

DEVCOBA

Developing **C**ollective **B**argaining in the Care Sector

WP4 Country Report

DENMARK

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1. Introduction

This report analyses the findings of an exploratory study of caregivers' individual positions and perceptions regarding job quality, working conditions, and collective representation in childcare services (ECEC 0-6) and long-term care services (LTC) in Italy.

This report analyses the findings from a series of interviews of care workers regarding their individual positions and perceptions of job quality (pay and working conditions) and collective representation in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC 0-6) and Long-Term Care services (LTC) in Denmark.

The research was conducted within the fourth research package (WP4) of the EU-funded DEVCOBA project DEVCOBA (Developing Collective Bargaining in the Care Sector). The project analyses the role of collective bargaining and representation in enhancing job quality and strengthening the attractiveness of these occupations to overcome severe labour and skill shortages. The project covers Denmark, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Spain, and the Netherlands (devcoba.unimi.it).

The source of this Danish WP4 study is primarily twelve 30 - 45 minutes long semi-structured interviews conducted either online with the use of Teams or by telephone. All interviews were transcribed. The question-guide was modelled on a joint template from the Devcoba project but adopted in the Danish context. It focused on the same issues as section 3-5 of this report: Perception of working conditions and job quality; Possible solutions identified by caregivers to improve their conditions; and Workers' voice.

Although difficult too, the recruitment of interviewees was more successful in LTC than in ECEC. In both subsectors, potential interviews were offered a voucher for two cinema tickets, including snacks. In LTC, trade union interviewees from one of the WP3 cases provided contacts to potential LTC interviewees. Snowballing was used to provide additional contacts. We managed to conduct interviews with seven LTC-employees. In ECEC, trade union interviewees from both WP2 (the overview report) and WP3 were contacted. The strategy seemed promising at first, but it resulted in only one suggestion for a potential interviewee. This person accepted to participate. Snowballing from this interviewee resulted in one more interview. Two of the last three interviewees were found through our personal networks. As the minimum number of interviews aimed for was eight per sub-sector, additional strategies were used in ECEC. These included e-mail contacts to 18 childcare institutions, printed posters exposed in 10 childcare institutions, printed posters exposed in Copenhagen's vocational school for pedagogues and pedagogical assistants (as some of these work in ECEC besides studying), adds on two Facebook pages targeted ECEC employees, and additional contacts via personal networks of our colleagues. These efforts resulted in on additional interview.

2. Profile of the interviewed caregivers

The group of seven respondents in *Long Time Care (LTC)* is mainly females aged 46-62. Only one male elder care worker has been interviewed. This reflects that most employees in elder care in Denmark are females. All interviewees are employed in the public sector in either home care or institution care (elder care centers and nursing homes). Half of the respondents work in different municipalities in the Greater Copenhagen area. The other half works in a municipality in Jutland.

Four of the interviewees are SOSU-helpers (Social and Health Care helpers), and the remaining three are SOSU assistants (Social and Health Care assistants). The education of SOSU-helpers takes 26 months, and the education of SOSU-assistants takes approx. 34 months. A third large occupation in LTC is the unskilled elder care helper. None of the interviewees belonged to this group. Three of the interviewees have experience from other careers and industries and started their jobs within elder care as mature adults, while the rest started in their youth. There were no migrants among the interviewed employees. One of the interviewed is a descendant of migrants, and the rest are ethnic Danes, which implies a clear underrepresentation of migrants compared to the national average.

Table 2.1 Key information about the interviewees

	Part of the sub-sector	Age	Gender	Skill level	Seniority (years)	Motivation to work in the sector
LTC 1	Home care PU	60	Male	SOSU helper	8 years	Former career in graphical work. Finds the work very meaningful and loves independent work in a team. Works 35 hours.
LTC 2	Institutional care PU	58	Female	SOSU assistant	6 months in the current position	Former industry worker, but has previous experience from LTC. Appreciate working with the elderly and happy with her work. Works fulltime 37 hours.
LTC 3	Home care PU	46	Female	SOSU helper	28 years	Happy with working with the elderly and salary is fine, but too many tasks and miss more colleagues. Less and less time to care for the elderly. Works fulltime.

