

*Final conference DEVCOPA project
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What makes Quality Jobs in the Care Sector?

Take-aways from the European Care Strategy implementation

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LTC Recommendation

Quality employment and fair working conditions

- national social dialogue and collective bargaining
- attractive wages
- adequate working arrangements
- non-discrimination
- occupational health and safety
- addressing the challenges of vulnerable groups of workers (e.g. domestic LTC workers, live-in care workers and migrant care workers)

Professionalisation of care and addressing skills needs and worker shortages

- initial and continuous education and training
- career pathways (incl. upskilling, reskilling, skills validation, and information and guidance)
- pathways to a regular employment status for undeclared LTC workers
- legal migration pathways for LTC workers
- professional standards, attractive professional status and career prospects
- adequate social protection
- tackle gender stereotypes and gender segregation



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Defining LTC workforce

- people in employment (for pay or profit) providing LTC services as their main job
- working in various LTC settings (residential care, community-based care, and home care)
- key occupational categories: nurses, personal care workers, social workers, and other healthcare professionals providing direct or indirect care

Identified in statistics through the crossing of ISCO codes (occupation) and NACE codes (economic activity)

ISCO-2-digit	ISCO-3-digit	ISCO-4-digit	87				
22 Health professionals	222 Nursing and midwifery professionals	2221 Nursing professionals			87.1	Residential care activities	
		2222 Midwifery professionals			87.10	Residential nursing care activities	
		226 Other health professionals		2264 Physiotherapists		87.2	Residential care activities for mental retardation, mental health and substance abuse
	2266 Audiologists and speech therapists				87.20	Residential care activities for mental retardation, mental health and substance abuse	
	Also dentists, pharmacists, dieticians, optometrists etc.				87.3	Residential care activities for the elderly and disabled	
	26 Legal, social and cultural professionals	263 Social and religious professionals		2634 Psychologists		87.30	Residential care activities for the elderly and disabled
2635 Social work and counselling professionals					87.9	Other residential care activities	
Also economists, sociologists, historians, philosophers, religious professionals etc.					87.90	Other residential care activities	
				88			Social work activities without accommodation
					88.1		Social work activities without accommodation for the elderly and disabled
					88.10	Social work activities without accommodation for the elderly and disabled	
32 Health associate professionals	322 Nursing and midwifery associate professionals	3221 Nursing associate professionals				88.9	Other social work activities without accommodation
		3222 Midwifery associate professionals				88.91	Child day-care activities
						88.99	Other social work activities without accommodation n.e.c.
53 Personal care workers	532 Personal care workers in health services	5321 Healthcare assistants					
		5322 Home-based personal care workers					

