

Social Platform contribution to the call for evidence on the European Care Strategy

- 1. The EU care strategy must support Member States in developing a resilient ecosystem for care services, contributing to building quality, affordable, available, and accessible care infrastructures in all Member States. It should propose a Care Guarantee that approaches care not just as a service, but as a right people have throughout the life-cycle, including children, adults with care needs, and the elderly. This is key to enable all people to reach their full potential and lead decent lives.**

EU institutions

- Include proposals that help Member States to set out a legal, financial, and coherent policy framework for providing quality, affordable, available, and accessible care services.
- Develop quantitative and qualitative care targets and disaggregated indicators to measure progress in the provision of care for all groups of people - going beyond the Barcelona targets.
- Require Member States to develop National Action Plans in which they detail the action they will take to implement the care strategy.
- Include reporting requirements and hold a regular review of the care strategy and the attainment of its objectives, with the full involvement of stakeholders (care givers and care receivers) and the civil society organisations representing them.
- Create a European Care Platform, made up of representatives from Member States and European social partner & civil society representatives, to monitor the situation around Europe, identify effective funding models and facilitate exchange of good practices.

Member States

- Create said legal, financial, and coherent policy framework for ensuring quality, affordable, available, and accessible care services for all who need them. It must support and develop all forms of care, especially home and community-based services to give people the choice to live and be cared for where and by whom they wish.
- Put in place policies which recognise and support not-for-profit social services providers, including social economy initiatives, such as cooperatives. Cooperatives are generally based on multistakeholder governance and involve all parties concerned by the service, thus increasing the quality of the service provided.

- 2. Facilitate the development and promotion of ambitious common quality standards on care services, rooted in a human rights-based approach, with a strong focus on social justice, non-discrimination and equality in their accessibility, affordability, quality, and coverage.**

EU institutions

- Create common quality standards and guidelines that ensure non-discriminatory universal provision as well as access to adequate, affordable, and quality care services that are guaranteed to everyone living in Europe. These guidelines should encourage service providers to follow a rights-based and people-centred approach, where the support provided is rooted in a meaningful, participatory, and individual needs assessment, with the full ownership of the service user. Service provision must also ensure people's access to other personal rights, such as health, participation in social and cultural life, education, life-long learning, mobility, etc.

Member States

- Pay special attention to rural and remote regions, migrants, linguistic, racial, and ethnic minorities, including Roma, people in vulnerable situations and with multiple or complex

social needs, requiring individualised approaches. Ensure a strong social protection approach to care to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups. Without adequate social protection systems and public funding, the out-of-pocket costs of care push most older and vulnerable people into income poverty. Social protection coverage must be improved to ensure a life in dignity for care both recipients and care givers.

- Ensure adequate, accessible, and enabling minimum income schemes, including inclusive activation measures, made up of adequate levels of minimum income, personalised support towards quality employment and access to quality services. Together with fair minimum wages in the context of quality jobs and good working conditions, these are necessary preconditions for ensuring affordable and quality provision and access to care services.
- Ensure that measurement of the social impact of care services assesses quality of provision and not just quantitative enrolment statistics.

3. Create the right public funding and investment conditions for care services by using and adapting all available EU instruments. Make relevant funds from the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and Next Generation EU accessible to not-for-profit care service providers and encourage Member States to use them extensively to fully implement the Social Pillar.

EU institutions

- Do more to support the continuity and sustainability of care services. This includes substantial social investment in care services, reform of EU fiscal rules, state aid and public procurement policies, which must prioritise quality of the service and not the lowest price. Facilitate the good use of EU funds to tackle the issues affecting the care sector.
- Encourage Member States to increase the allocation of public revenue to the provision of care services as a contribution to building resilience, wellbeing, and socio-economic inclusion through reviewing public spending priorities, implementing tax justice and progressive taxation schemes, which support fairer redistribution.
- Integrate the targets and objectives of the care strategy into the European Semester. Monitor whether Member States sufficiently fund care services, that National Resilience and Recovery Plans (NRRPs) prioritise adequate funding for care services. Make country-specific recommendations, where needed, that explicitly address the provision of quality affordable and accessible care services.

