



# Position Paper

## **ANEC comments on feasibility study on services for resident persons (home services)**

**ANEC-SERV-2009-G-042**

## 1. Introduction

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In 2007-08 AFNOR carried out a feasibility study on home services within the framework of Second Programming Mandate M/371 addressed to CEN by the European Commission. Following this work by AFNOR which finished in July 2008, the final report “Feasibility and opportunity to develop a standardisation work programme concerning services for resident persons (home services)”<sup>1</sup> was published in May 2009.

The objective of the work was to explore the possibility of European standardisation for home services, these being defined as

*“the services provided at home and involving activities aimed at facilitating, maintaining or improving life at home”.*

The services included in the study represent all services necessary to sustain independent living for individuals in their own private homes, covering both domestic (e.g. cleaning, ironing) and social services. The study included nursing care in its terms of reference although unfortunately paid little attention to these services in the body of the report. The emphasis was on older people rather than other vulnerable adults (e.g. disabled persons) and children.

AFNOR concluded that home services were an emerging economic sector. There is a policy shift from governments across Europe from residential homes for older people towards homecare, whilst home services to older people are socially and economically challenged by demographic changes. European standardisation was perceived as a relevant means to meet the needs in this sector.

## 2. Policy context and rationale for study

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The report notes that national public authorities have an important role in the organisation, financing and provision of these services which, in many cases can be called services of general interest. The study acknowledges that such services may be very diversified and are particular due to the fact that they are provided in the private home of the consumer. The study found that home services market increases every year and will continue to do so, in particular for services for elderly persons. In order to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cen.eu/cenorm/sectors/business+development/value/project4homeservices.pdf>

avoid abuses by certain service providers (particularly regarding disabled and/or elderly people), to ensure transparency on the quality of services supplied, to protect customers' interests and to promote the professionalism in this sector of activity, the report proposes the development of a European standard.

### **ANEC comments**

ANEC supports the AFNOR conclusion and believes that European Standards for some home services would be of benefit to consumers. In particular, elderly people living in their own homes are vulnerable to exploitation for many reasons. Whilst many older people are able to live rich and fulfilled lives into very advanced years, it is a sad fact that infirmity and incapacity are almost always a characteristic of the last few years of anyone's natural life. The reduced capacity of older age can be substantially ameliorated by appropriate support, enabling older people to remain in their own homes as long as possible. Government policies to support this view are a response to the overwhelming wishes of older people themselves. Many older people in Europe have through their lifetimes acquired assets such as residential property and cash savings. Their sometime wealth has been associated with the emergence of a new growth industry, sometimes exploitive, to supply support services, with different levels of quality performance.

The AFNOR study is only one of many studies which have observed the misuse of these services. ANEC therefore supports AFNOR's conclusion that European Standards on home services for elderly persons are needed.

### **3. Methodology for the feasibility study**

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Following their investigations, AFNOR summarised the diverse positions of the stakeholders on the standardisation proposal in the field of home services, and offered a synthesis. AFNOR concluded that there were many discrepancies across European countries in the availability and quality of the services and that there is a lack of human resources that was impacting on the quality of the service; that some more user-oriented competences were needed; and that there was a need to clarify the users/providers relation (more transparency and more power for the user, for instance).

AFNOR also initiated a debate between the stakeholders in order to assess if developing a European Standard in the field of home services was a relevant means to contribute to improving the performance of the services in this sector.

## ANEC comments

While ANEC accepts AFNOR's succinct synthesis of the situation, we believe the study would have benefitted from a clearer setting of the scope and definitions used at the onset. Although the term 'home services' was initially meant to cover all types of services provided in the home of the consumer, the report quickly makes the differentiation between home services 'at large' (child care, gardening etc) and home care service for elderly persons, the latter being a more organised and defined sector. The study then continues to concentrate almost exclusively on home services for elderly persons, thereby creating an obvious overlap with the AFNOR feasibility study on residential home services<sup>2</sup>, and the NEN/SN study on smart house services for elderly and disabled persons<sup>3</sup>. We believe a more coordinated analysis of the results of these studies – perhaps even merging the studies together to form a broader study on long term care services – could have proven beneficial.