LTC 4	Institutional care PU	48	Female	SOSU assistant	24 years	Delighted with her work and salary. Lack of competent and qualified colleagues. Works nightshifts fulltime.
LTC 5	Home care PU	47	Female	SOSU assistant	20 years	Generally happy to work with the elderly, but often too much work pressure and lack of qualified colleagues. Recently one year on sick leave with work-related stress. Works fulltime.
LTC 6	Home care PU	60	Female	SOSU helper	22 years	Likes to work with people and elderly, but work pressure is way too high and lack stable qualified colleagues. Way too much time spend on documentation and admin. Works 34 hours.
LTC 7	Institutional care PU	62	Female	SOSU helper	18 years	Happy to work with the elderly and works nightshifts, which is appreciated since it is very independent. Too busy, too much documentation. Elderly need more care than previously.
ECEC 1	Institutional care NP	46	Female	Pedagogue	15 months in current position	Finds working with children with special needs satisfying. Works 35 hours per week.
ECEC 2	Institutional care PU	41	Male	Pedagogue/ Trade union rep.	8 years current position	Enjoys working with children + combining the work a position as a trade union rep. Works full-time.
ECEC 3	Institutional care PU	24	Male	Pedagogical helper	2 years in position in focus	Has a great interest in working with children. Worked part-time as a pedagogical helper. Now studying to become a pedagogue.

ECEC4	Institutional care NP	43	Female	Pedagogue	14 months in current position	One of the great joys of the job is the feeling of having a direct impact on the children's life.
ECEC5	Institutional care PU	62	Female	Pedagogue	2 years in current position, 25 years ECEC	'Lovely children' are the main motivation to work in the sector. Works long part-time (30 hours/week).

Note: PU = public. NP = non-profit private. FP= for-profit private.

The interviewees in *Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)* were aged 24-64. Two of the five interviewees were male, although women make up the large majority of the employees in ECEC. One of the interviewees was now a full-time pedagogical student but had been working within ECEC for the last year, and another interviewee was a former business economist who had experienced problems getting employed within his original occupations and therefore changed to ECEC. The interviewees came from Copenhagen and the provincial areas (Eastern Jutland). They covered public and non-profit workplaces, and an interviewee had previously worked in a for-profit institution. There are three main occupations in ECEC (apart from family carers). Four of the interviewees were pedagogues, who have a so-called professional bachelor-degree entailing three years and six months of dual education and are comparable to 'pre-school teachers' in other countries. There were no pedagogical assistants among the interviewees. This is a vocational education of 3 years and 1 month duration, which also takes the form of dual education, but a gymnasium degree is not needed to start the education. One interviewee is a pedagogical helper. They work in day care centers alongside other trained staff and require no further formal training. All ECEC-interviewees but one German with Dutch origin were Danish citizens.

3. Perception of working conditions and job quality

3.1 LTC

The LTC-interviewees generally enjoy their work and find it very meaningful and motivating. All interviewees expressed that they often do not have sufficient time to carry out the work to their satisfaction, and several of them experience a constant lack of qualified and motivated colleagues, which can be straining and lead to sick leave. Some expressed that they are always too busy, while others mostly experience a too heavy workload when colleagues call in sick. When their workplace uses temporary workers, the interviewees reported that these are often either very expensive or not qualified to carry out the tasks, which again affects the workload for permanent staff. According to several interviewees, the work requires specialized skills due to complicated health issues such as dementia and other psychological diagnoses among the elderly.

'We lack skilled colleagues, for example nurses and social and health assistants. Often people expect to get a job where they can sit in an office and do some paperwork, and that's not what we need.'
(SOSU-assistant in institutional care).

