



Phare 1999

Country

fYR Macedonia

Implementation period

2003-2004

Funding (€)

€25,000

Results

Training of carers to provide home assistance to around 80 elderly people.

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Help around the home

Social assistance for the elderly in their own homes

Elderly people who need help to look after themselves – with cooking or personal hygiene for example – have a much better quality of life if they are able to stay in their own homes, rather than move into an institution. But for those without younger family members on whom they can rely on for assistance, there are often no alternatives.

A pilot project in the city of Skopje, funded by the European Union, seeks to establish services for elderly people without relatives able to care for them, who would otherwise face moving into institutional accommodation, with subsequent loss of self-esteem and reduced quality of life. This pilot project fulfils a policy aim of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to ‘deinstitutionalise’ care services where appropriate.

By providing basic medical care, as well as so-called ‘soft’ care services – such as cleaning, shopping, food preparation and bathing/personal hygiene – in the home, the project has enabled a pilot group of elderly people to feel more involved in society than they otherwise would have.

Moreover, since the carers trained by the project are themselves – as single parents – in a difficult situation for finding employment, they too are better integrated in society. In particular, through gaining employment they are better able to support themselves and their children financially, but they also gain in self-confidence and self-esteem, just as those helped do too.

Meeting a need

The project’s first phase was to study the needs of the elderly people within the target group, i.e. those without relatives able to care for them. The feasibility study looked at the types of services needed and at how they might be provided.



At the same stage, the project also worked to train the carers in the specific home-based services required. Some of the single mothers selected by the project as carers already had professional training and experience in nursing, but their experience was within institutions. The project's goal therefore was to help them adapt their existing skills to the specific requirements of care within the home.

Other carers taken on had no previous experience in this area, but were trained to provide 'soft' care services. The training provided by the project culminated in the award of a certificate, documenting the 18 carers' newly acquired skills in homecare.

Answering the call

With a team of carers trained, and the care services defined, the project's second phase was to go out and help elderly people within Skopje's central district. Some 88 elderly residents were identified by the project, and have received help from the project team to meet their daily needs.

The project leader stresses that the elderly people receiving the project team's assistance are only provided with those services for which they have specifically asked, and on a frequency which suits them.

Going further

The evaluation of the pilot project is expected to demonstrate that the provision of homecare services to the elderly is indeed a viable and worthwhile approach. The project team's hope is that their model will be implemented throughout FYR Macedonia in the future.