

## ***MNI contribution to the European Commission's Roadmap "Demographic change in Europe - green paper on ageing"***

**Brussels, 14 December 2020**

*Background: The European Commission (EC) Roadmap on a Green paper on Ageing<sup>1</sup> was published on 16 November, for a 4-week public consultation (Deadline for comments: 14 December). Here below MNI comments.*

The Medical Nutrition International Industry (MNI) appreciates the opportunity provided by the European Commission of a public consultation on the Roadmap on a *Green Paper on Ageing*. MNI welcomes this proposal, which will set out the key issues and discuss ways to anticipate and respond to the socio-economic impacts of demographic change and to harness further opportunities. More specifically, the Green Paper will approach *"How to meet people's needs - taking into account both the challenges that come with an ageing society as well as the new opportunities"*.

MNI would like to highlight the burden of malnutrition in Europe as 33 million people are at risk of malnutrition in the EU. Malnutrition is estimated to cost European countries €170 billion a year (Ljungqvist O, de Man F. Undernutrition - a major health problem in Europe, *Nutr Hosp* 24:368–370), primarily among hospital patients and the ageing population. Older people are particularly affected by malnutrition (Kaiser MJ et al. *J Am Geriatr Soc* 2010; 58:1734-8):

- **more than 1 in 3 people in care homes are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition**
- **1 in 3 older people living independently are at risk of malnutrition**

Older people are often unable to meet their nutritional needs through their normal diet and are, therefore, more at risk of malnutrition. Malnutrition is caused by inadequate intake of energy, protein and/or other nutrients as a result of diseases or their treatment or loss of appetite.

Despite the availability of screening tools, malnutrition among older people often goes undetected and untreated.

Malnutrition among older people leads to increased risk of complications such as infection, poor wound healing, frailty and falls which leads to additional hospital admissions / readmissions and increased length of stay, with the associated health

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12722-Demographic-change-in-Europe-green-paper-on-ageing>

costs. It can also result in loss of independence, reduced quality of life and increased mortality.

Malnutrition should not be accepted as an inevitable consequence of the ageing process. In this context, nutritional care (medical nutrition) is the most effective way to provide them with the essential nutrients they need.

Across Europe, different national approaches and initiatives have been developed and implemented to overcome malnutrition in a growing context of ageing population. Some countries are particularly advanced and have set national multidisciplinary knowledge centres for the awareness, prevention, identification and treatment of malnutrition. An example is the set-up of the Malnutrition Steering Group with a focus on children, chronically and acutely ill and older persons in The Netherlands (more info at: <https://www.fightmalnutrition.eu/dutch-malnutrition-steeringgroup/the-dutch-malnutrition-steering-group>)

In some other countries of the European Union, malnutrition of older people still goes undetected and untreated, due to lack of knowledge related to the prevention and treatment of malnutrition.

**MNI would therefore support the integration of malnutrition as a key element in the Green Paper on Ageing, in order to respond to the nutritional needs of a European ageing population:**

- This would ensure that the European Union would support, coordinate and complement Member States' efforts to fight malnutrition in older people and ensure a healthy and active ageing;
- This would also have a positive impact on the sustainability of public budgets, as an early diagnosis, screening and treatment of malnutrition avoids further complications, which are associated with higher healthcare costs.

**For more information: Infographic "Malnutrition – A condition that affects 33 million people in Europe"**

([https://medicalnutritionindustry.com/files/user\\_upload/infographics/MNI\\_Infographic\\_malnutrition.pdf](https://medicalnutritionindustry.com/files/user_upload/infographics/MNI_Infographic_malnutrition.pdf)).

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