

Briefing Note

On the Council conclusions on Enhancing Community-Based Support and Care for Independent Living

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In December 2017, the Council of the European Union issued conclusions on *Enhancing Community-Based Support and Care for Independent Living*.

<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15563-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

The Conclusions build on recent discussions around community-based care at European level. It is an important policy document to orientate reforms in this field in the coming years across the European Union.

ISSUE

The Conclusions name objectives and general principles regarding the development towards community-based care and set out recommendations for the European Commission, the Member States and the Social Protection Committee (SPC).

BACKGROUND

The Council of the European Union conclusions are adopted during Council meetings, which bring together **representatives from national governments, usually the relevant ministers**. They are used to identify specific issues of concern for the EU and outline actions to take or goals to reach. The Conclusions were a result of the cooperation between the [European Expert Group on Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care](#) and the [Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU](#).

KEY CONCLUSIONS

The Conclusions emphasize that **“the European Union and its Member States have made a commitment to protect the rights of vulnerable people and to enhance independent living and community involvement”**, also acknowledging the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified by the EU and the Member States.

The Conclusions stress that **“the choice of care setting should be an autonomous decision of the individual that ought to be respected”** and that a change in mind-set is needed to **“secure wider recognition of the principle that everyone has the right to live independently within their community, to play an active part in society and to take part in decisions concerning their lives.”**

The Council highlights the role of informal caregivers. By taking gender dimensions into consideration, it states that **“as a substantial part of care is provided by informal family carers, primarily women, it is important to ensure wider recognition of unpaid care work”**.

It also highlights the importance of **social and technological innovation** and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) as important means for the transition from institutional to community-based care are also highlighted.

The Council invites the Commission to **promote discussion, steer in-depth reflection and continue to enhance the exchange of evidence-based and innovative solutions, promising practices and expertise between Member States.**

The Council invites the Member States to **“develop an independent living approach in all care settings and accelerate the transition from institutional to community-based care”**, involving the persons concerned in the decisions-making process. **It also emphasizes the importance of retraining and upskilling for specialists working in residential care institutions.**

NEXT STEPS

The Council Conclusions are not hard law, but they invite different stakeholders to actively engage at different levels to enhance community based support and care with the aim to enable independent living. The Conclusions should guide the further development of laws, policies and practice in the EU.