

PR4-T2

A practical guide for extending social security and protection to domestic care workers and other categories of workers



**UPSKILLING DOMESTIC CARE WORKERS TO ENSURE
RESILIENT EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS**



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1. INTRODUCTION

The health and social services sector is experiencing significant growth but faces challenges such as an aging population, globalization, and cultural diversity, leading to increased social service needs. Social inequality has negative consequences for health and social cohesion. New policy trends, including deinstitutionalization, influence health and social services. Domestic care services have become crucial in EU countries due to changing family care practices, demographic shifts, and a preference for home-based care, especially in a post-COVID-19 EU.

Paid domestic work, traditionally associated with unpaid work by women, has evolved into a diverse sector with a broad set of tasks. The pandemic expanded the duties of domestic workers, including the use of technology for client monitoring and extensive medical care. Domestic care workers exhibit varying skills and competencies, with some being vulnerable and facing risks of contagion, social precarity, and exploitation.

1.1 The DOCUP Project

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted domestic care workers, care recipients, and agencies, exacerbating existing challenges. Governmental bodies and agencies responded with policy changes. Domestic care workers and agencies play a vital role in providing medical and administrative services and supporting individuals to stay at home. The personal and household services sector accounts for 9.5 million jobs, constituting 4% of total employment in the EU-27. The sector is currently grappling with a substantial domestic care skills gap that requires identification. Personal and household services encompass care activities (63%), such as childcare, assistance to the elderly, and support for the dependent or disabled (excluding healthcare), and non-care activities (37%) including cleaning, laundry, meal preparation, gardening, small house repairs, and private lessons.

The presented guidebook created for the Erasmus+ KA220 project, **DoCUp**, aims to address these challenges by offering a comprehensive framework for upskilling domestic care workers, along with flexible training methods and open-access resources focusing on practical, technological, and organizational aspects of teaching and learning.

1.2 Methodology

To ensure a thorough understanding of actual skill needs and workplace requirements, three distinct groups were consulted: domestic care workers, care receivers, and intermediates. Information collection activities sought to identify existing knowledge, skills, needs, and competencies in medical care, digital and administrative skills, and soft skills. The research endeavoured to address emerging workplace needs, especially those highlighted during the challenges posed by the 2020 pandemic across the European Union.

The research employed a combination of desk and field research. Desk research focused on gathering evidence regarding the challenges and working skills that domestic care workers must consider, both at a European and national level in partner countries. Secondary research supplemented this effort by collecting information on existing training provisions in domestic care services. Field research involved an online survey targeting the three identified groups to assess the skills and competencies required for effective domestic care service provision.

The research questions were the following:

- What were the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic care provision? What are the new challenges faced by domestic care workers?
- What are the training needs of domestic care workers resulting from the increasing demand for relevant services provision and the work conditions imposed within the pandemic?

The findings from this comprehensive research contribute to shaping a more robust and tailored educational framework for the domestic care sector, emphasizing the practical skills and competencies needed by care workers in response to the evolving demands of their profession.

1.3 Working conditions of domestic care workers based on desk research

The complexity of the sector includes various forms of employment, isolation of female workers, poor social recognition, and recruitment and retention issues due to salary and working hours. Southern

European countries often have domestic home care workers living with families, while countries like Sweden administer such services through municipalities. Personal care workers, including nurses and non-nursing caregivers, assist with daily living activities, instrumental activities, communication, and health monitoring. The aging population increases the demand for long-term care (LTC) workers, but the workforce has stagnated or declined in some countries. Responding to this demand requires policies to improve recruitment, retention, and productivity. Less than one-quarter of LTC workers hold tertiary education across OECD countries. The educational qualifications of personal care workers vary, and many lack formal training. Female-dominated, domestic work has a high rate of feminization in labour migration. Gender aspects are crucial in assessing legislative and policy measures affecting domestic workers.

The desk research highlights diverse contexts and challenges in partner countries (Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden), with common issues in work conditions for care workers. Generally, work conditions are poor, affecting women disproportionately as they dominate the sector. Many care workers have part-time positions, especially personal carers and home-based workers. Shift work, temporary contracts, and low pay are prevalent, with the demanding nature of long-term care (LTC) further exacerbating these challenges.

Migrant domestic workers in Europe, while covered by general labour laws in principle, face obstacles in having their basic rights respected. Legislation and policies at the European level regarding migrant and domestic workers require more consistent implementation across EU Member States. There is a pressing need for recognizing and improving the working conditions of the home employment sector at the European level.

