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Joint call: the new EU Commission must give space to its ambitions on long-term care

In December 2022, the EU took a decisive step towards addressing the long-term care crisis, a critical issue that will determine the quality of life of a growing part of its population. It adopted the [Council recommendation on long-term care](#), based on the Commission's Communication for a European Care Strategy.

The recommendation urges Member States to enhance the affordability, social protection, accessibility and quality of long-term care services for all people who need it. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of supporting informal carers, improving working conditions of professional carers, including live-in care workers and domestic workers, as well as addressing the shortage of the long-term care workforce.

Since then, all Member States presented [national reports](#) on their proposals for the implementation of the recommendation in September 2024, demonstrating their continued support for the goals adopted by the Council.

However, the mission letters of the new European Commission do not fully reflect this ambition. Long-term care is mentioned only from the perspective of workforce shortages – a critical dimension, but just one aspect of a much more multifaceted issue. Ms Mînzatu has called for a European Care Deal during her confirmation hearing, and we want to support this wider ambition.

It remains crucial to increase the availability and affordability of rights-based, person-centred, quality care, particularly home care and community-based care, especially in the light of demographic developments and the transition

away from institutional care. The need for care and support should be resolutely acknowledged as a social responsibility, rather than a private one, as it impacts society as whole, and both influences and is influenced by factors such as gender, employment, exposure to physical and mental health risks, poverty and social exclusion and the environment. Therefore, the provision of long-term care, throughout a person's life, should be established as a pillar of social protection in all Member States.

Informal carers - among which millions are women - should be identified, recognised and supported in all Member States, to mitigate the detrimental impact of care responsibilities on their social inclusion, economic situation, health and well-being. Their unpaid and underappreciated labour significantly affects workforce participation, contributing to gender gaps, limited access to social protection, reduced earnings contributing to old-age poverty.

As civil society organisations and trade unions representing people with disabilities, those supported by care services and their families, informal carers, care workers and cooperatives, and service providers for care and services for persons with disabilities part of the social economy. Having supported the European Care Strategy since its inception we call on the new European Commission to incorporate all ambitions of the Care Strategy into its planning for the current mandate:

- **Strengthen and support health promotion and prevention** to reduce the increase of care needs.
- Assist Member States in developing rights-based, person-centred long-term care services across all territories through the **European Semester, European funding and increased flexibility in public spending rules.**
- **Support the development of high-quality support services and measures for informal carers, tailored to their needs.** Legislation should improve the rights to care leave and access to social protection. Qualitative tailor-made support and the provision of support services such as day-care and respite care should be provided. This should lead to improving informal carer's wellbeing, labour market participation, as well as reducing negative social and health impact of caring.
- Support **care service providers in delivering rights-based high-quality, accessible, and affordable care**, while enabling them and household employers to hire and retain qualified workers.
- **Revise the Directives on Public Procurement** to ensure that price alone is not decisive, but prioritises value over cost to truly promote quality, social, and environmental considerations
- **Investigate and prevent the causes of abuse and neglect** in long-term care settings.

- In continuation of Executive Vice-President Mînzatu's mission to **address workforce shortages, improve working conditions**, by promoting fair wages, skills recognition, and social dialogue in the care sector, improving workers' mental health, and fully including vulnerable groups of workers, including domestic workers and migrant workers specifically.
- **Up-skilling and re-skilling of the long-term care workforce** for the provision of person-centred care services. Initiatives such as the [partnership of skills in long-term care](#) need to be strengthened
- **Address undeclared work and exploitation in care** by strengthening oversight and access to remedy, promoting formal employment, including through work permit pathways that promote decent work, and ensuring adequate social protection.
- **Tackle financial speculation in the long-term care sector** where profit-oriented companies benefiting from large investments and often public funding reduce quality to extract undue profit, squeezing out service providers, who genuinely try to provide person-centred, quality care. These include public providers, service providers from the social economy, and care cooperatives.
- Encourage Member States to **support high quality care by recognising the importance of different care and support services, valuing the interest of viable not-for-profit alongside for-profit providers**.

We reiterate our [proposal for a European Long-Term Care Platform](#) as part of the revised Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights to give this policy a tangible framework of monitoring and transparency, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations. The Platform should have an annual meeting similar to the Long-Term Care Forum organised on 12 November 2024 by the Commission.

With this in mind, we stand ready to support the new European Commission in its efforts to meet the needs of over 30 million people in Europe requiring long-term care due to age, disability, or illness, as well as their employees, service providers and families.

List of Signatories

AGE Platform Europe
 Alzheimer Europe
 Autism-Europe

Caritas Europa

CECOP – European confederation of industrial and service cooperatives

CESI – European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions

COFACE Families Europe

EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network

EFFAT – European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism Sectors

EFFE – European Federation for Family Employment & Home Care

Eurocarers

Eurodiaconia

EuroHealthNet

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

European Disability Forum

European Federation for Services to Individuals

Make Mothers Matter

Mental Health Europe

PICUM – Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants

UNI Europa Global Union