One interviewee working in home care explained that his team has completely stopped using temporary staff and has instead chosen to cover each other in case of sickness absence. This has relieved much stress since the employees no longer need to worry about working with unqualified and unmotivated temps when colleagues get sick.

All interviewed stressed that they spend way too much time on documentation and administrative tasks, which affect the service they can give the elderly. They experience that the problem has been continuously increasing over time. Years ago, it was often possible to drink a cup of coffee and chat with the elderly once in a while, but that is often impossible today. There are too many tasks and boxes to tick.

'I think there is a lot more documentation than previously. I constantly feel that we have to defend what we do every day. And we must document it all the time. You must constantly follow-up on some things, and it just takes a toll on you. To a certain extent, it's good that there must be documentation. But I also just feel that we all go around with this feeling... I must document everything to keep my own back clear. And that's a shame, I think. If you could remove it, that would be optimal, but I don't know how to do it. Now we've also got GDPR and all these things. And we must be careful all the time with what we write in relation to the fact that there is access to documents. So, you always feel You have a spotlight on you' (SOSU-helper in home care).

All employees interviewed were overall satisfied with their salary and pointed out that salary is not their main concern. They would all prefer more qualified colleagues and more time to perform their tasks. One respondent even mentioned that she fears even higher salaries might attract staff who are not really motivated to work with the elderly and will leave as soon as they find other work with similar

or higher salaries. This will affect the permanent staff who spend a lot of time onboarding and training new staff.

'I don't hear any of my colleagues complaining that they think they are paid too little.' (SOSU-helper in home care)

Most interviewees work long part-time (32-35 hours per week), while a few work full-time (37 hours per week). Some have increased their working hours from 32 to 35 hours but are reluctant to work full-time due to the heavy workload they experience. Several mentioned the paradox that they miss more qualified colleagues but are reluctant to work full time. However, most find understaffing to be a systemic and structural problem, and all mention that less administration and documentation would help.

The interviewees working night shifts seem to experience fewer problems related to staff shortages. Moreover, they are to a higher degree able to perform and plan their tasks independently. In sum, the interviewees working nightshift seem to be the most satisfied employees. They have fewer issues with their working environment.

3.2 ECEC

The interviewees whose jobs were all covered by the municipalities' collective agreements with the trade unions expressed general satisfaction with their current jobs/the latest jobs in ECEC. All interviewees described their own wages as at least acceptable, whereas two of the interviewees found that wages of pedagogues in general were too low:

'On a structural level, I find that the wages are low. The job we perform as pedagogues is important for the whole society. We deliver an infrastructure that upholds the society' (ECEC3)

With regard to working conditions and workload, all interviewees aired satisfaction, but they did point out problems as well. Although the interviewees found the tempo was high, the general impression was that this is an unavoidable part of working in childcare. The workload was in general not found to be too high. However, especially the early and late hours of the day can be demanding, as the presence of staff at these hours is reduced more relative to the absence of children.

Furthermore, the staff/child ratio was described as fair or good in the workplaces in focus, especially in the two non-profit workplaces. However, one of the interviewees found it worrying that the municipality, in which the interviewee's workplace is situated, in order to limit costs is planning to reduce the ratio between pedagogues on the one hand and pedagogical assistants and helpers on the other hand, so that the pedagogues only make up 44 % of all employees. This ratio is also a general concern of the trade unions organizing the pedagogues, the Association of Child and Youth Educators (BUPL), as described in the Danish WP2-report.

Despite the general satisfaction with the workload, two of the five interviews had in previous positions in the sub-sector experienced long-term sick leave due to work-related stress. For one of these, the problem was related to the staff/children ratio and working time:

'Now I am in an institution with many pedagogues and then the burden is shared....I was previous employed in an institution with three nursery rooms and only two pedagogies. In my room, we had three pedagogical helpers and no pedagogues, and I was the only one working full-time. We were groping blindly around. I ended up being on sick leave with stress for seven months' (ECEC4)

This quote furthermore illustrates the problems found in at least two of the ECEC interviewees' workplaces of being able to attract pedagogues, while it was much easier to employ pedagogical helpers, especially the less experienced younger ones.