Domestic workers, especially those in undeclared employment, often experience low wages, long hours, and potential abuse. Collective negotiations can lead to better-defined employment conditions and structured benefits for both employers and workers. Undocumented workers face difficulties in claiming their fundamental rights and lack access to social protection, leading to potential exploitation and servitude.

The challenges identified encompass various dimensions including employment conditions, healthcare, and workforce shortages. Additionally, common challenges affecting all countries, particularly exacerbated post-COVID-19, are discussed. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive strategies and policies to address these multifaceted issues and ensure the well-being of both care workers and the recipients of care.

Spain faces challenges in its home care sector characterized by a prevalence of high informal working, contributing to precarious employment and fostering the black economy. The sector grapples with issues related to legal status and limited access to training programs. Furthermore, a noteworthy incidence of poverty is observed among female workers within this sector.

The Greek home care sector confronts a decrease in health self-assessment among workers and an escalation of unmet needs. The financial recession has pervasive negative impacts on various dimensions of healthcare. Additionally, there exists inequality in access, with families assuming the primary responsibility for in-home care.

In Italy, the demand for home care workers is on the rise and includes not only care responsibilities but also the management of domestic tasks. One of the challenges facing the country is the regularisation of these professionals. Indeed, Italy experiences irregular employment of domestic care workers, introducing risks for both workers and care recipients and requiring targeted innovative policies and local initiatives.

Poland grapples with an insufficient supply of home care workers, exacerbating the challenges arising from an aging population. The formal care sector is marred by staff shortages attributed to low pay and challenging working conditions. The physical strain endured by care workers often leads to injuries, accidents, and instances of violence from clients.

Sweden contends with challenges associated with an aging population, resulting in increased life expectancy and more complex care needs among the elderly. Language barriers pose difficulties in meeting the needs of non-Swedish-speaking older individuals. The sector is characterized by a high prevalence of time pressure, burnout risk, and challenges in the digitalization process.

All partner countries, irrespective of their unique challenges, share common hurdles exacerbated post-COVID-19. These challenges include the growing complexities associated with an aging population, unstable work conditions, an expansion of activities, a shift towards increased home-based care, a rise in complex care needs, a burdensome workload, insufficient training for personnel, elevated stress levels, heightened sick leave, difficulty in maintaining quality work, limited mobility, high job stress leading to burnout, an unstable regulatory regime, and potential loss of funding.

This comprehensive overview of challenges underscores the imperative for coordinated efforts at the national and European levels to address the multifaceted issues faced by the home care sector across partner countries.

1.4 Research findings and conclusions

This overview examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the care sector in the European context, focusing on challenges faced and lessons learned. The study highlights the significant consequences on the mental health of care workers, recording high levels of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic disorder symptoms. Factors contributing to this distress include age, gender, education, cohabitation with patients, and the caregivers' health. The elderly non-self-sufficient population also experienced deteriorating mental health, especially due to increased anxiety and sleeping disorders resulting from social isolation.

The pandemic affected the supply of care workers, revealing the fragility of the domestic care sector, attributed to insecure contracts and understaffing. Additionally, the domestic care field emerged as a major source of employment for immigrant women from developing countries, facing double vulnerability due to job insecurity and social isolation.

Research aimed to identify changes in social welfare during the pandemic and the associated social challenges. There was a general increase in demand for care workers due to the health emergency, leading to a shift in caregiving responsibilities onto families. However, precarious working conditions and lack of labour rights in the informal sector hampered care workers' ability to respond consistently to demand. The pandemic also led to a contraction in new recruitment, driven by fears of infection and families having more time to care for their loved ones.

At the policy level, the shortage of care professionals across EU countries remains unaddressed. The study highlights challenges in accessing foreign domestic workers due to outdated policies, forcing families to choose between the underground market and assuming the burden of care. While measures were taken to support workers impacted by the pandemic, domestic workers, often not registered for social security, rarely benefited from these initiatives.

The overview identifies the impact of COVID-19 on care workers' skills and proposes suggestions for updating training curricula. Recommendations include supporting mental health through psycho-educational programs, training professionals to deal with worsening symptoms in care recipients, enhancing technological skills for remote care, and emphasizing knowledge related to infection prevention and the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE). The shortage of trained staff

and the specific challenges related to the migrant background of care workers underscore the need to consider cultural and linguistic barriers in training programs.