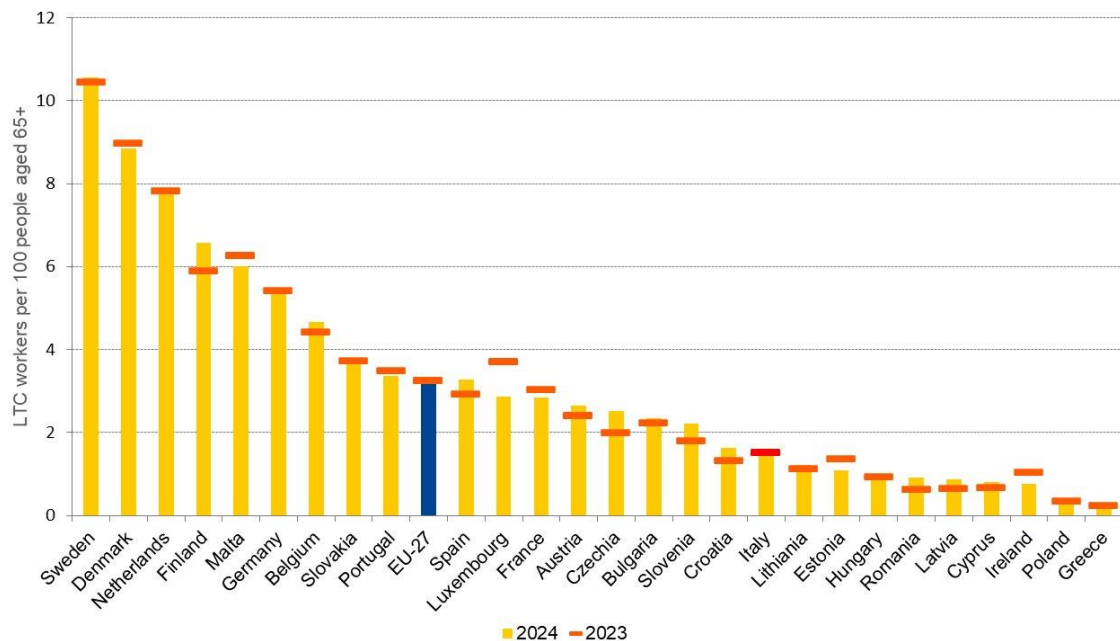
Measuring the workforce challenges

Performance indicator	Policy lever	Context information
Coverage of collective bargaining (SES)	Ratification of ILO Domestic Workers Convention	Full-time LTC workers
Gross hourly wages for LTC workers (SES)		LTC workers with permanent contracts
LTC workers per 100 individuals 65+ (LFS)		LTC workers working shifts
LTC workers not participating in education and training (LFS)		Non-fatal accidents at work
		LTC workers aged 55+
		Personal care workers/ nurses in LTC
		LTC workers in residential/ non-residential care
		LTC workers by job tenure
		LTC workers by educational levels
		Women in the LTC workforce

The EU Monitoring Framework on the Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care (2025)



Key data



- 3.2 million LTC workers, 1.6% of EU workforce + domestic care workers + undeclared work
- mostly personal care workers (65%), followed by nurses (29%)
- mostly women (87%)
- 3.3 LTC workers for every 100 individuals aged 65+ in 2024, showing a very small improvement compared with 2023; high variability among Member States
- 58.8% in full-time employment
- average hourly gross wage around 90% of the economy-wide average (69% for personal care workers)
- difficult working conditions (46% in shift work, high incidence of non-fatal accidents at work)
- insufficient career progression pathways and access to upskilling opportunities

European Care Strategy: evidence on LTC workforce

- [Addressing knowledge gaps with regard to the long-term care workforce](#) (ESPAN)
- [Application of EU labour law in the long-term care sector](#) (Thematic Review 2022-2023, ECE)
- [Access for domestic workers to labour and social protection: An analysis of policies in 34 European countries](#) (ESPAN)
- [OSH in figures in the Health and Social Care Sector](#) (EU-OSHA)
- [Undeclared care work in the EU](#) (Eurofound)
- [The EU Monitoring Framework on the Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care](#)

Key findings

- **Large variations** across countries in terms of jobs profiles, type and place of employment
- Specific challenges faced by more **vulnerable groups**, such as domestic workers, live-in carers or migrant workers
- Prevalence of **un(der)declared work** in the sector impacts adequate **access to labour and social protection**
- **Risk of in-work poverty** in some countries due to combination of part-time and/or fixed-term contracts with low hourly wages
- Challenges in the **enforcement of labour rights**
- **Higher levels of work-related stress & of exposure to a multitude of risk factors** (i.e. musculoskeletal, psychosocial, chemical & biological risks)



European Care Strategy: OSH in the health and social care sector (1)

Policy pointers

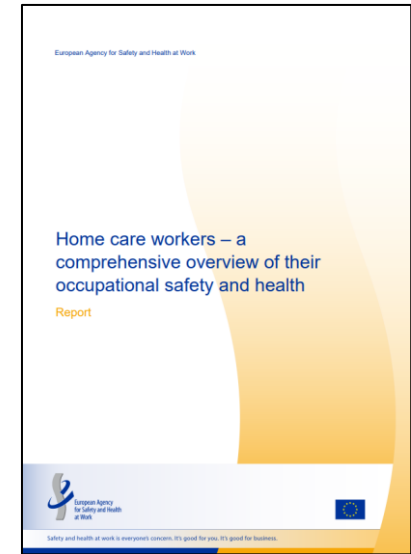
- **Cross-sector action** is needed to **improve OSH** for LTC workers and thus guaranteeing **high-quality health and LTC care services**
- **Intersectional approach** to risk prevention, assessments and management
- Stronger action at workplace, sectoral, national and EU level is needed to tackle **musculoskeletal risks** and prevent **mental health issues**
- Regular **psychosocial risks assessments** are needed, with clear guidelines for identifying, evaluating and managing risks and OSH outputs
- Targeted interventions are needed to address both musculoskeletal and psychosocial risks, which often **interact**