The interviewees pointed to other factors than wages and workload as important for job quality and job satisfaction. One such factor was colleagues, which was found to be important for job satisfaction:

'The main reason for me being satisfied with my job is that I really have good colleagues' (ECEC1)

Another factor was management, which was highlighted in all interviews. Managements effect on job satisfaction could be positive as well as negative. All interviewees expressed various positive aspects of their current management, such as the extent to which the management paid attention to parts of the childcare institution with special circumstances. An example of this is a childcare institution that is not specialized in children with special needs but still has a high share of them:

'Now I have some children with special needs. In my room, we have four, and one more is coming. The positive thing about it is that my management shows a huge understanding of this situation. It contributes to a situation where the management approach us and asks what they can do to ensure that you are able to have a good workday under these conditions' (ECEC1)

However, two of the interviewees have had very bad experiences with management in their previous positions in the sub-sector, and one found that her present management was not visible enough. One of the experiences with past management had to do with the hiring of a new local manager who did not fit the job and the higher-level managers slow response to this:

'Finally, after one year she has been fired because she did not comply with the values...at that time I think 13 pedagogues had left....The person was very direct and not very oriented towards the staff' (ECEC 2)

The experience of another interviewee was linked to a work-related health problem (herniated disc) that the management accordingly did not take seriously. A long stress period followed:

'I was unlucky and got a herniated disc. Nobody listened, and I felt I could not take sick leave. In the end, they fired me...But then they reemployed me as they could see they had a bad case... The day I

return to the kindergarten, my manager avoids talking to me when I am trying to say something, so I end with a one-and-a-half year long sick leave due to stress' (ECEC 1)

Despite the limited number of ECEC interviews, they include experienced variations in job quality between public, non-profit, and for-profit institutions as one of the interviewees has work experience from all three types. These experiences paint a picture of municipal childcare institutions where it is more difficult to get access to management, non-profit workplaces with easier access to management and faster changes, and for-profit workplaces that focus more on budgets and profits than care:

'Decisions and actions happen faster where I am now [non-profit]....the issue does not have to pass so many units as in the municipalities... the accounts are more open if you want something that costs money...I have tried one for profit institution...they were in the game to make money...it was not about professionalism. It was sufficient to be together with the children, to take care of them, and to make it look good to the parents' (ECEC 1)

This picture was by and large confirmed by the interviewee ECEC4, who is currently working in a non-profit institution. This interviewee added that she furthermore found the cooperation with the parents to be closer in the non-profit workplaces. However, we should not generalize from the experiences of two interviewees, which could also partly be related to the different sizes of the workplaces. However, at least some of these observations reflect the more general picture of the differences described in the WP2-report. The ECEC4-biography also illustrates that employment in ECEC can be physically demanding and comes with risks.

Another interviewee, ECEC2, pointed to less severe but still noteworthy health issues, such as a higher frequency of colds, flu, and fever, among others.

4. Possible solutions identified by the caregivers to improve their conditions

4.1 LTC

All interviewees mentioned a lack of qualified and motivated colleagues. Most of the interviewees' workplaces call in temps, but it puts even more stress on the staff because the temps are not always familiar with the workplace, the elderly, tasks, etc. Often, they are not qualified and some experience that they also often lack motivation working with the elderly.

'It's simply the number of staff that's too low. That's it. And that's because the budgets are so tight that there's no room for free time, or what we call white time, on our driving lists, which would allow a chat with the elderly.' (SOSU-helper in home care with 28 years of experience).

One interviewee working in home care stated that temps from agencies are often competent but have no knowledge about the specific needs of the elderly and are draining the budgets. This interviewee is part of a self-organizing team with big autonomy to schedule their own tasks. They decided a few years back to cover for each other instead of using temps when someone calls in sick, which has removed the fear of working with temps when someone calls in sick. This solution has lowered the sick leave rate significantly in the workplace concerned. Generally, more involvement of staff in the planning of shifts and tasks, or even self-planning teams, was mentioned by several interviewees as a way to improve working conditions, especially in home care.

