

MHPSS Evidence Snapshot

Long-term Care of Older Persons and Persons With Disabilities in the Western Balkans

The aim of this study is to obtain information that will enable the formulation of recommendations and measures for public policies to:

- a) increase the capacities of service providers and civil society organisations, and
- b) increase financial contributions to ensure better access to long-term care services for older persons and people with disabilities under normal circumstances, and especially in case of emergencies.

In addition, this study provides a comparative overview of the condition of long-term care in the Western Balkans.



Photo credit: Red Cross of Serbia

Background

This study was developed as part of a three-year initiative in the Western Balkans region entitled “Strengthening the resilience of older people and people with disabilities during COVID-19 and future disasters”, coordinated by the Red Cross of Serbia and supported by the European Union, the Austrian Development Agency and the Austrian Red Cross. The project connects civil society partners from Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia and Kosovo*, as well as large civil society networks representing older persons and persons with disabilities at the EU level. The research component of the project includes individual national studies and one regional study with recommendations on access to long-term care services.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

How the research was conducted

Desk Analysis

Quantitative research conducted in each project location with a sample of 650 older and persons with disabilities in need of long-term care (total sample of 3,900 people across all locations)

Qualitative research with in-depth interviews conducted with long-term care providers and representatives of relevant institutions in charge of formulating policies on long-term care, as well as beneficiaries of long-term care services.

Key findings

Across the Western Balkans only a small proportion of citizens with functional difficulties rely exclusively on professional support.

In the Western Balkans, support in performing activities of daily living is predominantly provided by household members.

Informal care is not the focus of public policies in the Western Balkans.

Financial allowances for informal caregivers are established only for parents or guardians who care for children with functional difficulties.

Implications for humanitarian practitioners and policymakers

The research shows that the capacities of systems of healthcare and social protection need to be strengthened, and the long-term care services within these two systems integrated and coordinated at all levels.

The competencies of professional carers should be systematically increased and aligned with the concept of integrated care.

Informal caregivers need support including education, more flexible access to the labour market as well as psychosocial support.

Recommendations for future research

As the older population is the most diverse demographic group, and their needs for long-term care change over time, there is a need for much more thorough and systematic collection of data related to their needs and preferences.

It is also necessary to disaggregate data by gender and by age, separating the data into five year cohorts for best results.

About the study team

The research study was implemented by
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Keywords

Examples: older persons; persons with disabilities; long-term care;

Articles and further reading

The full text of the study is available here:

<https://www.redcross.org.rs/media/9019/long-term-care-of-older-persons-and-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-western-balkans.pdf>

A summary of the study is available here:

<https://www.redcross.org.rs/media/9018/long-term-care-of-older-persons-and-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-western-balkans-summary.pdf>