Regarding home care services for the elderly: it is clear that there are many reasons for the diversity of the care sector – cultural, social and ethnic. ANEC is aware that consumers receiving home care have a diversity of needs and believes they should be entitled to express an equally diverse range of choices. In the elderly age group a person's physical and mental needs associated with increasing frailty and declining capacity may mean that the freedom to exercise consumer choice is restricted. Heavily merchandised services, packaged to meet the marketing advantage of the supplier, may be particularly inappropriate and can restrict choice. ANEC therefore strongly supports AFNOR's conclusions that transparency is needed and services should better reflect the needs as well as wants of users. Services inappropriately packaged to meet the marketing and merchandising aims of the supplier are not in the consumer interest.

Key issues not raised by AFNOR which must be considered in any future work in this field include surrogate decision-making for children, elderly people and other people of reduced capacity. For older people, there is a need to address issues of privacy and dignity, advocacy and "retaining memory" where capacity declines, protection of personal identity and identity sharing/sacrifice, personal information management, personal lifestyle as a managed process, diversity of older people meaning no "one size fits all", and the need for a more positive societal attitude to older age. While formal Standards can reach out to these issues, they cannot resolve them completely.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cen.eu/cenorm/sectors/business+development/value/project5residentialhomes.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cen.eu/cenorm/sectors/business+development/value/project11smarthouseservices.pdf>

## **4. Overview of the sector and the main economic and social issues**

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AFNOR observes that the sector of home services is a new development, resulting from a new balance existing between work and family life. As such, it also represents a new field of standard-making activity. A new supply side industry is emerging, with suppliers offering innovative and alternative solutions, responding to and reflecting new family structures and the evolution of women's role and status. Home services related to domestic and daily life activities have to be considered in the context of a work-family life balance debate and equality between men and women. Home services for older people are under pressure considering the demographic issue, the associated cost and the lack of societal resources to face future needs. AFNOR's review of the national standards in this sector shows that they are focused on quality requirements for service providers and services for the promotion of the recipient's personal autonomy.

### **ANEC comments**

ANEC acknowledges that home services is a new sector with concomitant new opportunities and challenges for consumers. ANEC is already supporting and contributing to the only formal European initiative to create standards for the social care sector, CEN/PC 385 which commenced work in October 2008 looking at sheltered housing services. This initiative is showing how a European approach can provide an answer to some problems traditionally answered at national level but is the only real instance in CEN of consumer input to standards related to social services.

ANEC considers that voluntary standards on their own are not sufficient to ensure high quality, safe services and therefore supports the establishment of a European horizontal legislative framework to cover the safety and quality of all services. Such a framework should also apply to more vulnerable consumers, such as children or disabled people. This framework should be underpinned by formal standards.

## **5. Needs and recommendations of stakeholders**

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AFNOR recognises that European standardisation work on home services for the elderly would have to take into account some elements that could make harmonisation more difficult - different life styles and economic levels in the European countries, very different material conditions and cultural backgrounds, the characteristics of every region (rural / city) or cultural background (languages, family models, management of home care, etc.) These complex factors could give a European standard only an indicative role.

Recommendations put to AFNOR by stakeholders for the home services sector cover:

- Terminology and classification
- Process of long term care service provided to older and dependent people
- Characteristics of the service (minimum requirements)
- Safety of services (supporting a proposed Service Safety Directive)
- Training and competence
- Standardisation documents about means (instruments and guidelines, ethics and code of conduct, tools for delivering parts of service).

### **ANEC comments**

ANEC believes that it is in the consumer interest that several of the above issues are further considered for possible standardisation. Given the complexity and variety of home services (in the broad sense), ANEC supports the recommendation to develop a European terminology and classification standard in this area as a necessary prerequisite for other initiatives.

The model being developed by CEN/ PC 385 is already pointing to ways and means of addressing the complexity of social standards. For example, every social service can be disaggregated into other services, and standards can be developed for both disaggregated services and the most common bundles of services. Domestic services will often be bundled together, healthcare services will often form another bundle, and personal support services – often described as “social services” – will frequently be grouped together. ANEC believes that there is a distinction between bundling services for the benefits of the consumer, and packaging services for the benefit of the service provider.

As already mentioned above, ANEC strongly supports the development of a horizontal Service Safety Directive in Europe to cover all services, thus including also home services. However, the service elements enumerated in the final report (need for qualified staff, information provision, safety & hygiene of equipment etc) should be considered as elements of a standard setting *quality* (rather than safety) requirements for home services.

