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**CONFERENCE „DEMENTIA CARE AND POLICIES OF EXTENDED DANUBE REGION“**  
In organization: **Alzheimer Association A&R - Alzheimer BiH**

**INTRODUCTION**

The conference "Dementia Care and Policies of the extended Danube Region" - held as a virtual event on August 31 and September 1, 2020 - brought together eminent experts from renowned institutions across almost the entire Danube region. Conference had 34 lecturers in the 11 sessions.

The basic context within which the conference was held concerns the demographic changes taking place within all societies of the Region and the new challenges that these demographic dynamics present to them. Among the causes of demographic change in the societies of the western part of this region, declining birth rates, low fertility rate and increasing life expectancy feature prominently.

These factors are accompanied by the uncontrolled emigration of young people and professionals that is characteristic of the lower eastern part of the Region.

These causes affect the aging of the population and the change in the percentage of the population of the group 15-55 versus 65+ in total population, which creates completely new challenges for all societies that are currently more adapted to the needs of the group 15-55 years. Outdated stereotypes and misperceptions about older people lead to a poor understanding of their needs. The challenge is further compounded by the diversification of capacities and abilities among the older adult population, which influences how different people's needs can best be met. It is evident that these factors contribute to: limited access to medical care and social services; an often unaddressed right to diagnosis and adequate therapy; neglect of cognitive impairment as a cause of loss or decline of ability and capacity; discrimination based on age, illness or condition; restrictions on or deprivation of the right to work; slow or inconsequential development of services for this population; lack of understanding or acceptance of housing needs or adaptations for those aged 65+ years; social and other exclusion from social interactions; and restrictions to the right of people with dementia to move.

Listed factors have an impact on the right of older people to a dignified life and their equality in society.

**CONFERENCE ACHIEVEMENTS**

The presented topics, created on the basis of scientific research work of lecturers and their teams within renowned institutions and financed by public funds implemented throughout the wider Danube region, confirm the above facts and indicate the following:

1. Discrimination with regard to respect of human rights:

- Neglect of the needs of older adults and people living with dementia including: dignified aging, adapted health care system,
- Discrimination of rights based on the condition of a person caused by non-communicable diseases in persons 65+ in relation toward people whose condition caused by somatic or communicable diseases including discrimination in relation to other groups e.g. children, participants in a various wars and their families, etc.,
- Discrimination and deprivation of the right to work of retired persons with sufficient capacity and with a expressed will to work, and inclusion in society more broadly



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Alzheimer Europe

Mediterranean Alzheimer Alliance

## 2. Outdated and misaligned legislation

- Legislation with discriminatory elements or insufficient consideration towards persons 65+ and people living with dementia which refers to: health and social solutions adapted to the 65+ population, behavior and activities in case of pandemics / epidemics,
- Inadequate legislation and protection toward older adults and people living with dementia regarding architectural and urban planning: frameworks and support for people living with dementia and people 65+ in meeting housing and other needs in urban and non-urban areas in terms of adapted living and housing environments and their contents, design and urban solutions of outdoor and indoor spaces adapted to people with cognitive impairments, adequate solutions of public transport and traffic,
- regulations on public order and peace, etc.,

## 3. Health care systems not aligned to the needs of people living with dementia and older adults:

- Inconsistent and incompletely implemented protocols in determining cognitive impairment and diagnosing dementia, leading to inadequate therapies, more rapid deterioration of the condition, discontinuation of treatment and inefficient use of effective medicines
- Insufficient post-diagnostic support for people affected by dementia ,
- Insufficiently coordinated or absent system of palliative care (often targeting one or certain groups and not all those who need it),
- Absent or insufficiently developed programs and strategies for prevention of dementia and related diseases or underlying risk factors,

## 4. Social neglect:

- Insufficiently developed social policies and under-funded social services aimed at ameliorating the disease course and promoting social inclusion of older adults including those living with dementia,
- Social exclusion of older adults from most social interaction, e.g. cultural, civic, religious
- Insufficient financial support for the development of new services and products aimed toward older adults or people living with dementia through social entrepreneurship programs such as: Alzheimer's cafe, Supportive programs on daily basis for respite of caregivers, mental health centres for older adults etc.,
- Insufficiently developed programs focused on the needs of assimilated migrants.

## 5. Lack or insufficient support to caregivers

- Insufficient education of caregivers that leads to poor, insufficient service and failure to meet the needs of people who need the service,
- Insufficient scope of care due to limited resources of the affected person due to non-recognition of the status of informal carer, which results in non-fulfilment of his/her rights, obligations and financial supports by the welfare system,

## 6. National Strategies without actions

- Lack or non-implementation of National Strategies / Plans dedicated to solutions related to: combating dementia and other cognitive impairments, aging or healthy aging.
- Insufficient, partial or non-existent budgets for implementing adopted national strategies, thereby jeopardizing successful realization of strategic objectives and sustained improvements

## STATEMENT OF EXPERTS

The presentations of Conference "Dementia Care and Policies of extended Danube Region" demonstrate and confirm the existence of the problems described above in the societies of the Danube Region extended to Albania, Greece, Northern Macedonia and Turkey.

This fact indicates necessity for a more active approach of all policy makers, experts and NGOs at the national level in order to:

- adopt measures whose implementation would change the status of people living with dementia and the total population 65+,
- initiate and support public campaigns to raise awareness of the need to focus to the questions of people living with dementia and people 65+ and
- support the creation and implementation of dementia / age friendly societies.

In addition to acting at the national level, it is necessary to initiate national dialog country by country and coordinate between countries regarding development of joint strategies:

- Measures should include the passing of policies, laws, regulations, recommendations and the establishment of frameworks for comprehensive activities that need to be carried out in each of the societies individually in order to address the above problems and make the system more accessible.
- Public awareness campaigns should help: to understand the needs of people living with dementia and people 65+ and the measures that need to be taken to make the system more accessible to meet those needs, the necessity for their inclusion into society, developing products and services for these people, and education and developing of empathy by the public towards people living with dementia and people 65+.

In that sense, we support:

- WHO's Global Action Plan on the Public Health Response to Dementia 2017-2025 identifies seven action areas required to address the needs and improve the lives of people living with dementia. We note that this document in 2018 was supported by the adopted Sarajevo Statement on Dementia in the Western Balkans Region at a closed meeting of representatives of relevant Ministries, experts and NGO members from the Western Balkans and that this Statement represents a continuity of our endeavour.
- WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Aging and Health which identifies all the above problems and offers solutions through the implementation of 5 strategic goals:

1. Establishing and fostering the philosophy "Healthy Aging"
2. Creating a dementia / age friendly society
3. Aligning the health system to the needs of people living with dementia and people 65+
4. Developing system for providing long-term care - at home, in the community and in institutions
5. Monitoring the implementation of activities, encouraging research and establishing a system for measuring the adjustment of society.

We further note that in front of us lies the decade of Healthy aging 2020- 2030 and that this provides a further framework and vision for faster action.

We believe that this document expresses and justifies our research and enables the development of activities that will improve the status and rights people living with dementia and people 65+ in our societies and improve interethnic cooperation in order to coordinate activities and developing joint policies and programmes.



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At the same time, with this Statement of Experts, we ask European and other funding bodies to get involved and support projects that promote these activities and support these values.

I agree with this text and I am signing it! Please, sign every page at the bottom of right side, scan and send to us by e-mail