

Families of persons with disabilities and the EU budget

Update and opportunities for joint advocacy to unblock EU funding for family carers

EU context

The European Union has a 7-year budget. We are currently at the end of the current 7-year budget 2014-2020 and the negotiations are in progress for the next budget 2021-2027. The European Commission has made legislative proposals, and now the European Parliament and Council of the EU (your national governments) need to amend and agree on a final text.

This MFF negotiations represent an opportunity and political momentum to raise the visibility of family carers and introduce them a key target group in the next 7-year budget, namely in the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), so that more funding can be made available to develop support to family carers.

In addition, the Croatian Presidency of the EU January-July 2020 resulted in the adoption of EU Council conclusions on demographic challenges, which include a strong care component. The German government will take over the Presidency of the EU from July to December 2020, and is pushing strongly the care agenda, in the framework of demographic challenges, with the aim to adopt Council conclusions on closing the gender care gap.

Current COFACE actions

Based on key documents like the European Charter for Family Carers, our position paper on the family dimension of long-term care, our S.H.I.F.T. guide, and the European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based care (EEG) Guidelines and Checklist, we advocate for families of persons with disabilities and family carers more broadly via the following channels:

- Mainstreaming the perspective of family carers in the EU policy and law (e.g. the Work-Life Balance Directive, the European Disability Strategy, the European Gender Equality strategy, the EU Budget Regulations);
- Contributing to alliances of NGOs (including the EEG, which COFACE is co-chairing this year; the European Taskforce on co-production; the Alliance for Investing in Children) and of organisations we are members of, like the European Disability Forum;
- Including COFACE members with expertise on the topic in the programmes of EU-level meetings and conferences;
- Working with the European Parliament, mainly through Disability Intergroup and the new Interest Group on solidarity between generations that COFACE is building with AGE Platform Europe;
- Co-organising workshops and conference sessions long-term care and family carers, calling for more funding and support (last year in partnership with Eurocarers and Age Platform Europe);
- Writing statements, joint statements and open letters targeting the three EU institutions, as COFACE and in partnership with others;
- Working with the European Commission country desks on EU Funds, especially the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);
- Raising this issue at the European Commission High Level Group on Disability.

Future COFACE actions

We will continue highlighting the needs of family carers in EU-level discussions, following up on the above listed actions. In the second half of 2020 the EU budget negotiations and the German Presidency the EU may create an important momentum for our voice to be heard even stronger, as the German presidency is preparing European Council conclusions on closing the gender care gap which can further boost the political work on family carers in the disability and long-term care fields.

The COFACE office is monitoring the EU budget negotiation process closely in Brussels. We are trying to find out how Council and Parliament will react to the Commission proposals.

We have already issued an Open Letter to Presidents von der Leyen and Michel, and would like to suggest the following additional joint actions together with a cluster of COFACE members:

- **June 2020:** Release a statement from the COFACE Disability platform, highlighting the different needs which have emerged from the COVID-19 crisis, including actions to include family carers as target groups in the ESF + regulation and the national ESF+ Operational Programmes
- **July 2020:** With this statement, COFACE can coordinate its members in contacting their ESF authorities to strike up a discussion and get a foot in this process, and also send it to their Members of European Parliament.