'We have been working concentrated for over two years now to improve the working environment, incorporate flexibility, and minimize sick leave. It has increased the working environment, job satisfaction, joy, and psychological security tremendously. It has lowered our sick leave rate from 11%–12% to just around 5, where it is now. The project has been so successful that we visited other municipalities to share our experiences' (SOSU-helper in self-planning home care team).

All interviewed mentioned documentation and administration demands as a major challenge. They all expressed that they spent an increasing amount of time on documentation, which takes time away from their core assignments. Lack of sufficient time also means that they very rarely have time to chat with the elderly, which can frustrate the elderly as well as themselves. They all feel powerless in addressing these structural and systemic issues and believe it must be solved by management and policy makers. Several mentioned the need to amend the national Health Care Act and the Service Act to lower the demands for documentation.

Most interviewees expressed that they regret the image of elder care work in the general public and believe that more people would find the work attractive if they knew more about the positive features. All agree that youth workers in elder care is a good idea, but it can be problematic in relation to home care.

Several interviewees mentioned that physical working conditions have improved due to the introduction of machines and tools to lift and bath elderly, among others.

4.2 ECEC

All interviewees showed a relatively high level of job satisfaction. Therefore, it is not surprising that only a few possible solutions to improve the conditions were mentioned. An interviewee had just experienced a requested change in the right direction regarding work organization:

'if you had asked me 3-4 months ago, I would have pointed to something. But we have pointed out some problems, and actions have been taken. Part of the problem was that in my room, the children only passed by for 10 months. Then, they were passed on to another room. It was hard for me as well as for the children....But we are in the middle of a process now leading to a situation where the children avoid this shift and we can work with them more in-depth' (ECEC1).

Another interviewee working in an institution on a street with multiple childcare institutions asked for more experimentation and variation in work organization. However, the concern of the interviewee was more service quality than job quality:

'All institutions structure the day in the same way. This is not necessarily the best way to do it. All institutions have a plenary with the children at 9 and lunch at 11 and then something from 2 o'clock. And it is like that every day. It could be a good thing with something that brakes up this pattern just a little bit' (ECEC3).

5. Workers' voice

5.1 LTC

All interviewees work in public institutions or public home care, and all have a shop steward in their workplace, or a 'common' shop steward covering their workplace, that initiates information meetings and voice challenges to management and the trade union. The shop stewards' level of activity varies a lot across workplaces, but most interviewees expressed that shop stewards do what they can to help and improve working conditions. However, as stated above, the main issues concerning working conditions are found to be determined by structural or systemic challenges that neither shop stewards nor management can solve themselves. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees expressed satisfaction with their shop steward and the level of information they received. Some workplaces have regular meetings with shop stewards, whereas such meetings seem less frequent in others. All interviewees knew their shop stewards and felt confident that they would do their best to help in case of problems and challenges. For most, the shop steward is their only link to their trade union.

'Unfortunately, I actually think it is the structural conditions which are the main problem. The shop stewards are struggling. There are some politics in it. There is a lot of politics in it... They do a hell of a lot of things, but they are also tied on hand and foot, there is no doubt about it' (SOSU-helper on shop-steward)

Most, if not all workplaces, also have work environment representatives, who normally work close together with the shop stewards.

Most interviewees were well aware of the three national initiatives targeting labour shortages described in WP3: The tripartite wage lift, the 'parttime to full-time' project, and the introduction of inspiration positions for youth workers in elder care centres and nursing homes.

All interviewees knew about the special tripartite wage lift from 2023. They all appreciated the wage lift, but without exception felt that more colleagues would have been better. Some expressed that they did not really feel the wage lift due to increasing prices.