In conclusion, this comprehensive overview sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by the care sector in the European context during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact on the mental health of care workers, coupled with vulnerabilities in the domestic care sector, underscores the need for urgent policy reforms and targeted support measures. The study emphasizes the crucial role of training curricula in adapting to the evolving challenges brought about by the pandemic, with a focus on mental health support, technological skills, and infection prevention knowledge. Addressing the shortage of trained staff and recognizing the specific challenges faced by migrant care workers are pivotal for building a resilient and responsive care sector in the post-pandemic era.

2. OVERVIEW OF GOOD PRACTICES

The best practice guide, based on project outcomes and additional research, is designed to address specific challenges faced by domestic care workers. The goal is to motivate stakeholders to reassess educational programs and national strategies, with a focus on enhancing the quality of care provision and improving the well-being, sense of security, and satisfaction of domestic care workers. The guide aims to formalize work practices and conditions in the domestic care sector, providing a learning section for incorporation into existing training programs and course curricula. It also serves as an information tool to help workers navigate social security schemes and understand their entitlements, promote a system of health protection, and identify support channels. The primary target audience for the guide includes employment intermediaries and educational providers.

The study highlights the **need for enhanced training and education** to attract and retain workers while ensuring the delivery of high-quality care. The requirements for care workers differ based on the specific needs of the individuals they assist, ranging from household tasks for the elderly to more complex care for those with disabilities. The analysis points out that the educational and training requirements for personal care workers are generally low in most countries, allowing almost anyone to enter the profession. This becomes problematic when care workers are expected to perform tasks beyond basic care. The evolving nature of professional life requires new flexibilities and competencies, with blurred boundaries between professions. The study identifies a range of training needs for care workers, including **risk prevention, disease knowledge, nursing care interventions, stress management, and**

digital and administrative skills. Furthermore, the research underscores the high professional risks faced by care workers, such as exposure to toxic cleaning products, musculoskeletal disorders, and emotional challenges. The need for developing professional-specific skills to ensure health and safety, as well as personal agency and well-being, is emphasized. Care receivers in different countries express varying opinions on the adequacy of care worker skills, influenced by cultural values and perceptions of family care. The analysis reveals that skills considered essential for care workers include **care and medical knowledge, digital and administrative skills, and soft skills.** The importance of understanding and adapting to new technical evolutions and generic competencies, such as empowerment and multicultural diversity, is highlighted. Additionally, there is a growing importance of **digital and administrative skills** in response to technological advancements.

The analysis suggests that the demand for skills in-home care is not consistently high when obtaining a job, with factors like personality and experience sometimes deemed more important. However, the evolving nature of care work, as revealed in both field and desk research, necessitates a broader skill set, including basic nursing skills, digital literacy, and administrative capabilities. Stress management and self-care skills emerge as crucial due to the demanding nature of the profession, especially heightened during and after the pandemic. The study advocates for the professionalization of the domestic care sector as a means to elevate the quality of service, ensure safety, and garner societal recognition and support. Acknowledging the value of care work through professionalization contributes to the development of genuine, high-value jobs. The analysis concludes that professionalization, coupled with ongoing education and training, is essential for recognizing and valuing the contributions of care workers, promoting societal awareness, and fostering a safe and healthy work environment in this critical sector.

The methodology for identifying and selecting "good practices" involved defining them as strategies or activities proven to be effective, efficient, sustainable, and transferable, leading to desired outcomes. Partner organizations will conduct a desk review, considering impact, innovation, sustainability, and transferability as key aspects in selecting practices. The focus is on qualitative aspects related to professional profiles, collective agreements, training qualifications, and support for families using domestic care services.

2.1 Good practices from Greece



Good Practice 1

Title: *Platform for empowerment and education of formal and informal caregivers and the elderly*

Website: www.careplatform.gr

The platform was created by NGO 50+ Hellas and Social and Solidarity Economy Organization Co2gether. The Care Platform is a comprehensive initiative designed by NGO 50+ Hellas and Social and Solidarity Economy Organization Co2gether. Aimed at both formal and informal caregivers, as well as the elderly, the platform provides practical tools, educational materials, and a range of practices to enhance the quality of life for caregivers and those in need of care. Besides educational resources, the platform offers free legal advice from a health law specialist, online psychological support groups, and an interactive forum for users to discuss care-related issues and pose questions to experts. The platform seeks to reduce the burden on caregivers, improve the quality of care provided, and enhance the overall satisfaction of caregivers. Accessible 24/7, the platform not only focuses on education but also offers psychological support and legal advice, contributing to the well-being of caregivers and, consequently, the quality of care provided. The platform maintains continuity through community engagement. The built-in discussion forum and online support groups foster a community that actively sustains and enhances the platform over time. While tailored for a Greek audience, the platform provides information on Greek laws and standards. Its online presence enables national-level services accessible to Greek speakers worldwide, making it adaptable to other countries with similar needs. The services provided by the Care Platform are entirely free of charge, further emphasizing its commitment to supporting caregivers.

