

Greece

Long-term Care

18 May 2011

Key Facts

- Approximately 18.7% of the Greek population is aged over 65 (OECD average 15%) with 4.3% of the population over 80 (OECD average 4%) (OECD Health Data, 2010)
- In 2002, a nationwide study showed that 18.2% of the population face a health problem associated with some kind of disability, more than half of which involves over 65-year old people (ESYE-National Statistical Service of Greece).

Background

The Greek system of long-term care is mixed, as it includes the direct provision of social services by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity and the provision of care through social insurance funds. Typically, long-term care services for the elderly are provided by the state, by private non-profitable organizations and by private profitable organizations. Moreover, Greece has a strong tradition of family responsibility, such that family members usually provide care to the elderly or disabled persons in the family.

Benefits and Eligibility Criteria

In Greece, the public system provides in-kind long-term care benefits (services) in institutions, but there are limited formal home care arrangements. In theory, any old person has access to long-term care services in institutions, whether s/he is insured or uninsured by the social health insurance system.

There are no institutional discriminations or access restrictions, as long as old people are legal residents of the country. In practice, however, there are some deviations from this universal model, mostly due to the uneven concentration of providers across geographic areas, and also due to a shortage of special institutions (e.g. Rehabilitation centres). In these cases, the family network satisfies to a large extent the needs of the elderly.

The social security funds pay for long term care services as well as for specific medical charges for the treatment and rehabilitation of adults and children with either impaired physical mobility or mental deficiency problems. Medicines for chronic disease, including Alzheimer, are also provided free of charge by the dispensaries of public hospitals.

Social security funds also provide cash benefits. The non-residential care benefit is granted to affiliates (working or retired) and their dependants, who suffer from certain illnesses resulting in a level of invalidity of at least 67%. The monthly amount granted to the beneficiaries is 20 times the daily wage of an unskilled worker. A second benefit, the total invalidity benefit is granted to pensioners suffering from certain illnesses resulting in a level of invalidity of at least 80%. The amount granted to the beneficiaries corresponds to 50% of the invalidity pension. Among old age pensioners, only blind beneficiaries may be entitled to this benefit.

Finally, a housing allowance is paid to the uninsured and financially weak elderly aged over 65 years old, as well as to older couples who are uninsured and lack a house.

Provision of care

Care for the elderly in Greece is provided through the Elderly Care Units, which can be non-profit (e.g., those operated by charitable associations, the Orthodox Church or the local authorities) as well as for profit. The decisions to establish and operate a Unit are issued by the Directorate of Social Welfare of each Prefecture. The Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity also provides some beds for the indigent elderly where beds in state institutions are insufficient. The cost of these beds is covered by the national budget. Care is also provided through Elderly Day Care Centres (KIFI) in urban and suburban areas. They provide help to older people who are not self-sufficient or do not have informal family carers to attend to their

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needs. KIFI are established and operated by municipal enterprises, business associations of local authorities and also by private non-profitable entities.

Moreover, the Open Protection Centres of the Elderly (KAPI) provide social support and entertainment in the community to people over 60 years old. They provide all forms of organized recreation, medical care, physiotherapy treatment, occupational therapy, and all kinds of material and moral services to the elderly.

In addition, the "Aid at Domicile" provides nursing care and domestic assistance to older people who live alone and cannot take care of themselves. They are also aimed at the disabled people who face situations of isolation, exclusion or family crisis. Its goal is to support and care for the elderly in their home and to enhance their quality of life. It is implemented under the responsibility of Local Authorities, primarily in remote mountainous and island areas.

Funding

The LTC funding system is mixed, including funds from the national budget, social security and private payments. The extent of financial coverage relative to total LTC cost differs depending on whether the care is free for the user or restricted, as well as on the nature of the provider (i.e. public, private non-profitable, private profitable).

In particular, the housing allowances for the elderly, as well as the supporting programmes for the disabled, have been funded from the national budget since 2005. The allowances' adjustment is not dependent on a particular index, but on the discretion of the Ministers of Economy and Health & Social Solidarity, who decide the adjustment rate, based on purely political criteria.

Caregivers

According to a survey conducted during the first quarter of 2009 by the National Statistical Service of Greece, 229,400 people are employed in the sector of health and social care. However, the number of those occupied specifically in the long-term care sector has not been recorded. Similarly, there are no estimates of the number of informal caregivers, although informal care giving arrangements are the default system in Greece, where the family often substitutes the state in providing care.

References

OECD 2009-2010 Questionnaire on Long-Term Care Workforce and Financing

OECD (2010), *OECD Health Data 2010*, Paris.

OECD Social and Labour Demographics Database 2010

ESYE-National Statistical Service of Greece (2010), accessed from <http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE>.