Opportunities to reduce, postpone and rethink the need for long-term care
The case of needs assessment

The Global Observatory of Long-Term Care celebration of the UN International Day of Care and Support

Kai Leichsenring

Friday, 28 November 2025, 13.00 GMT, 14.00 CET, 22.00 JST (online)

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY AND RESEARCH

GLOBAL OBSERVATORY OF LONG-TERM CARE

GOLTC

Defining and assessing the needs for long-term care

- The moment of truth for LTC systems – and for (potential) users
  - Different rationales and eligibility criteria
  - Different shares of beneficiaries
  - Unequal access

- How are needs assessed – and by whom?
  - Assessment instruments and criteria

- Rethinking and improving needs assessment
  - Incentives for ageing in place, investment in prevention
  - Allocation criteria for targeting or developing „caring societies"?
  - Linking individual needs assessment and local/regional care management

Diverging rationales for needs assessment

- To assess eligibility on legal and administrative grounds

  - Gate-keeping based on the medical model of long-term care, but …

  - Moving from physical restrictions ("invalidity") to restrictions in ADL/IADL (nutrition, personal hygiene, mobility, cooking, housekeeping, transport etc.)

  - Moving towards inclusion of cognitive or other mental health problems (dementia)

- To assess care needs in terms of "time needed for care",

- To consider multi-professional perspectives in developing a care plan

- To move from deficit-oriented assessment schemes to resource-oriented perspectives

  - Assessment in the context of living conditions

  - Carer-blind or carer-sighted?

  - Involving the person in need of care and informal carers?

A wide range of instruments to classify needs

- Different weights for different limitations, resulting in scores and categories
    - Different scores, number of categories and thresholds
    - Different indicators for "self-sufficiency" (e.g. DE)

- Minimum thresholds for care needs expressed in time
    - Different categories based on the amount of time allocated to care (e.g. AT: at least 65 hours/month and 7 levels; LU: 15 categories)

- Nationwide vs. regional/local assessment schemes to access the LTC system
    - Cash benefits
    - Services in kind (residential and community care)
    - Other support, e.g. informal carer schemes

Sources: Llena-Nozal et al., 2025; Carrino et al., 2025

The moment of truth

# Defining eligibility criteria – with massive consequences

Share of older Europeans (65+) potentially covered by different LTC eligibility rules
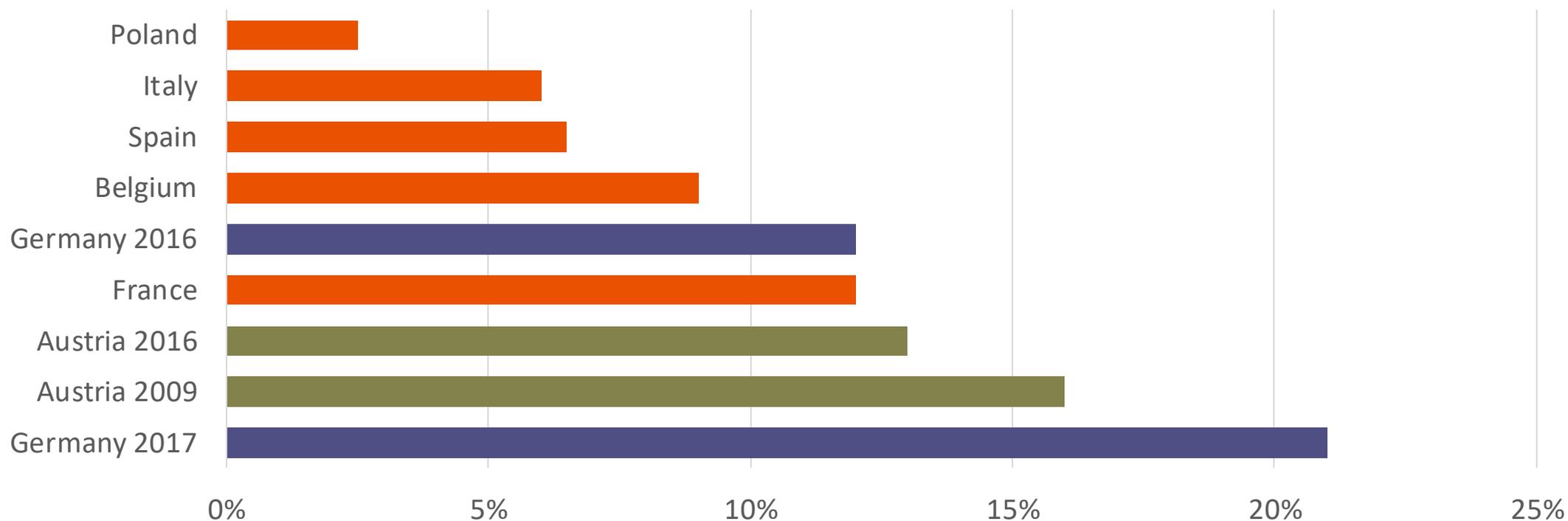
Source: Carrino et al., 2025, based on SHARE (6th wave, 2016).