## **6. Conclusions and recommendations**

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The report concludes that there are two different scopes to consider in order to assess the feasibility of European standardisation in this field. These are (1) homecare services

for older people, and (2) home services “at large”. Concerning the first one, the feasibility study confirms that European standardisation can be relevant to answer some specific needs.

The report goes on to recommend three levels of action which can be separately or concomitantly considered:

1. The implementation of a multi-stakeholders group
2. The elaboration of European standards<sup>4</sup> within a CEN Technical Committee dedicated to long-term care
3. Communication in order to promote the role of European standardisation for social services.

AFNOR notes that these recommendations have to be considered in parallel with the conclusions of the AFNOR feasibility study on residential homes for older people. By insisting equally on different but complementary approaches to services to older people (residential homes and homecare), recommendations stemming from the two feasibility studies together contribute to put forward the necessity of a global approach of long-term care services.

Concerning home services “at large”, AFNOR concludes there is no evidence that stakeholders would need European standardisation work due to the fact that it is an emerging sector not yet mature for European standardisation, and also due to the “confusion around the definition of home services”, and the connection between some home services and Social Services of General Interest.

However, AFNOR refers to CEN/PC 385 on sheltered housing and recommends that broad coordination of home services stakeholders is ensured with this CEN committee on the question of terminology, by supporting some standardisation technical work on home services terminology.

Finally, the report stresses that any implementation of these recommendations should be coordinated with DG Employment (Open Method of Coordination<sup>5</sup>) and with DG Enterprise.

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<sup>4</sup> Development of European Standards on terminology and Classification, on the Process of long term care, on Training and Competence, and on Tools and Guidelines.

<sup>5</sup> The open method of coordination is a relatively new intergovernmental means of governance in the EU, based on the voluntary cooperation of its member states. The method rests on soft law mechanisms such as guidelines and indicators, benchmarking and sharing of best practice and its effectiveness relies on a form of peer pressure. Generally, the method works in stages: first the Council agrees on policy goals which the member states then transpose as guidelines into national and regional policies. The specific

## ANEC comments

ANEC accepts the distinction made between homecare services for older people, and home services “at large”. However, where homecare services are provided to older people, these are often bundled with “at large” services such as domestic assistance and these may form an integral component of home care services. ANEC believes that a competent scoping study should address and analyse these issues further. This should also take into account the work already done in CEN/PC 385 and any work resulting from the feasibility studies on smart house services and on residential home services.

The results of such a scoping study should feed into the development of a European terminology and classification standard in this area - as a necessary prerequisite for other initiatives. ANEC believes such work should be developed so as to be applicable also to residential home services or smart house services for elderly persons so as to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure consistency.

Following the development of a clear terminology and classification standard, ANEC would support the development of a set of standards on the quality/safety of home services for elderly persons, provided a clear benefit and need for a separate standard for these services can be shown (as opposed to a more general long term care standard). Such a standard should set ambitious requirements based on best practice (including requirements for safety, training and qualifications of staff, service delivery, complaints and redress systems, use and hygiene of equipment/premises, information provision and contracts, ‘after-sales’ services, confidentiality and privacy issues, and sustainability/social responsibility matters).

Moreover, ANEC stresses the need for CEN to put in place an effective strategy to ensure the balanced involvement of all relevant stakeholder groups in the development of any standards in this field, and in particular to ensure the involvement of organisations representing older people. With a view to this, it should be considered whether stakeholder consultation in this field could take the procedures and methodology on stakeholder representation developed in ISO/TMB/Working Group Social Responsibility as a starting point.

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benchmarks and indicators to measure best practice are then agreed upon. Finally, results are monitored and evaluated (source: wikipedia)





## **ANEC comments on home services**

Finally, as some home services for older / dependent persons may also be considered under the umbrella of 'services of general interest' (depending on the country in question), ANEC supports the conclusion that work should be closely coordinated with the European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs, DG SANCO, and DG Enterprise), as well as with the national authorities, where possible.

## Acknowledgements

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## APPENDIX – About ANEC

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### **About ANEC**

ANEC is the European Consumer voice in standardisation, representing and defending consumer interests in standardisation and certification, and in policy and legislation related to standardisation. Our aim is a high level of consumer protection. ANEC was set up in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law. It represents consumer organisations from the European Union Member States and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries. Our General Assembly is composed of one national member per country, nominated jointly by the national consumer organisations in their country.

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