The objective of a new report, 'European Dementia Monitor 2017: comparing and benchmarking national dementia strategies and policies', is to provide a benchmark of national dementia policies in order to compare the responses of European countries to the dementia challenge in different domains. This benchmarking of national dementia policies is intended as a tool for national organisations to compare their situation to that of other European countries. For Alzheimer Europe as a European organisation it is key to understand what differences exist, why they exist and how to find better solutions.

Keywords
Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, inequalities

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The European Dementia Monitor compares countries on 10 different categories, as follows:

1. The availability of care services
2. The affordability of care services
3. The reimbursement of medicines
4. The availability of clinical trials
5. The involvement of the country in European dementia research initiatives
6. The recognition of dementia as a priority
7. The development of dementia-friendly initiatives
8. The recognition of legal rights
9. The ratification of International and European human rights treaties
10. Care and employment rights

According to the findings of the European Dementia Monitor, no country excelled in all ten categories and there were significant differences between European countries.

Key findings:

- Finland scored highest on care availability and affordability, since it provided the most care services and ensured that these services were accessible and affordable for people with dementia and their carers.
- On treatment, Belgium, Ireland, Sweden, England and Scotland (United Kingdom) came first, as all anti-dementia treatments were fully reimbursed and the countries had a policy in place to limit the inappropriate use of antipsychotics.
- Germany, France and Spain scored highest in the clinical trial category, as it was possible for people with dementia to take part in all nine phase III clinical trials currently being conducted in Europe.
- Italy was the country that was the most committed to and active in European dementia research collaborations.
- Ireland and Norway came first in the recognition of dementia as a national policy and research priority.
- Finland, the Netherlands and England (United Kingdom) had the most inclusive and dementia-friendly initiatives and communities.
- Germany, France, Israel, the Netherlands, Slovenia, England and Scotland (United Kingdom) complied with Alzheimer Europe’s four recommendations with regard to respecting the legal rights of people with dementia and their carers.
- Finland and Norway had ratified the most International and European human rights conventions.
- Ireland came first with regard to the care and employment rights which are recognised.
On the basis of the findings in the 10 identified categories, Alzheimer Europe established a ranking of countries (with each domain contributing 10% to the overall score) with Finland coming first with an overall score of 75.2% followed by England (United Kingdom) (72.4%), the Netherlands (71.2%), Germany (69.4%) and Scotland (United Kingdom) (68.8%) (Figure 1).

There is still a clear East/West divide in Europe with most of the Western and Northern European countries scoring significantly higher than Eastern European countries (Figure 2). As a rule, countries with national dementia strategies scored better in all categories. It is time therefore that all European countries and in particular those in Eastern Europe recognise dementia as a national priority and develop national dementia strategies.

“Our organisation has been lobbying for the recognition of dementia as a public health priority and called on European governments to develop national dementia strategies. The aim of the European Dementia Monitor is to assess which countries provide the most dementia-friendly policies and guarantee the best support and treatment of people with dementia and their carers.”

Jean Georges, Alzheimer Europe