5

The moment of truth

The impact of eligibility criteria on service use

Long-term care recipients as a percentage of older citizens (65+) by setting, 2022/23

Source: https://data-explorer.oecd.org/

6
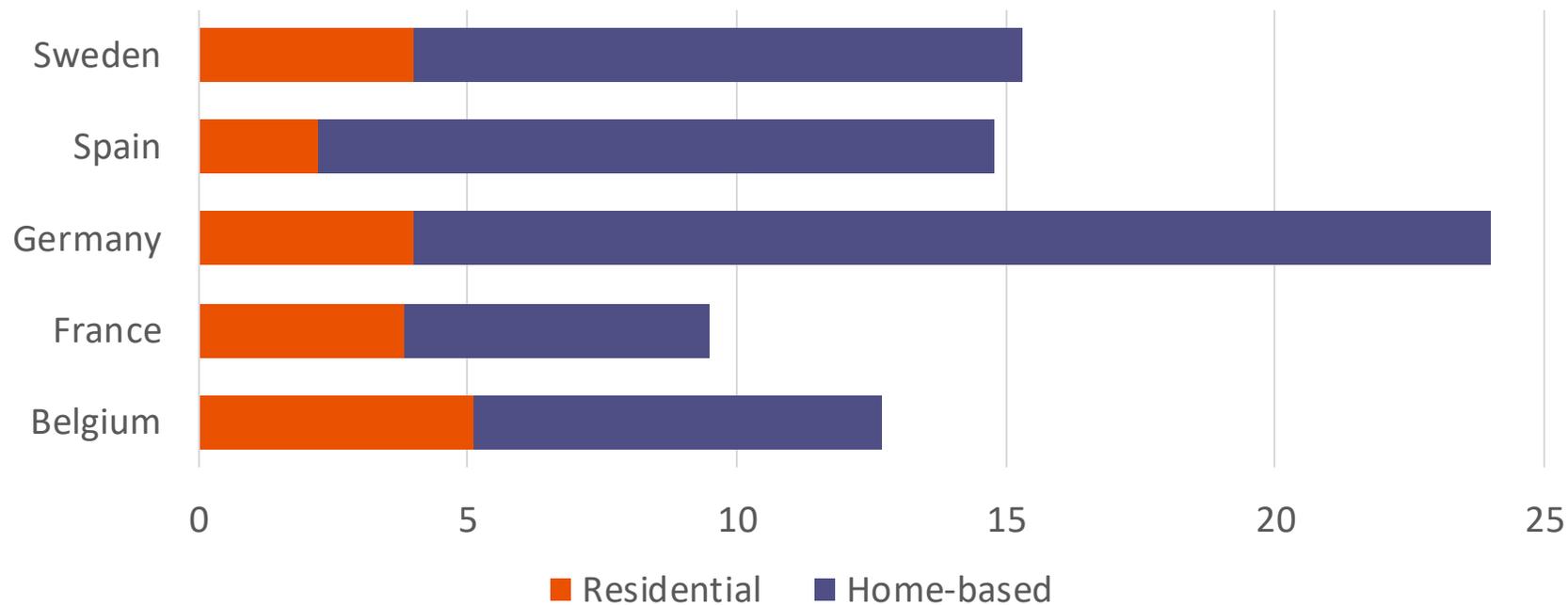
