



Position Paper VI

Preventing malnutrition among older persons and the wastage of food

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WWW.EAHSA.EU
INFO@EAHSA.EU

When a person is not getting enough food or not getting the right sort of food, malnutrition is just around the corner. Especially older persons are vulnerable to malnutrition. They lack the force to eat or just have no appetite to eat. Also, the environment can greatly impact food preferences of older persons who have limited mobility and rely on others for food shopping and preparation. As a consequence, a lot of food wastage is avoidable if meal, atmosphere and service are adapted to the needs of the older persons.

Malnutrition has the full attention of EAHSA members. They promote well-nutrition and adapt their services to provide the best circumstances to eat well.

Some facts and figures :

- Social isolation and partner loss are the primary cause of poor eating among older persons. A loss of autonomy, physical and mental problems and associated pathologies increase the risk of malnutrition.
- Poor eating leads to higher health risks and poor clinical outcomes: risk of infections, risk of complications, more need for treatments in hospitals, longer length of stay, and finally risk of dying from diseases.
- A positive meal experience is important in combating malnutrition in older persons. Pleasant meal conditions stimulate appetite and reduces the risk of malnutrition.
- Paradoxically, (national) safety and quality regulations prohibit service providers to prevent food wastage and promote the single-use of food and beverages.

- Around 100 million tonnes of food are wasted annually in the EU. If nothing is done, food waste could rise to over 120 million tonnes by 2020.
- The main reasons for throwing away food that could have been eaten if it had been managed better are: "left on the plate after a meal", "passed its date", "looked, smelt or tasted bad" and "left over from cooking".
- Addressing malnutrition in older people requires an inter-sectoral approach. Tackling malnutrition must involve an effective delivery chain that cuts across the domains of multiple health and care professions, hospitality sectors, agencies and governments.
- Based on recent UK research, under-nutrition and malnutrition costs €171 Bln EU-wide.

EAHSA therefore calls for Member States, all stakeholders and the aged care services and housing sectors :

- **To create an EU labeling, accreditation and awarding system for good nutritional and hospitality policies for older persons, that focus on good quality, adapted quantity, prevention of waste and good feeding experiences;**
- **To define minimum levels of resources to provide good meal care to older people;**
- **To align EU and national safety and quality regulations in order to prevent food wastage.**