EU institutions & Member States

- Monitor the use and outcomes of public funding for social and care services at national level, e.g. through monitoring the implementation of the voluntary European quality framework for social services, in association with the upcoming European Quality Framework for social services of excellence for persons with disabilities announced in the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

Member States

- Protect care services from any further cuts and fiscal consolidation measures and recognise this type of expenditure as a key investment in healthy, prosperous, and resilient societies. Restore adequate funding to care services and roll back cuts created by the austerity measures of the past decade, which have weakened the resilience of the sector.

4. Unlock the job creation potential of the care sector across Europe by improving the attractiveness of jobs, working conditions, wages, up- and re-skilling, health and safety, collective bargaining, and better career paths. Improve the recognition of and support for both formal and informal care work.

EU institutions

- Include proposals that aim to support Member States in improving the working conditions of the sector across Europe, including strengthening employment rights, social security as well as better wages and working conditions. Considering the strong gender dimension of the care sector, this would contribute to closing the gender pay, employment and pension gaps.
- Launch a European campaign with the aim of increasing the societal recognition of careers in the care sector and recruiting people, by providing them with information on career options.
- Create an EU Skills for Care initiative to help in the up-and re-skilling of professionals in the care sector. This initiative would help identify skill gaps and needs, promising practices and successful initiatives. Considering the employment potential of the sector, this would also help fulfil the EU headline targets on employment and skills.
- Promote the implementation of the 2017 Council recommendations on the European Qualifications Framework to facilitate recognition of qualifications obtained abroad.
- Encourage Member States to recognise and support informal carers, notably through a formal status and ensure they can access their social rights.

EU institutions & Member States

- Promote and support the training, professional development and mobility of care workers through adequate legal frameworks and financial support.
- Simplify reporting obligations for the reception of funds to reduce any unnecessary burden for care service providers. Funders of care services must avoid overly burdensome reporting procedures, so that care workers can dedicate most of their work time to their main purpose, which is actual service provision. Support innovative methodologies such as new organisational procedures, coproduction, and the use of technology.

Member States

- Improve the recognition of skills acquired through experience, such as through informal care work to facilitate access to formal employment in the sector.
- Ensure that care services receive additional support in emergency situations, including flexibility in funding lines to enable care service providers to allocate sufficient funding to adjust to unforeseen circumstances.
- Create the necessary conditions to enable people to take up life-long learning, skilling, and reskilling opportunities to enter and remain in the care sector and support innovation.
- Create possibilities and incentives to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce, in terms of skills, qualifications, gender, ethnic background and country of origin. This will help ensure that service delivery responds better to the specific needs of different beneficiaries and communities.
- Reduce the threshold for accessing professional training for care jobs, for example by offering financial support.
- Undertake additional efforts to highlight the employment opportunities in the social sector for people of all ages. The Youth Guarantee should also be used to encourage young people to seek work in the care services sector.
- Ensure informal care is based on choice rather than necessity. Ensure legal recognition of and support services for those willing and able to provide care to a relative on a long-term basis. Informal carers should be able to exercise their rights (including access to social protection, financial support, pension, respite care, information and training, work-life balance measures) and they should also fulfil obligations to be co-defined with informal carers themselves or organisations representing them (as regards training and minimal care skills to be acquired or care quality criteria, for instance).
- Go beyond the minimum provisions of the Work-Life Balance directive in providing adequate and financially compensated leave for parents and carers.

5. Support digitalisation of care services, while tackling the digital divide and digital poverty. Special attention needs to be given to accessibility, both digitally and face-to-face, and to the overall quality of services, as well as to ensuring that digitalisation helps improve the quality of jobs in the sector.

EU institutions & Member States

- EU institutions and Member States should allow and support the use of funding for digital equipment and ICT-literacy training of formal care staff, informal carers, and beneficiaries. This is key to ensure access to life-long learning to allow people to develop sufficient digital skills and provide and access care services that have been (re-)organised digitally.
- Improve the interoperability of health information systems by developing a proper European Health Data Space. It must support quality health and care service provision across borders and the construction of more genuine common market for digital health and care services, while guaranteeing the protection of sensitive personal data.

