNG Workshop – 15th October 2009 – Paris

On 15 October, the National Foundation of Gerontology (FNG), the French partner of the EUSTaCEA project, organized a workshop in Paris on the subject **“Towards a European Charter of the rights of older people” in need of long-term care and assistance?”**

This meeting was an opportunity to discuss the first draft of the Charter, what it could be used for and which impact it could have. It was also a good opportunity to collect feedback from French participants and some key points that will have to be discussed in the next meetings. The next step is now the **elaboration of the toolkit** that aims at explaining each article of the charter and offering some good practices, as well as providing recommendations.

(For more information on the FNG, see their web site: www.fng.fr.)



The next steering group meeting will be held on the 17th and 18th of December in Brussels. It will be the opportunity for all the partners to introduce their suggestions in the elaboration of the toolkit.

Call for good practices on respect of people’s dignity and integrity in long-term care and assistance

We are looking for good practices to illustrate our toolkit. This call looks specifically for good examples of actions/policies aiming at improving the **respect of dignity, physical and mental integrity, freedom and security** of older people in need of long-term care and assistance. Of course, if you have any other good example in a relevant field, please send it to AGE at coordinator.daphne@age-platform.org. Don’t hesitate to consult your networks to gather input!

Other European projects and initiatives

Beginning of a new Daphne project on elder abuse : The EuROPEAN project

The **European Reference framework Online for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect (EuROPEAN)** project will start at the beginning of December and is coordinated by ANBO. It gathers 10 partners from Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, Austria, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Czech Republic and Netherlands. It will contribute to the construction of a framework of good practices in policy approaches against Elder Abuse, by developing a background and position paper, a research on the national background on elder abuse and on national good practices in policy approaches and frameworks to prevent elder abuse, and will publish a report on it.

What’s going on in European countries?

France : Government action plan on Alzheimer disease : free training sessions for family carers

On 24 November Nora Berra, the French Secretary of State in charge of older people, Laurent Vachey, Director of the national solidarity fund for autonomy and Arlette Meyrieux, President of France Alzheimer association,

signed a partnership convention on the organization of free trainings for family carers of people suffering from Alzheimer disease. This collaboration participates to the Alzheimer Action plan 2008-2012 and to the law called 'hospital, patients, health and territory'. The objective is to train 4000 family carers with 400 training sessions. More information available (in French) on: <http://www.travail-solidarite.gouv.fr/actualite-presse/dossiers-presse/plan-alzheimer-deux-jours-formation-pour-aidants-familiaux.html>.

France : The hotline 3977 to denounce elder abuse situations overloaded by phone calls

Since its creation in February 2008, 15 months ago, the 3977 received more than 63'000 phone calls, equivalent to 170 by working day. The awareness of people on elder abuse is increasing, so the number of phone calls. Beyond the calls, 1 over 5 concerned administrative difficulties of family conflict, 4 over 5 were elder abuse. Psychological abuse concerns the majority of the abuse, followed by 16% of neglect, 13% of financial abuse, and 13 % of physical abuse.

More information on the [web site of 'la maison de l'autonomie'](#) (only in French).

UK : Anti-psychotic drugs 'wrongly prescribed to thousands'

Hundreds of thousands of demented patients are being wrongly prescribed powerful 'chemical cosh' drugs, with an estimated 1800 dying every year as a result, a report said. Just one in five of those given the medicines in care homes and hospitals derive any benefit from them, it said. Around 180.000 people with dementia are thought to be on the medicines with up to 150,000 of those receiving them unnecessarily, the report adds. Care services Minister Phil Hope promised an 'urgent action plan' to crack down on overprescribing.

From an article of the Times, November 13, 2009. Similar article on the Times' web site:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/health/article6914003.ece.

The report is available here :

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_108303.

... and in the rest of the world ?

Focus on ... Mauritius: Ageing With Dignity, Respect And Smile (November 13, 2009)

Here is good news for old persons living in Mauritius. As the fertility rate drops and medical care improves, older Mauritians are living longer and better. As a result, **the State is insuring the rights and comfort of its older citizens, giving them a sense of security for their future.** The Minister of Social Security views older persons not as a burden but rather as people who deserve respect. The State adopted legislation in July 2005 on elder rights. The government sees these rights as including free transportation, old-age pensions and "The Protection of the Elderly Persons Act," which protects elderly persons from verbal, psychological, physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse. In addition, the State set up hotlines to report any form of abuse and formed leagues to bring elderly persons into politics, leisure activities and sports. More information is available on [Global Action on Ageing web site](#).

(From GAA newsletter 23-25th nov 2009)

United Nations : Follow-up of the Second World assembly on Ageing (Oct. 22, 2009)

After many debates, the Third Committee adopted its resolution A/C.3/64/L.6 on aging. In it, Member States

request the Secretary-General to “submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, [...], a comprehensive report on the current status of the social situation, wellbeing, development and rights of older persons at the national and regional levels.” Committee members re-affirmed the importance of the UN, its Regional Commissions, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations in assuring the rights of older persons. On July 6, 2009, the Secretary General’s Report, a follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, was released. It notes that questions related to promoting, protecting and ensuring **the rights of older persons have come more to the center of national and international attention**. Report available in English, French, Chinese and Spanish at: <http://www.globalaging.org/agingwatch/GA/SGreport64.pdf>.

(From [Global Action on Ageing web site](#))

Further information

See on AGE web site, section Elder abuse (in English only) at :

- http://www.age-platform.org/EN/article.php3?id_article=800
- http://www.age-platform.org/EN/article.php3?id_article=738.

Or contact :

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