Interprofessional experiential learning solutions: equipping the qualified dementia workforce to champion evidence informed improvement to advanced dementia care and family caring (Palliare)

Dementia Policy Review: A comparative analysis of current national dementia action plans and related health and social care policies within partner countries

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The purpose of this Dementia Policy Review was to undertake a comparative critical policy analysis based on the national review of general health and social care policy documents, dementia specific policy and strategy documents, national workforce development frameworks and national dementia action plans within the partner countries. The countries included in this review were Czech Republic, Finland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Scotland. The review provided the opportunity to illustrate whether and in what way relevant policy documentation explicitly related to the care of individuals with advanced dementia and their family carers. The concept/term advanced dementia is not clearly defined within the literature, however we were clear that we were looking for policy responses to the extended palliative care phase
of dementia care across partner countries.

The review found that the principles of dementia care were underpinned by internationally agreed human rights in all partner countries. This could be seen in legislation, action plans and strategies where equality, respect of human rights, dignity, autonomy and participation are guaranteed in several acts which also applied to dementia care. Social protection was also a principle which was recognised as a core value, particularly in Scotland. Prevention and alleviation of suffering was considered as a universal right. The policy documents also reflected the different cultural, economic and political circumstances of the partner countries. Some partner countries situated their legislation and policy development within mental health context whereas other countries were situated theirs in more general health and social care context. Moreover the nature, scope and extent of implementation of policies, action plans etc. also varied, with only two countries having national dementia action plans in place.

What was striking, but perhaps not surprising, was the absence of policies focused on the extended palliative stage. Dementia and palliative care policies have tended to develop and be implemented separately from one another. A gap regarding the support and care of the family and friends of people with dementia has also been illuminated. Currently, the needs of family care givers are considered as part of national dementia plans (where they exist). Only one partner country had a dementia specific workforce development framework for all health and social care professionals that included the care of people with advanced dementia. The review makes recommendations based on these findings.