European Care Strategy: OSH in the health and social care sector (2)

Policy pointers

- Specific **challenges** related to **home-based care**:
 - Challenging OSH prevention conditions in the work environment
 - Undeclared work and precarious employment conditions
- **Sector-specific risk assessment and prevention tools** for home care environments, including **digital tools** for real-time monitoring and support
- Strengthen **workers' professional autonomy** to reduce role conflict and encourage teamwork to strengthen **mutual support** and promote **flexibility and predictability** of work schedules
- Improve **equipment and ergonomics** and offer **training programmes** on patient handling
- Involvement of workers, as well as clients and their families, in OSH efforts
- Ensure minimum **social protection and employment rights** and encourage **formalization via financial/administrative incentives**
- Improve oversight of **cross-border placements** and **digital platforms**
- Boost **training and collective bargaining** to support career and wage progression



European Care Strategy: European Labour Authority focus on LTC

Understanding Labour Mobility in LTC: 2026 ELA Report

- Targeting both residential and home-care settings
- Focus on labour market of the LTC sector, recruitment patterns and challenges, working conditions, enforcement of labour law and information needs of LTC workers
- Report launch in **Q2 2026**

Raising Awareness: ELA's 2026 LTC Information Campaign

- Target audience: employers, employees, policymakers, social partners and general public
- Goals: increase awareness of EU legislation, highlight the benefits of declared work, and address key challenges identified in the report
- Campaign launch will **align with the report** launch in **Q2 2026**



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European Care Strategy: workforce skills

Large-Scale Skills Partnership under the Pact for Skills

- Launched April 2023
- Brings together MS, social partners, education and training providers, and major care organisations
- Target for **60% of LTC workers to receive annual training by 2030**
- Strong training output (2023):
 - €310M invested
 - training for 3.5M people
 - 48k training programmes updated

Care4Skills

- **EU-funded** initiative under the LSP
- Developing vocational curricula, digital and green skills modules, and a **Sectoral Skills Strategy** to guide national and EU actions on workforce, development, training, and policy reform
- Implementation and monitoring of the **Rapid Response Training Programme**:
 - More than 1,5000 learners via the **Knowledge Hub**
 - Evaluation underway to inform scalable training models for entry-level care staff



European Care Strategy: LTC research funded by Horizon Europe

The **Care4Care project** aims to support knowledge transfer and contribute to real improvements in the care sector across Europe by linking better job quality directly to care quality.

- **Improve job quality & recognition:** develop career pathways, ensure EU-wide qualification recognition, guarantee fair pay, and strengthen collective bargaining
- **Enhance health & safety:** enforce working-time rules, ensure safe staffing, address psychosocial risks (stress, burnout, violence), and support an EU directive on PSR
- **Strengthen rights for live-in carers:** implement ILO Convention 189, ensure equal labour rights in private households, and prevent bogus self-employment
- **Support ethical migration pathways:** simplify recognition of foreign qualifications, ensure equal pay and rights, and develop an EU admission scheme for care professionals
- **Advance gender equality:** integrate gender equality across care policies, enforce the Equal Pay Directive, and promote women's leadership in care
- **Improve funding & governance:** attach social clauses to public funding, enhance coordination across sectors, and use ESF+ and ELA to support reforms and quality standards



Examples of Member States actions

AT: Sector-wide collective agreements; new specialist nursing roles (Professional law); supported upskilling and income continuity; workforce & demand forecasting (Care Reform, 2022)

DE: Concerted Action on Care; tariff-equivalent wage requirement to access statutory insurance reimbursement (2022); higher sectoral minimum wages (2024)

