

## REPORT TO THE WALLOON PARLIAMENT

### Care system for dependent elderly people in the Walloon Region Current situation and future challenges



The Belgian Court of Audit examined the care system for dependent elderly people in the Walloon Region by focusing on the two main instruments operated by the Walloon public authorities, namely home care and institutional care and accommodation.

At present, the supply of care services hardly meets the expressed demand. Moreover, neither the unmet demand, nor – on a larger scale – the elder’s needs can be assessed. We do not have sufficient information even on the current beneficiaries, in particular elderly people resorting to home care; their number and characteristics are still unknown to public authorities.

The Court also points out that although the current system takes the most dependent people into account, it cannot guarantee that they will be provided care adjusted to their needs.

The measures that have recently been taken to anticipate changing needs do not fully address the challenges of population ageing, neither in quantity nor in quality. The audit demonstrates that, under the assumption of unchanged policy, the overall supply of care will remain insufficient to cover changing needs by 2030. This is all the more true as the current unmet demand is expected to increase by then in a proportion at least comparable to the increase in number of elderly people.

The Court also emphasises the weaknesses in strategic and forward thinking, which may jeopardise the implementation of the most appropriate, efficient and effective solutions. It highlights, among other things, the current inconsistent information system which prevents reliable estimates of future needs, imprecise budgetary projections or the fact that new measures are developed without taking the unmet demand into account. In addition, the different components of elderly care policy are developed, managed and thought through according to a siloed approach. Intermediate care (short stay, etc.) or alternative care (grouped housing, etc.) are relatively little integrated into the intended deployments too.

The Court made several recommendations to address the challenges ahead. During the adversarial debate, the Minister for Health and Social Action stated that she agreed with both main findings on the current context and recommendations of the Court. She does recognise the need to anticipate adequate solutions for the care of future elderly people. She therefore listed various ongoing and planned actions that will help to deal with the identified issues.