'I believe that the only thing the salary increase has done is to retain those who are already in the profession. There is a lot of talk about the need to improve this profession, and of course we do, but we cannot avoid the fact that the profession contains what it contains. And as long as there is not enough staff to take care of the professional tasks, things will run fast. And no one wants to go into a profession... of course there is, but there are a lot of those we get in, and they go on to other educations because they simply can't handle looking at a driving list, where there are maybe 12 visits, which includes two cleanings and three morning visits. It is not a dream for anyone to get a job like that' (SOSU-helper in home care)

'I think the wage lift definitely makes a difference for many people. I think it makes them feel that they are actually appreciated for what they do every day.' SOSU-assistant in an elder care institution on the wage lift.

All interviewees had heard about the 'from part-time to full-time' project and felt it had some effect. Some interviewees had themselves gone up a few hours, and all knew colleagues who did the same. However, only a few interviewees work full time. Most expressed that the work was too hard to work the full 37 hours.

'I'm just afraid that the way things are going right now, it's way too hard, and there are a lot of people who say no because they simply can't do more hours. And I know that if they said yes, it would actually be less hard—so it's a bit...' (SOSU-assistant in institutional care on 'parttime to full time')

Most had also either heard about or had experience with youth workers in elder care. Everyone had positive experiences with youth workers, and all agreed it was a good idea to introduce elder care work to the youth, and most believed it could help improve the image of elder care work among the general population. Even the home care workers had heard positive stories about the youth workers but did not believe it would work out in home care.

'I wish we had the same thing here in the Municipality of Copenhagen. Because I am well aware that for me as a professional who has to go in and help someone, it would not help me in building a relationship with the person I am going to help. But it would still help in the way that I knew that when I walked out the door, there were still others who were listening, etc. So I really wish we had it in the Municipality of Copenhagen' (SOSU-assistant in institutional care in Copenhagen).

5.2 ECEC

All the interviewees' workplaces were covered by collective agreements, the workplaces had trade union representatives, and all the interviewees were trade union members. Moreover, an interviewee had taken a position as trade union representative (shop steward). He took the position due to the problematic relations with the management described above

All interviewees have used the trade union representatives and/or the trade unions themselves and have found the reps/trade union efforts useful, although one interviewee in the distant past had a disappointing experience with her trade union and left it for a period. Moreover, all interviewees expressed satisfaction with their current trade union rep. One of the interviewees was for a period a member of one of the yellow unions because it was cheaper and her budget as a single parent was very tight. However, she is now back in the traditional and more expensive trade union Association of Child and Youth Educators (BUPL), as she trusted this trade union more and had good experience with it:

'I am a member of BUPL again. I have been so lucky to be a member of that union when I needed a union. I did not have confidence that they [the yellow union] knew enough about the collective agreement I work under, my working conditions, etc.' (ECEC 1).

One of the other interviewees emphasized that the question was not only about being a member of a trade union or not, but also about the profile of the trade union:

'On a personal level, I found LFS [a trade union within FOA] to be a trade union I could relate to—a real trade union working for the members' conditions—and a trade union which the members' trust. I feel both on a personal and pedagogical level aligned with them' (ECEC2).

This interviewee (ECEC3) had both taken part in trade union activities - a demonstration for the 'wagelift' at the square in front of the Parliament - and used the relevant shop steward at the workplace in relation to sickness period (not caused by work-related factors):

The interviewee being a trade union rep for obvious reasons had closer contacts with the relevant trade unions than the other interviewees. In addition, he used his network to other trade union reps a lot:

'I use my network of shop stewards, but often the first step is to contact the joint shop steward. It is him that you can brainstorm with and who is the center of the web. If he cannot answer, I will contact the regional office, BUPL Østjylland. They have good caseworkers that can help' (ECEC2)

Of the four case-initiatives from the Danish WP3-report, the interviewees had heard about two of them: the wage-lift for certain public sector employers (including ECEC-workers) and the nation-wide projects to increase working time for municipal employees, including ECEC-workers. The wage-lift was noted by all interviewees as positive, although not as something that fundamentally changed their situation.

