

**Statement regarding the implementation of measures for Social Care homes  
during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond (SUMMARY)**

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights, in her capacity as a National Human Rights Institute and the National Preventive Mechanism, issued a Statement regarding the implementation of measures at Social Care homes, in order to prevent the spread of the virus during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The Ombudsman noted that the restrictive measures implemented at social care homes and homes for the elderly and specifically, the restriction of visitations, unavoidably resulted in the further isolation of persons residing in such premises.

People who were mostly affected were those who were already in a state of confinement living in these settings. For these individuals, contact with the outside world and their loved ones had become even more difficult, or even impossible, throughout the implementation of these restrictive measures.

As the Ombudsman stated, the loss of interaction with other people and especially with the family, for more than two months, may have been detrimental to the very well-being of these individuals. The situation was even more difficult for people with dementia who were unable to comprehend the reason they no longer received visits from family and friends.

As the Ombudsman noted, the care of persons living in social care homes should not only be related to their physical health but the State, through the competent authorities' cooperation with the owners of the Social Care Homes, take into account the resident's personal needs, their prosperity and dignity and make all possible efforts to prevent the danger of them being socially excluded.

The Ombudsman suggested that measures should be implemented in order for the residents of social care homes be engaged in creative ways (such as painting, knitting, puzzles etc.), based on individualized plans that take into account their physical and mental condition.

Furthermore, it was suggested that residents receive further psychological support by specially trained staff, especially post pandemic and also receive training/support in the use of technology (i.e. video-calling) for the purpose of socializing and avoidance of any further isolation.

The Statement was submitted to the Minister of Labor, Welfare and Social Insurance, as well as the Minister of Health, in order to take appropriate action within their competences.