



## AMASE POLICY BRIEF DECEMBER 2023

# Measures to promote the social inclusion of older vulnerable persons in the field of Long-Term Care in Romania

### Summary

The Romanian government approved in December 2022 the *National Strategy on Long-Term Care and Active Ageing for 2023–2030*. This represents an important step in reforming the system.

- Despite important changes in the past ten years, the Long-term Care (LTC) system is presently struggling to respond to growing demand for LTC services under conditions of severe budgetary and human resources constraints.
- Methodological coordination and funding at the national level must support local efforts that are essential for the development of the LTC system.
- Promoting the availability and quality of LTC services that are integrated, people-centred and properly managed is highly needed.

### Key findings

The main challenges of the LTC system in Romania is the underdevelopment and financially unsustainable public

social service system, especially of the community-based and homecare services, in terms of both coverage and financing level. The lack of systematic employment-related, professional, in-kind or monetary support for formal and informal carers represent also important issues (European Commission, 2021). Moreover, the fact that the country already sees a shortage of healthcare personnel puts the healthcare system under pressure and the financial sustainability of the system into question.

In Romania, despite the long-term measures contained in national legislation, long-term care (health) expenditure as a percentage of GDP increased from 0.29 in 2015 to only 0.33 in 2021 according to Eurostat/SHA data. In term of long-term care (social) Romania reduced its expenditure from 0.05% in 2015 to 0.03% of GDP in 2021 (Eurostat, 2023). Moreover, home-based long-term care (health) expenditure as a percentage of GDP indicates a low interest in financing this field, despite the high needs.

In terms of accessibility and availability of services, the indicator long-term care beds per 100,000 inhabitant indicates lower values in Romania in comparison to other European countries. The COVID-19 crisis opened significant opportunities for the improvement of the LTC sector, due to both an increase in public support for addressing the issues which became visible during this period and to the return of a significant, trained and/or

experience, workforce from abroad. The insufficient workforce to meet the demand for formal care for older people in Romania represents a big challenge to developing LTC services. Rural areas, where more than half of older population live, are characterized by an insufficient development of social services and are more affected by the lack of services in comparison to urban areas.

## Approach & Methods

Partners from Norway and Romania gathered a large amount of information by involving relevant stakeholders, experts and representatives of older persons over the past three years of research activities and policy analyses (Ghența et al., 2022). Research encompassed an overview of long-term care systems regarding governance, financing and organizing, types of services available, accessibility and eligibility, as well as the identification of best practices in Norway in the field of long-term care systems promoting social inclusion for older vulnerable groups. Best practices were assessed in terms of their potential transferability to the Romanian context with the purpose of informing a set of policy measures aimed at tackling social exclusion of older vulnerable groups. The SWOT analysis of best practices

from Norwegian LTC system was carried out by different researchers at the National Scientific Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection (INCSMPS) and differences in their evaluations were resolved through a consensus session regarding the classification in one of the three transferability assessment classes: low, medium, and high. All best practices were maintained for the transferability evaluation process with external experts, within a Policy Delphi methodology with two rounds. Selected best practices for LTC domain reached consensus among Romanian stakeholders, under certain conditions. A set of policy measures for the Romanian LTC system were defined and validated with Romanian stakeholders during a workshop organized in June 2023.

**Table. Best practices with potential for transfer**

Name of the best practice	Goals	Category
Care allowance	Ensure that people who need help in daily life can receive it from relatives or other close relatives.	social insurance
Housing allowance (bostøtte)	Provide decent housing to older persons with low incomes and high living expenses.	social insurance
Visiting friend (Norwegian: "Besøksvenn") – as part of Red Cross Norway's visiting service	Prevent and alleviate loneliness and exclusion among people of all ages through regular one-on-one visits, as well as visits to institutions.	programme
Pink buses (Rosa busser)	Improve the mobility of older people.	programme
Age-friendly flats (Omsorg+): The Pastor Fangensvei 22 Seniorhus	Promote active and healthy aging in an inclusive and accessible local environment through citizen involvement, voluntary efforts and activities across generations that help reduce the risk of illness and disabilities.	social services

## Recommendations for national policy makers

### Introducing a care allowance from relatives for the dependent older persons

- Sharing of funding sources between the state budget and the budget of local authorities.
- Methodological coordination and funding at the national level must support local efforts that are essential for the development of the LTC system.
- The need to have a type of organization, minimum training and continuous training of informal caregivers.

### Introducing housing allowance for older persons

- The measure must target financially vulnerable older people (using income testing assessment to identify the most vulnerable older persons).
- It is necessary to revise the legal provisions in the field in order to define financing mechanisms for implementation of the measure.
- Currently, Romanian social assistance law provides services for rehabilitation and adaptation of the living environment, small improvements, repairs, but the financing mechanisms are not defined.

### Introduction of visiting friend programs for older dependent persons

- The allocation of budget funds from various sources and ensuring the sustainability of the implementation of the measure.
- The cooperation of stakeholders is very important, the support of territorial administrative units is crucial.
- The involvement of volunteers from NGOs is important in the context of the shortage of human resources in the system.

### Implementation of the minibus program for the older persons

- The development of participatory budgeting projects regarding the purchase and adaptation of buses/minibuses for the transport of disabled people or the older peoples with mobility issues and who cannot use the public transport system.
- Promoting examples of good practice (collaborations between local authorities and public transport authorities, the implementation procedure: how to request the respective service, where the request is submitted, who can benefit from this facility, etc.).

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## References

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