Good Practice 2

Title: *Eldicare: Matching Skills in a growing European Silver Economy*

Website: <https://learning.eldicare.eu/> / www.eldicare.eu

The Eldicare project, led by the Greek civil society organization KMOP, addresses the challenges in the elderly care sector by providing education and training in ICT & health applications. It offers two distinct e-learning programs – one for informal caregivers seeking certification and another for professionals aiming to deepen their expertise. Impact and Innovation: Eldicare empowers caregivers by offering

education, leading to the recognition of their skills. The project is poised to bring about a significant shift in the elderly care sector, benefiting both caregivers and stakeholders through the acquisition of new skills, the establishment of value chains, and the creation of innovative and modernized curricula. The project's sustainability lies in updated curricula and a system providing more professional outlets for caregivers in Greece and other European countries. Transferability: Already applied in Spain, Germany, the UK, the Czech Republic, and Belgium, Eldicare's success demonstrates its potential for application beyond Greece. The Eldicare platform is free to use, and participants in the training courses receive certification.

Good Practice 3

Title: *BIOAXIS Homecare: independent living of people of all ages*

Website: <https://www.bioaxis.gr>

BIOAXIS Homecare, a distinguished Greek company, spearheads a transformative home care service dedicated to fostering independent living for individuals of all ages. At its core, this service serves as a vital link connecting families in need with skilled caregivers through an expertly expanded network. The company acts as a facilitator, pairing families with a designated care officer who crafts tailored care solutions. Certified professionals from BIOAXIS Homecare stand by families throughout their collaboration, addressing questions and responding to emergency needs. The service extends beyond basic care, offering a spectrum of specialized services, including personalized care plans, home checks, caregiver supervision, staff management, health certifications, and meticulous organization of medical histories. Notably, BIOAXIS Homecare strongly emphasizes caregiver training, ensuring that each professional is equipped to meet the unique needs of their assigned cases. The overarching goal of BIOAXIS Homecare is to provide bespoke solutions that seamlessly integrate physical care, nursing services, and technology. This approach aims not only to enhance the quality of life for patients but also to create meaningful job opportunities for caregivers throughout Greece. The service stands as a testament to innovation by combining personalized care with technological advancements. Sustainability is ingrained in BIOAXIS Homecare's ethos. The company ensures safety and quality through comprehensive background checks, maintaining references, and detailed CVs for all caregivers. Education plays a pivotal role, with caregivers receiving training tailored to the specific needs of each

case. The service offers insurance, guaranteeing quality service and immediate staff replacement for families. Additionally, BIOAXIS Homecare provides full coverage, addressing even the smallest concerns through a range of supplementary services. BIOAXIS Homecare's model, marked by its emphasis on personalized care, caregiver training, and a comprehensive support network, is designed for easy transferability as a service to different countries. The success of this approach suggests its potential applicability on an international scale. While BIOAXIS Homecare operates on a charged basis, it serves as a noteworthy example of how a well-established network can swiftly and efficiently support families. Furthermore, the service actively contributes to the empowerment and employment of care workers, aligning with best practices in the caregiving sector.

2.2 Good practice from Italy

Good Practice 1

Title: *Emilia-Romagna: Training courses for domestic care workers*

Website: <https://sociale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/anziani/assistenti-familiari-badanti/sezione-dvd-assistenti-famigliari>

The Emilia-Romagna region is leading the way with an innovative programme specifically designed for the training of domestic care workers. Regional Government Resolution (DGR) 2375/09 has approved the "Guidelines for the innovation and development of contact and updating activities for domestic care workers", which includes the use of cutting-edge tools to facilitate communication and engagement of domestic care workers with services. As part of the initiatives to promote and support the implementation of the regional guidelines for the qualification and regulation of domestic care workers, the region has worked with selected districts to develop a targeted basic training pathway for these professionals.

