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Carina Dantas, Ethics Chair

It would be impossible to reflect on the societal challenges and its Ethical implications for Pharaon and oversee the Covid-19 pandemic.

The impact of the emergency state and the confinement measures in the project (especially in its co-creation phase) has been duly addressed through a dedicated contingency plan and it is not expected that its consequences shall last for the full duration of the project.

However, it seems certain that there are other long-term consequences, much more serious in a wider perspective and that cannot be overseen. **There was a solid speech and political will, in the last few years, that was transversal to most European countries**, on the need to invest in prevention, in integration of health and care, in the promotion of digitally enabled and person-centred solutions – in summary, consensual on the need to progress further and investing in wellbeing and quality of life.

The economic crisis post-pandemic and the societal changes that are emerging from this period will easily favour the drawback of these priorities from the political and funding agenda and, unless measures are taken, can imply a step-back of maybe 5 years in the implementation of innovation in health and care, even more the one connected to the ageing population.

Pharaon, as a wide and multi-stakeholder ecosystem of actors, with broad European coverage, can be seen as a potential enabler for maintaining the focus on the mid-term priorities in this area.

Pharaon includes representatives from many stakeholder networks (e.g. SHAFE, AGE Platform, the EIP-AHA, among others) and can therefore be used as a major vehicle for opinion-making and advocacy, ensuring that relevant societal challenges are not forgotten.

If this can be the time for obstacles, Pharaon can also search for the opportunities.

During this pandemic period, many traditional services to the ageing population had to be closed (e.g. day care centres); hospitals were crowded and people were afraid to go in person to the General Practitioner and primary care services; loneliness and lack of family support, due to travel restrictions, was exacerbated and digital services, if correctly implemented and accessible could be the perfect tool to address so many of these challenges. In this sequence, **a huge ethical challenge to address will be the redefinition of the balance between digital tools and human presence. If this was already somehow stable in the public opinion, the emergency period polarised opinions once again.**

A bigger sensibility in approaching the testing and implementation of solutions in the communities will be required.

And Pharaon will be on top of these new challenges!