The case of Italy

Care allowance in Italy: Dynamics of growth in number of beneficiaries and its value, 2022 – 2023, constant prices
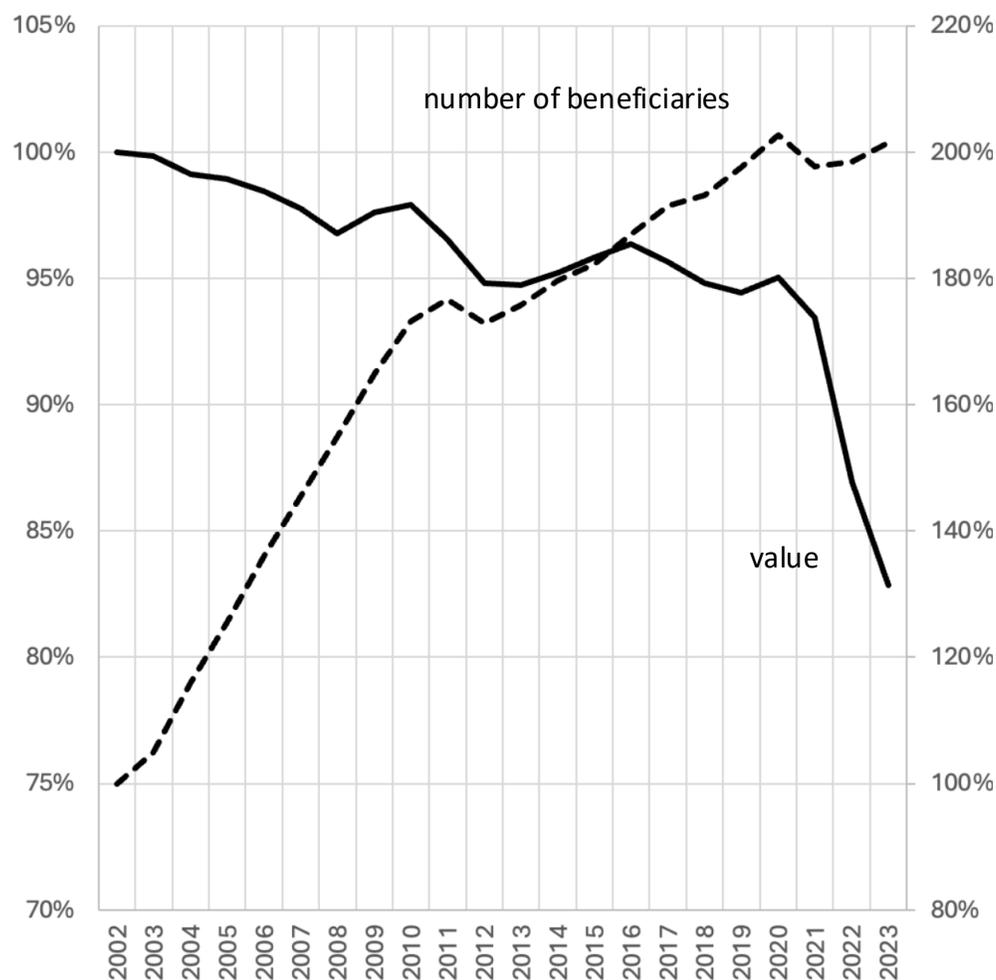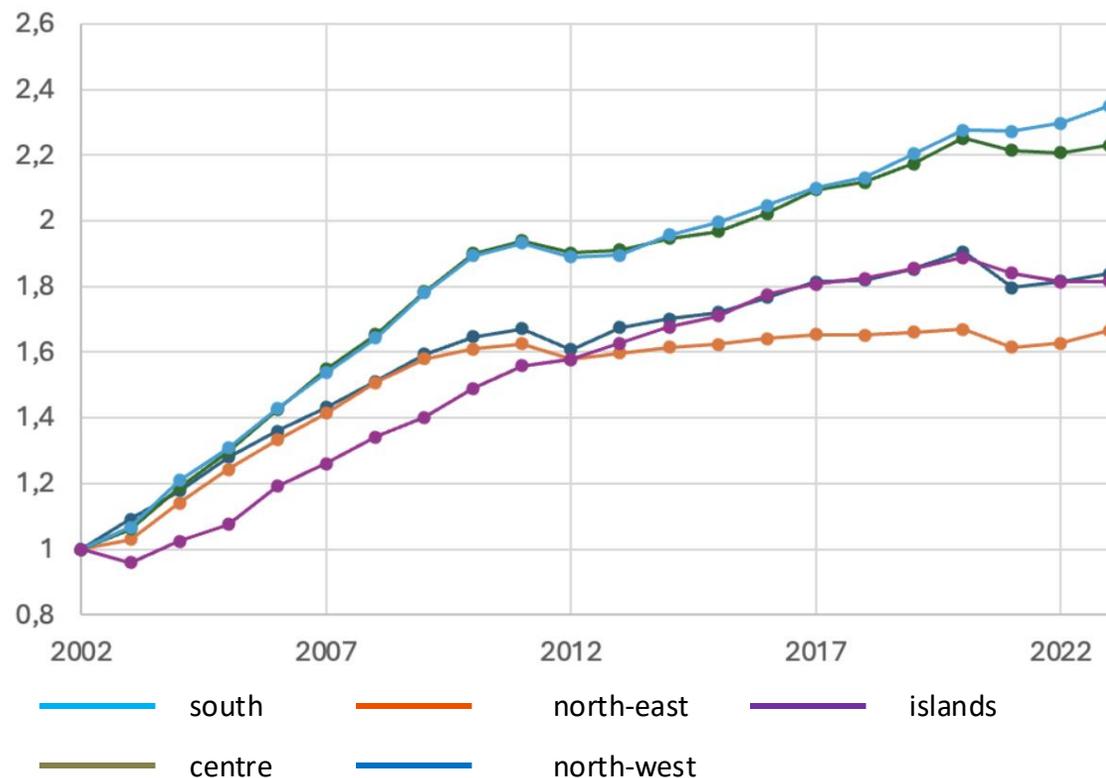

