

*Affordable high-quality long-term care:
catalysing dialogue and action under
the European Care Strategy*

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Beyond Applause: Pathways to Improve the Attractiveness of the Long-Term Care Sector – Workshop

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Policy Framework

2017 European Pillar of Social Rights, Principle 18: Everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home-care and community-based services.

2022 Council Recommendation & European Care Strategy: Member States should support quality employment and fair working conditions in long-term care, by:

- Promoting **national social dialogue** and **collective bargaining**
- Promoting the highest standards in **occupational health and safety**
- Upskilling and reskilling
- Addressing the challenges of **vulnerable groups of workers** (domestic workers, live-in or migrant workers)
- Providing **career pathways, professionalisation, adequate social protection**
- Addressing **skills** needs and worker **shortages** in the sector
- Tackling gender stereotypes and gender segregation



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Key data

- **3.1 million** workers employed in the LTC sector, **1.5%** of workforce (Eurostat, 2023)
- **No uniform definition** of LTC workers across Member States, **no national definitions and classifications** of LTC workers in the legislation of most Member States

Characteristics across EU

- mostly **women** (87%)
- **personal care workers** (64%), primarily in **residential care** (65%),
- 61% have an upper secondary degree
- 7.9% **non-nationals** (3.4% intra-EU mobile workers, 4.5% third-country nationals)

Conditions

- less likely to have long employment tenure (>60 months) 45% vs 56 %
- average hourly gross wage around **80% of the economy-wide average (69% for personal care workers)**
- 46 % in shift work



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Key deliverables – Care strategy

Social dialogue and collective bargaining

- New Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Social Services (kick-off December 2023)
- Support for capacity building for social dialogue at national level in the care sector

Education and training

- LTC skills partnership, under the Pact for Skills (launched April 2023)
- Supported by Erasmus+ project Care4Skills (kick-off March 2024)

Analytical work

- CEDEFOP skills in LTC
- Application of EU labour law in LTC
- Domestic workers
- Policy brief LTC workforce
- Feasibility study on attracting third country nationals in LTC
- Occupational safety and health issues in the health and LTC sector

Funding and technical support

- Technical Assistance Instrument (TSI)
- European Social Fund+
- Recovery and Resilience Fund
- Horizon Europe and Digital Europe



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Evidence Base

Reports on application of EU standards governing working conditions in the long-term care sector

- European Centre of Expertise (ECE) Thematic Review 2022-2023: Application of **EU labour law** in the long-term care sector
- Access for **domestic workers to labour and social protection**: An analysis of policies in 34 European countries (ESPAN)
- **Addressing knowledge gaps** with regard to the long-term care workforce (ESPAN)
- **Occupational Safety & Health** in figures in the Health and Social Care Sector (EU-OSHA)



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Key findings

- **Large variations** across countries in terms of jobs profiles, type and place of employment
- **Risk of in-work poverty** in some countries due to combination of part-time and/or fixed-term contracts in combination with low hourly wages, especially among LTC personal care workers.
- **Un(der)declared work** is prevalent in the sector.
- No coverage gaps for nurses and personal care workers as regards transposition of EU labour acquis
- Specific challenges for domestic LTC workers
- LTC Workers are exposed to **higher levels of exposure to a multitude of risk factors** compared to the average EU-27 worker and report **higher levels of work-related stress**.
- **Collective agreements** – key role
- **Possibility to formalise informal care** provided by family members as LTC work in few countries
- **Enforcement challenges**
- The workforce dimension may be less prioritised in the **LTC quadrilemma** of (1) increasing LTC coverage, (2) ensuring quality of services, (3) improving working conditions and job quality, while (4) managing public expenditure.



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Recent Member State reforms

- DE: **collective wage agreements** for LTC workers, **reform of tertiary nursing education** (dual study programmes), remuneration during studies, simplification of **recognition for foreign qualifications**
- ES: Accreditation and Quality Agreement introducing a needs-based, community-oriented care model, measures to **address workforce shortage by facilitating rapid upskilling of workers**
- LV: general **agreement regulating working conditions, wages, and training** for employees in state-funded long-term care settings
- FI: **Good Work Programme** including staff **training, international recruitment, and competence verification**
- PT: better **legal protection** for domestic workers, ensuring **fair working conditions, appropriate wages, and safeguarding** against exploitation and abuse and statute that recognizes and supports informal caregivers
- SE: legislation establishing a **Protected Professional Title for Nursing Assistants**, to ensure high-quality care and patient safety



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Future Actions

- **Quality Jobs Roadmap**
 - support fair wages, good working conditions, training & fair job transitions, notably by increasing collective bargaining coverage
 - developed in close co-operation with the social partners
- **Union of Skills** initiative
 - focus on investment, adult & lifelong learning, vocational education & training, skills retention & recognition of qualifications, enhancing skills intelligence
- Creating a more coherent framework for **addressing long-term care workforce challenges**, including facilitating the recognition of skills and qualifications, supporting skilling and career progression and improving working conditions
- Further plans to improve **Europe's approach to occupational health and safety**, new initiatives on **work-life balance** to support workers' **mental health**
- **Continuous support to member states** in the implementation of the Council Recommendation



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Agenda

Thematic panel (40 minutes)

- Mr Lorenzo Munar, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
- Ms Samantha Howe, European Federation of Public Service Unions
- Mr Sylvain Renouvel, Federation of European Social Employers
- Mr Thomas Bignal, European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities
- Mr Tommy Sheridan, Department of Health, Ireland

Q&A session and SLIDO (10 minutes)

- Mr Jiri Branka, European Agency for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications

Interventions from the audience (15 minutes)

Q&A session (5 minutes)

Closing Remarks and Summary (5 minutes)



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