



European Economic and Social Committee

The rights of the live- in care workers and the future of the live- in care in Europe

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European Economic and Social Committee



Presentation:

1. In **September 2016**, the EESC adopted an **own-initiative opinion** on "The rights of live-in care workers" (SOC/535). It was the first policy document at European level addressing the issue of the working conditions of live-in care workers.
2. As a follow-up to this initiative, the EESC carried out four country visits to the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Poland, chosen for being countries of origin and destination of live-in care workers located in the four corners of the EU. Visits took place in 2017 and 2018. **The findings of those visits** were presented at the meeting of the EESC in **October 2019** in Brussels.



European Policy on long term care

- 18th principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights (long-term care):

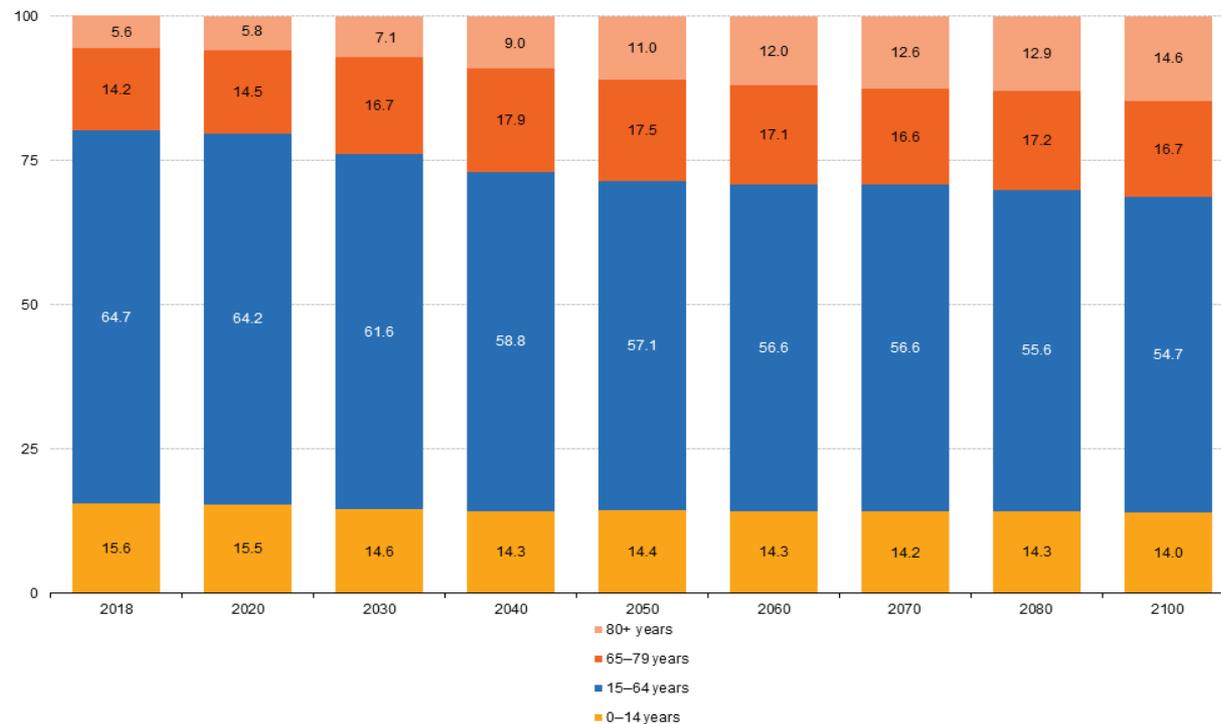
Everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home-care and community-based services.

- Live-in care workers represent an important yet forgotten strand of long-term care. Without improving their working conditions, we will not be able to provide European citizens with affordable and quality care.



Why the number of live-in carers is growing?