Source: Audino et al., 2024.

- Indennità di accompagnamento (care allowance) as a lump-sum cash benefit
  - needs-tested, no means-testing
- Rising number of beneficiaries (right scale)
- Reduced value: due to indexation based on the development of nominal wages, rather than being adjusted for inflation (left scale)
- Total expenditure increased from 0.37% (2002) to 0.8% (2020) and eventually to 0.65% of GDP in 2023

The case of Italy

Care allowance in Italy: Differences in growth between macro-regions, 2002 – 2022

Source: Audino et al., 2024.

- Differences in growth between macro-regions cannot be explained by demography (data are controlled for age)

- Assessment by medical doctors is lacking homogeneity

- Care allowance as a means to reduce (pension) poverty and/or as an incentive to employ live-in carers (badanti)

- Clear eligibility criteria needed

Rethinking needs assessment

Conclusions

- Needs assessment to combat inequalities in access to long-term care

  - Define clear eligibility rules that are long-term care needs-specific and comprehensive (in context)

  - Combine assessment procedures with information and counselling (also of informal carers)

  - Consider the needs assessment procedure as an investment to strengthen prevention, rather than a gate-keeping exercise

- Needs assessment to combat care poverty by integrated care management

  - Design needs assessment as the entry-point to the long-term care system, including the involvement and integration of relevant stakeholders

  - Utilise outcomes of individual needs assessment as a data base for local/regional care planning and management

  - Use data from the assessment to steer persons in need of LTC through the system

Thank you!

Contact:

Kai Leichsenring
leichsenring@eurocentre.org

@EuroCentre_SWPR

European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research

Berggasse 17, 1090 Vienna, Austria
+43 1 319 45 05-0

ec@euro.centre.org