This training pathway, characterised by a "blended" approach, has been designed to provide domestic care workers with a flexible and integrated learning opportunity. One aspect is self-learning through the regional e-learning platform, Self, which allows access to educational content through various digital platforms such as computers, tablets and smartphones, ensuring maximum accessibility. This component allows domestic care workers to progress in their studies at their own pace and according to their individual needs. In parallel, there is a face-to-face training component delivered in classrooms, with in-depth sessions led by professionals from the service network, known as 'district teams'. These

sessions give domestic care workers the opportunity to interact directly with industry experts, clarify doubts, share experiences and acquire practical skills through exercises and case studies.

The proposed training pathway consists of basic modules that integrate videos, handouts, slides and other educational materials, as well as assessment tests covering a wide range of topics. These include areas such as interpersonal relationships and communication, health support, mobility support, personal and household hygiene, nutrition and diet, dementia care, leisure activities, integration into the Italian working environment and the principles and organisation of the State.

The aim of this programme is to provide essential basic training, while building and strengthening trust and cooperation between participants and service providers. Furthermore, it can serve as the first step in a progressive professional development journey, with the possibility of follow-up meetings and specialised workshops on specific topics at a later stage.

Since 2018, this resource has been accessible to interested non-profit organisations involved in institutional activities. Training initiatives are locally organised and promoted by municipalities and local health authorities, in line with regional programming, and are provided free of charge to users.

Good Practice 2

Title: *Help desks and other initiatives to enhance the qualification of care work*

Website: <https://www.fidaldo.it/atlante/lavoratori-domestici/emilia-romagna-sportelli-e-altre-iniziativa-di-qualificazione-del-lavoro-di-cura/>

The programme aims to integrate domestic care work into the network of services and to facilitate the regularisation of their work through specific and flexible initiatives tailored to the characteristics and distribution of domestic care workers in their respective contexts. These initiatives target both domestic care workers and the families who rely on their support. Key initiatives to support domestic care workers include:

- Training courses focusing on language and care-related issues.
- Support centres and self-help meetings.
- Integration of domestic care workers into the service network through coaching sessions and structured mentoring activities.
- Developing training and upskilling activities in collaboration with service network operators to foster a collaborative environment among domestic care workers.

- Provision of an additional €160 per month for carer's allowance recipients with regular contractual status as domestic care workers.

Initiatives aimed at families include:

- Information centres to provide advice and support to families.
- Strengthening of a structured system for matching supply and demand of domestic care services.
- Integration into the territorial service network, particularly in the field of domestic care, through activities such as inclusion in individual care plans and personalised counselling.

The programme includes territorial activation through services and initiatives. In 2017, the district programme launched 123 training initiatives involving 1652 participants, with 58 support centres throughout the territory. In 2020, there were 37 territorial training initiatives involving 711 participants in 15 districts, with 78 support centres in 21 districts. It's worth noting that these figures cover both the pre- and post-Covid periods, with the pandemic impacting training activities, some of which moved to remote formats before returning to full operation.

This intervention focuses on improving services by promoting collaboration within the territorial network and implementing structural interventions and services. The presence of established services enhances the replicability of the model. The programme matches data and services to plan targeted interventions for domestic carers and families, providing information, advice, training and support to promote consistent territorial activation. It serves as a model for improving similar social health services.

Good Practice 3

Title: *Emilia-Romagna: Additional Economic Contributions*

Website: <https://www.fidaldo.it/atlane/lavoratori-domestici/emilia-romagna-contributi-economici-extra/>

The Region of Emilia Romagna has included among its socio-health objectives the promotion of the qualification and regularisation of care provided by domestic care workers to people who are not self-sufficient and/or disabled. The aim of this commitment is to integrate domestic care workers into the service network in order to ensure comprehensive and effective support. Among the various initiatives planned, there is the possibility of providing additional financial contributions conditional on families entering into a regular employment contract with domestic care workers and supporting their

participation in training courses. This approach aims to improve the quality and reliability of care for the most vulnerable.

The additional financial contributions are intended for non-self-sufficient elderly people and severely or extremely disabled adults who are assisted by domestic care workers, with the families being obliged to enter into a regular employment contract with the domestic care worker and to facilitate their participation in training initiatives organised by local social health services and the vocational training system. In 2020, the most recent year for which data are available, a total of 7,707 elderly persons received the care allowance, which varies in amount according to regional regulations. Of these, 2,256 people received an additional contribution to regularise the work of a domestic carer. In addition, 2,333 persons with severe or very severe disabilities benefited from the care allowance intended for this category of needs.