Member States

- Ensure that adequate network coverage, of both internet and electricity, is available in rural and remote communities as well as segregated neighbourhoods, such as those where Roma live. Furthermore, financial support with utility bills might be needed to ensure that the most vulnerable can also reap the benefits of digital care services.
- Develop tools to guide beneficiaries through the large variety of online services and help them identify high-quality services. For example, this could be done through standardised labels for online services that meet certain quality criteria co-designed with users.
- Ensure that services remain available through face-to-face intervention and targeted outreach measures for those for whom online access is either not an option or not preferred. Additionally, measures must be taken to address the digital divide.

Annex 1: Work of our member organisations and partners on the European Care strategy, long-term care and the revision of the Barcelona targets

Overall European Care strategy

AGE Platform Europe

- [The EU Care Strategy must be built on supporting all human rights](#) – response to Commission’s Call for Evidence, 2022
- [Care must empower us throughout our lives – Position paper](#), 2021

Age Platform Europe & Red Cross Office

- [Joint vision on long-term care – shared conclusions of our joint policy event](#)

AGE Platform Europe, Equinox, Eurochild, European Disability Forum, European Network Against Racism, Equinet, ERGO Network, European Youth Forum, Hope and Homes for Children, ILGA Europe, Lumos, Transgender Europe

- [Joint Briefing on Equality and Intersectionality – people with disabilities](#)

Caritas Europa, European Anti-Poverty Network, European Federation for Family, Employment and Home Care, EFFAT, European Federation for Services to Individuals, Eurocarers, ERGO Network, Don Bosco International, FairWork, FEANTSA, La Strada International, Make Mothers Matter, PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants), UNI Global Union, Social Platform, Association for Integration and Migration (SIP), Red Acoge

- [Joint recommendations for the European Care Strategy regarding migrant care providers and service users, 2022](#)

Eurochild

- [Eurochild position on the European Care Strategy, 2022](#)
- [Eurochild and ISSA, First Years First Priority position Paper on the European Care Strategy, 2022](#)

European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)

- [EASPD Position Paper on the EU Care Strategy, 2021](#)

Make Mothers Matter (MMM)

- [The European Care Strategy: The right time to place Mothers centre stage, 2022](#)

Eurodiaconia

- [Eurodiaconia input to the Commission Consultation on a European Care Strategy, 2022](#)

EURORDIS – Rare Diseases Europe

- Eurodis [Contribution to the call for evidence on the proposal for a European Care Strategy](#)

Long-term care

Eurocarers

- [Enabling Carers to Care. An EU Strategy to support and empower informal carers, 2018](#)
- [Without greater investment in care, the European Union will fail to rebuild resilient societies at the service of people, 2021](#)
- [The EU Strategy on Care: A new paradigm for carers across Europe? Response to the Call for Evidence on the Care Strategy, 2021](#)

European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network

- Thematic snapshot on [Roma Health, Disability, and Long-Term Care, 2021](#)

InCARE project

- [InCARE contribution to the Call for Evidence, 2022](#)

Eurodiaconia

- [Eurodiaconia input to the Commission Consultation a Council Recommendation on LTC, 2022](#)

EURORDIS – Rare Diseases Europe

- [Recommendations from the rare 2030 Foresight Study \(recommendation 4, pages 62 – 74\)](#)
- [Position Paper: Achieving Holistic Person-Centred Care to Leave No One Behind](#)

Education/Revision of the Barcelona targets

European Anti-Poverty Network

- [Leaving nobody behind. Prevention and reduction of poverty and social exclusion through education, vocational training and life-long learning, 2020](#)
- [EAPN Position Paper on Adequate Income, 2020.](#)

European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network

- Thematic snapshots on [Childcare & Children](#) and on [Gender Equality & Work-Life Balance, 2021](#)

Eurodiaconia

- [Eurodiaconia input to the Commission Consultation on ECEC, 2022](#)

For more information

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