Population structure by major age groups, EU-28, 2018-2100
(% of total population)



Note: 2018: provisional, 2020-2100: projections (EUROPOP2018).
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: demo_pjanind and proj_18ndbi)



Working conditions

- Care work is highly demanding, both physically and emotionally.
- **Barbara Janikowska's testimony:**

She spent eight years working in Germany were an 'odyssey from one agency to another', as she experienced highly exploitative working conditions. Her first live-in care job in Germany was supposed to be looking after one person but it turned out to be a group of seven. She found herself permanently on duty, working in one house continuously for ten months with just one short break for a holiday.
- **Natalia Myronowna Bilous's testimony:**

She had been working in Poland for nine years, mostly without a contract, around the clock without proper breaks including on weekends. She was compelled to change households five times. She experienced unjustified late wage payments, bullying and sexual harassment, false accusations of theft, religious discrimination, and threats of deportation.



Visits in the UK, Germany, Italy and Poland

- A variety of stakeholders participated in the meetings.
- Debate focused on three topics:
 1. What is the situation of live-in care workers? How are the employment and working conditions and status of the live-in care workforce distinct from the overall social care workforce?
 2. What is the situation of care users and the families who rely on live-in care arrangements to meet their care needs?
 3. How common are live-in care arrangements as a sub-sector of care? Is live-in care expected to grow with the increasing demand for care? How can this translate into job creation and economic growth? What changes need to be made to strengthen the care sector in the short and long term?



Key findings of the visits (1):

- Stakeholders share a **common critique** of many of the structural problems of live-in care work, especially that it functions through the exploitation of women, and that this is not only unethical and shameful, but also unsustainable.
- Despite the goodwill expressed by stakeholders to find solutions, including through negotiations between unions and employers, stakeholders **feel powerless** to fix the structural issues that can only be resolved through effective action at national, European and international levels.



Key findings of the visits (2):

- Participants agreed that there is a need to **regularise** the situation of live-in care workers, and support their professionalisation and the stronger involvement of the state, including addressing inadequacies in financial support for long-term care.
- Where disagreements among stakeholders arose, they emerged mainly in relation to how **to solve the challenges**.
- In terms of **professionalisation**:
 - Participants agreed that a core aim of professionalisation should be to bring such work into the formal economy and to ensure better access to training for live-in care workers.
 - Disagreed, whether they should be treated as part of the care workforce or as a more professional part of the domestic workforce.



Key findings of the visits (3):

- Stakeholders agreed that, along with the EU, Member States need to urgently **find resources and political capital** to sustainably plan, manage and finance long-term care policy in Europe.
- The **role of the state** is important not only in terms of subsidising care work but also in terms of its regulation. The state should play a pivotal role in providing quality care.
- There is a need for **long-term care policy at EU level, similar to the EU's industrial policy**. A core aim for such a policy should be to develop a sustainable funding model to facilitate quality employment for live-in care workers and affordability for families.



Key findings of the visits (4):

- Participants agreed that there is an urgent need for **better regulation of working and living conditions of live-in care workers** (including working time).
- However, a key question relates to the best model to achieve this. Namely, whether this should occur through employment covered by collective **bargaining agreements** (as in the Italian model) or **self-employment** (as in Austria).
- Many discussions were about how to achieve regulation that benefits both families and care workers in a way that is equitable, enforceable and affordable for society as a whole.



Key findings of the visits (5):

- The **internationalisation** of live-in care work and its cross-border characteristic mean that the solutions to regulate live-in care work cannot be found exclusively at the Member State level.
- Considering the convergence of challenges in relation to providing live-in care work in the visited countries, a discussion needs to take place to **develop a European framework regulating** the service provision of live-in care, while respecting the autonomy of the social partners and different models of industrial relations.
- Finally, there is a **need for a paradigm shift in society's perception of live-in care work**. It is important to recognise its value in society and to make this profession more attractive for the local population, including the male workforce .



Key findings (meeting in Brussels)

- Participants shared the view that it is important to look at the live- in care sector also from **the perspective of its potential for the EU economy and business growth.**
- Participants underlined the role of **digitalisation** in delivering and organising care work in the future. These include using application and work platforms for employing care workers as well as other electronic devices which could improve care provision and make care recipients more independent while staying at home.



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Thank you
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