Emilia Romagna was one of the first regions to introduce dedicated financial support exclusively for those using domestic care workers, demonstrating transparency in the publication of data.

2.3 Good Practices from Poland

Good Practice 1

Title: *Facilitations in the employment of foreigners*

Website: <https://poradnikprzedsiebiorcy.pl/-zatrudnianie-cudzoziemcow-nowe-ulatwienia>

Poland faces a growing demand for caregivers due to an aging population. The Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy reports a significant shortage of workers in the aid sector. To address this gap, Poland has introduced facilitations in the employment of citizens from countries beyond the eastern border since 2022. This initiative allows individuals from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, or Ukraine to work as aid workers without undergoing the traditional labor market test. This exemption speeds up the process for employers to hire foreign caregivers. The innovation lies in waiving the "labour market test" for citizens from eastern border countries and streamlining the hiring process for foreign caregivers. This facilitates quicker placement of caregivers to meet the rising demand for elderly care services. The legal foundations for these facilitations were established under the Act of December 17, 2021, ensuring the sustainability of the project. These regulations came into effect on January 29, 2022,

providing a clear and legal framework for the facilitations. The solution of expediting the issuance of work permits for foreigners can be transferred to other countries facing similar demographic challenges, especially those with aging populations. The legal foundations and facilitations can serve as a model for other regions.

Good Practice 2

Title: *Neighbourhood services as a form of caregiving services*

Website: <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/uslugi-sasiedzkie-nowe-wsparcie-od-1-listopada>

Neighborhood services, introduced under the amendment to the Social Assistance Act in Poland, provide a new form of social assistance. Launched in November 2023, the services aim to support individuals, particularly older ones, who require assistance with tasks like shopping and house cleaning but do not need full-time care. Neighborhood services enhance caregiving for those who are solitary, ensuring a systematic and environmental approach to social services. This innovative form of social assistance provides paid neighborhood services to individuals who meet specific criteria, offering support for daily tasks. The introduction of this service addresses the gap between existing offerings and current caregiving needs. Funded by municipalities, neighborhood services are expected to be sustainable, with the municipal council responsible for establishing the principles, including financial aspects. The initiative aligns with the "Senior Support Corps" program for additional financial resources in 2024. The model of providing neighborhood services can be transferred to other countries facing similar challenges in institutional care and caregiver shortages. The funding mechanism at the local government level presents a systemic solution. The eligibility criteria for service providers include age, residence proximity, and completion of first aid training. The provision is not limited to solitary individuals, as municipalities can expand the list of eligible recipients.

Good Practice 3

Title: *The development of professional competencies and qualifications of medical caregivers, addressing the epidemiological and demographic needs of the country.*

Website: <https://www.cmkp.edu.pl/projekty-ue/react-om-kurs-kwalifikacyjny-dla-opiekunow-medycznych> / https://zdrowie.gov.pl/power/strona-1040-kwalifikacje_opiekunow_medycznych.html

The project focuses on enhancing the qualifications and professional competencies of medical caregivers in Poland. Initiated by the Medical Centre for Postgraduate Education, the project introduces a qualification course (MED.14) supplementing knowledge and skills for caregivers. This includes handling patients with infectious diseases, emphasizing the needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualification course enriches caregivers' practices, extending their skills to activities previously reserved for nursing professions. The hybrid course combines theoretical e-learning components with practical training to ensure comprehensive development. Funded by the European Union from the European Social Fund, the project has a clear social purpose of professionalizing and dignifying caregivers. The qualifications obtained contribute to the sustainability of caregiving services provided by highly qualified professionals. The model of elevating qualifications for medical caregivers can be replicated in other countries facing increasing demand for caregivers due to aging populations. The emphasis on continuous learning ensures caregivers remain relevant in evolving healthcare landscapes. Collaboratively implemented by the Department of Medical Personnel Development at the Ministry of Health and the Medical Centre for Postgraduate Education, the project aligns with EU funding initiatives and addresses the changing needs of healthcare in Poland.