'One person from the trade union came and checked our pay checks to ensure that we had received the Wage Lift and that we were sure what it was. That was excellent. It is the first time in 20 years that I experience getting more as it is on a level where you feel the difference' (ECEC1)

However, one interviewee (ECEC2) argued that the wage lift could or should have been bigger.

Notably, the fact that all employees at the collective bargaining round 2024 received relatively large wage increases and that the targeted wagelift was gradually implemented might have dampened its effects.

Regarding the full-time national project, none of the workplaces in focus had been involved in this, but one of the interviewees knew about the project and knew that the municipality in which his workplace is situated had been involved. All of the interviewees' workplaces had a strong presence of – especially long – part-time employees, but none of the interviewees reported structured efforts to increase the average working time. As the interviewees were not directly involved in the recruitment

processes, their knowledge about the extent to which the labour shortages effected their workplaces was limited. However, one of the interviews reported on ongoing problems in attracting the highest educated staff-level, the pedagogues, whereas less problems were found in relation to the pedagogical assistants and the pedagogical helpers. This pattern mirrors the pattern reported in the Danish WP2-report.

6. Conclusions

Below we will briefly summarise the most important findings from this WP4 report. Initially, we will repeat that the findings cannot be generalised. This is due to the fact that the number of interviews is low – especially in ECEC – and not in all regards representative for the employees in the sub-sectors as such. To illuminate this, we will in short form make comparisons with the findings from the Danish WP2 overview report.

Firstly, the WP4 report paints a picture of a high level of job satisfaction in both LTC and ECEC. All interviewees found it meaningful and motivating working with the elderly and children. Good colleagues with cooperative approaches and good management were among the most important factors for employees being satisfied. Although parts of these findings - e.g. the meaningfulness of the work - are also found in the WP2-report, the high level of job satisfaction is nevertheless noteworthy. It is difficult to tell if this is due to a selection bias or not.

Secondly, it is also noteworthy that wages were not among the most pressing concerns, neither among the LTC-interviewees nor among the ECEC-interviewees, although some expressed that wages in the sector in general still were too low. This is partly in contradiction to the WP2-report, which describes a year-long equal pay and low-pay battle covering both LTC and ECEC and furthermore indicates that the ECEC-employees' wages – at least until very recently – were below the level they could expect their education, responsibilities, and tasks considered. The special wage-lift implemented from 2024 might explain the difference here. The WP2-report concerns a longer period up to when the wage-lift was implemented, whereas the WP4-interviewees have experienced the implementation of the wage-lift recently.

The WP4-report shows, thirdly, that despite the high level of job satisfaction, a high workload is a major working condition concern, but more so in LTC than in ECEC. This is in line with the findings of the WP2-report. The WP4 interviewees from LTC emphasise that a lack of colleagues/staff shortages is a major reason for this problem. Another major reason is the documentation demands leaving too little time for the core tasks. In ECEC, the WP2-report states that the focus is more on service quality than on job quality, although job quality problems naturally exist here. Minimum staff norms (staff/children ratios) are currently being implemented. The WP4- interviewees found the staff/children ratios at their workplaces to be fair, but several commented on the problems with the share of skilled pedagogues, which in part is related to labour and skill shortages.

Fourth, regarding the WP4- findings on collective representation, trade union membership was high among the interviewees in both LTC and ECEC, and all interviewees were covered by collective

agreements. There was among the interviewees a general trust and positive attitude towards the trade union reps (present in all workplaces). These reps were often the only link to the trade unions. But there were also concerns about the power of the trade union reps and their room to manoeuvre. One of the findings from the WP2-report, which is not mirrored in the WP4-report due to a selection bias, is the pockets of care not covered by collective agreements found in LTC (especially among small for-profit providers) and ECEC (especially in private family care). The WP4 interviewees were, with two non-profit exceptions, all currently employed in public entities.