DK: Mentoring/co-teaching & simulation training; two vocational pathways with flexible entry

ES: Continuous training & standardized qualifications (Accreditation and Quality Agreement, 2022); wage increases; reduced hours; 80% permanent contracts; higher staffing ratios (National Agreement for Private and Public-Managed Care Centers, 2023)

FI: Apprenticeship pathways for care assistants to become practical nurses; continuous competence assessments

IT: New family/community nurse roles integrated into multiprofessional teams

June 2025 Webinar: “Towards a more coherent framework for addressing long-term care workforce challenges: from evidence to policy responses”



Thank you!



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Additional background

Other EU-level support actions (1)

❖ Mutual learning and policy dialogues with the LTC coordinators

❖ Workforce-related initiatives
(social dialogue and pact for skills)

Commission decision setting up the European social dialogue committee for social services

As part of the follow-up to the 2022 Care Strategy and the 2023 Social Dialogue Initiative, the Commission adopted on 10 July 2023 a decision setting up the European social dialogue committee for social services.



Pact for Skills: launch of large-scale skills partnership for long-term care

Today, long-term care service providers, social partners and education and training providers, with the support of the European Commission, have set up a large-scale skills partnership for the long-term care sector.



❖ Partnership and cooperation with OECD, WHO, GO LTC



Self-care and care competences for informal caregivers

Launch of online training
29th October 2025



❖ EU funding (ESF+, EASI, ERDF, TSI, RRF, HORIZON Europe, Digital Europe, ERASMUS+, etc.)



EU-level support actions (2)

❖ **Studies and policy briefs** (CEDEFOP, EUROFOUND, EU-OSHA, analytical package LTC workforce)

❖ **Statistics** (Task Force for LTC statistics led by ESTAT)

❖ **Perspectives 2027** (Commission report on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care, EC-SPC Triennial Report on Adequate Social Protection in Old Age)



❖ **EU-level policy coordination processes** (European Semester, social Open Method of Coordination)

Resources

- [Long-term care - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion](#)
- [Commission Communication on a European Care Strategy](#)
- [Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care](#)
- [The EU Monitoring Framework on the Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care](#)
- [Thematic analysis: Recovery and Resilience Facility \(RRF\) funding for Member States to strengthen and build resilient long-term care systems - European Commission](#)
- [Addressing knowledge gaps with regard to the long-term care workforce \(ESPAN\)](#)
- [Application of EU labour law in the long-term care sector \(Thematic Review 2022-2023, ECE\)](#)
- [Access for domestic workers to labour and social protection: An analysis of policies in 34 European countries \(ESPAN\)](#)
- [Health and social care sector and OSH | Safety and health at work EU-OSHA](#)
- [OSH in figures in the Health and Social Care Sector \(EU-OSHA\)](#)
- [Framework of Action on Retention and Recruitment in the Care sector](#)
- Eurofound (2025), [Unpaid care in the EU](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg
- Eurofound (2025), [Undeclared care work in the EU: Policy approaches to a complex socioeconomic challenge](#), Eurofound research paper, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg
- [Care and self-care competences for informal caregivers – Caring for yourself](#)
- [Care and self-care competences for informal caregivers – Caring for another](#)
- [State of long-term care: conceptual framework for assessment and continuous learning in long-term care systems](#)

Relevant OSH projects

Ongoing Research projects

- Research project – Musculoskeletal Health (focus on primary prevention) (report)
- Research area project – Mental Health (focus on primary prevention) (report)
- Research area project – OSH in home care sector (report)
- Research area project – “EU-OSHA’s Workers’ exposure survey on cancer risk factors in Europe” data related to HeSCare sector
- Research area project – Work-related accidents in the HeSCare – Why are they so prevalent and have increased in such a way over the last 10 years? (report)

Research projects planned for next year

- Research area project – Mental Health II (focus on secondary and tertiary prevention) (report)
- Research area project – Musculoskeletal Health II (focus on secondary and tertiary prevention) (report)
- Research area project – OSH in the residential (long-term) care sector (report)
- Research area project – OSH in the Healthcare sector (report)



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