2.4 Good Practices from Spain

Good Practice 1

Title: *Basic Course on Care of the Elderly Care Pathway (“Senda de Cuidados”)*

Website: <https://www.sendadecuidados.org/>

Senda de Cuidados considers education and training to be fundamental human rights, necessary both for the exercise of other rights and for personal and professional development. The NGO provides a Basic Course on Caring for the Elderly. The course aims to provide an approach to the reality of the

elderly, thus promoting the training of future carers. The need for domestic care workers is increasing a lot. Associations like Senda de Cuidados are points of reference for providing specific care for the elderly and for providing dignified and recognised work and training programmes that ensure up-to-date information and education to improve the professional level of the care workers. This practice is promoted by the association and supported by its internal and external professionals. In addition, they have also established a scholarship system to facilitate and support access to and completion of courses and internships. This practice can be applied in other locations thanks to its high transferability potential. The implementation of training courses in domestic care can be implemented wherever there is the possibility of having training facilities, of establishing a network with professionals and other stakeholders. This best practice showcases the importance of promoting and defending the value of domestic care, as well as the necessity of providing carers with respectable working conditions and lifelong training.

Good Practice 2

Title: *“Taking care of oneself to take care of others” Support service for carers* Provincial Council of Álava (“Diputación Foral de Álava”)

Website: <https://egoitza.araba.eus/es/-/pr-servicio-de-apoyo-a-personas-cuidadoras>

The “Taking care of oneself to take care of others” program supports families caring for elderly people living in rural areas with the aim of:

- improving the quality of care provided by carers;
- improving the quality of life of the main caregivers;
- sharing the responsibility of caring with other carers;
- acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and skills for caring for the elderly and for self-care.

This program is addressed to those non-professional carers, whether or not they are the main caregivers or whether or not they are family members

The programme is developed through different actions: mutual help groups, psychological support at home, home counseling on adaptations to the environment, and training guidelines for activities of daily living. The program is promoted by the public administration of Alava (north of Spain). This good practice has a high transferability potential. It can be replicated by local entities wherever facilities are available, and a network of professionals supports the program. Self-care is fundamental to preventing burnout,

among other benefits, especially in this sector. It is essential to ensure a good quality of life for carers and the quality of their service.

Good Practice 3

Title: **Communication Skills** Super Carers (“SuperCuidadores”)

Website: <https://cuidadores.unir.net/formacion/cursos-online/2091-curso-de-habilidades-de-comunicacion>

Online course designed to enhance effective communication in the workplace. This training focuses on identifying and overcoming communication limitations, highlighting the importance of positive dialogue and empathy. Participants will learn to apply empathic listening and develop key social skills to foster mutual understanding in the professional environment. This course is designed for carers who take care of dependent people, whether they are family members or contracted carers. Mastering effective communication is an essential aspect for caregivers. It is demonstrated that this course has a successful and positive impact on the stakeholders. Its virtual nature allows great flexibility and easier access from everywhere. In addition, the caregivers are assigned a tutor who guides them and helps them at all times to advance their knowledge. It is developed by SUPERCUIDADORES which is one of the leading companies in online services and training for carers and the social and health care sectors. It has a clear social purpose: "to professionalize and dignify the figure of the carer to improve both their quality of life and that of the elderly or dependent people they care for". The training course on communication skills can be implemented by other entities at local, regional, national, and international levels. The “Communication Skills” online course provides the necessary training in communication between patient and caregiver, the promotion of empathy, and the development of social skills, among others.

2.5 Good Practices from Sweden

Good Practice 1

Title: **Work-Life Balance Support**

Website: <https://www.av.se/en/work-environment-work-and-inspections/foreign-labour-in-sweden/Posting-foreign-labour-in-sweden/swedish-labour-market-model-an>

The Work-Life Balance Support program in Sweden, facilitated by the Swedish labour market model and collective agreements, is designed to enhance the work-life balance of domestic workers, emphasizing mental well-being and job satisfaction. The program incorporates flexible working hours, remote work options, and access to counseling services. Prioritizing the welfare of domestic workers not only fosters a healthier work environment but also contributes to increased productivity. The program stands out for its innovative approach by integrating modern work arrangements to address the unique needs of domestic workers. It aims to enhance the overall well-being of workers by promoting mental health support and providing flexibility in work arrangements. Sustainability is ingrained in the program through remote work options, reducing commuting-related carbon emissions. By emphasizing long-term career sustainability and supporting mental health, the program contributes to overall job satisfaction and retention. The core principles of flexible work arrangements and mental health support are universally applicable, making this model easily transferable to other countries or industries employing domestic workers. Regular feedback sessions and continuous improvement mechanisms ensure its effectiveness. The program aligns with Sweden's commitment to promoting inclusive work environments and supporting the overall health of its workforce.

Good Practice 2

Title: ***Skills Enhancement and Certification Program***

Website: <https://www2.lingio.com/en/vocational-swedish-for-eldercare>

The Skills Enhancement and Certification Program in Sweden, led by Vocational Swedish for eldercare, focuses on upskilling domestic workers through training and certification programs. By enhancing their skills, the program aims to make domestic workers more competitive in the job market while promoting continuous professional development. The program's innovation lies in incorporating digital training modules and adapting to the evolving demands of the modern workforce, ensuring the relevance of skills in today's dynamic job landscape. Investing in skill development contributes to the long-term sustainability of domestic workers' careers, aligning with Sweden's commitment to a knowledge-based economy. The skills enhancement model can be replicated in other industries and countries, offering a



scalable solution for improving the employability of domestic workers globally. The emphasis on continuous learning is crucial in the rapidly changing job market. Regular industry consultations ensure the program's alignment with market needs, and collaboration with employers and educational institutions strengthens its effectiveness.

Good Practice 3

Title: ***Transparent Employment Contracts and Fair Wage Policies***

Website: <https://leglobal.law/countries/sweden/employment-law/employment-law-overview-sweden/02-employment-contracts/>

The Transparent Employment Contracts and Fair Wage Policies program in Sweden, led by L & G Global, promotes transparency by ensuring clear and comprehensive employment contracts for domestic workers. The implementation of fair wage policies addresses income inequality and ensures adequate compensation for workers. The program innovates by using technology to provide accessible information on labor rights and wage standards, contributing to a more equitable society. By promoting fair wages and transparency, the practice contributes to the economic sustainability of domestic workers and addresses social inequalities. Transparent employment practices and fair wage policies can be adopted in various sectors and countries, promoting ethical employment standards globally. Ongoing monitoring and periodic reviews of employment practices ensure continued compliance with labor standards, and collaboration with labor unions and advocacy groups enhances the effectiveness of the initiative.

3. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The importance of reaching migrants without access to traditional training institutions cannot be overstated. The proposed training material focuses on ensuring accessibility, interactivity, and comprehensiveness to empower migrant care workers with emerging skills and competencies crucial in the domestic care sector. To effectively reach the target group, the training material should meet specific criteria:

a) Preferably Interactive:

- To enhance accessibility, the material should incorporate interactive elements.
- Practical simulations and scenarios can be integrated to simulate real-world caregiving situations.

b) Easily Accessible Regarding Language:

- Multilingual resources and translations should be provided.
- Clear, simple language should be used to ensure understanding across language barriers.

c) Comprehensive Coverage:

- The material should cover all the basic necessary skills and competencies for the caregiving profession.
- The focus should be on emerging skills and competencies, distinguishing from on-the-job practical tasks.

As presented in the best practices section from partners from different countries, the following training units should be taken into consideration when preparing educational materials:

- **Critical Care Skills:** disease comprehension (dementia, disabilities), nutrition and fluids based on nutritional requirements, wound care, and dressings, Mobilization support and ambulation, and patient body hygiene in various scenarios.
- **Basic Nursing Skills:** infection prevention and control, use of medical devices/equipment., medication administration and prescription understanding, pressure sore prevention, and first aid techniques.
- **Health and Safety:** Environment-friendly cleaning, risk prevention for falls and disorders, COVID-19 sanitation and personal hygiene, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and handling emergencies.
- **Digital and Administrative Skills:** Digital record-keeping and care plans, technical skills for emails and data sharing, telecare system usage, and ICT skills for e-health devices.

- **Relationship Skills and Cultural Expression:** Communication, empathy, active listening, Cultural awareness and expression, autonomy support and cognitive stimulation, and conflict resolution.
- **Personal Agency and well-being:** Stress management techniques, time management skills, understanding worker's rights, actions for personal health improvement, and strengthening personal agency and well-being.

The proposed learning outcomes for each unit provide clear objectives for participants, ensuring a well-rounded development of skills and competencies relevant to the caregiving profession. The outcomes span from practical caregiving skills to digital literacy, emphasizing personal well-being and cultural sensitivity. This comprehensive and interactive curriculum, designed to meet the unique needs of migrant care workers, not only equips them with essential skills but also fosters a sense of empowerment and well-being. The focus on emerging skills ensures that the workforce is prepared to meet the evolving demands of the domestic care sector.

In conclusion, **Spain's** best practices showcase diverse approaches to improving domestic care services, emphasizing the **importance of training, support, and effective communication** for caregivers. The transferability of these practices suggests potential adoption in different regions to enhance the quality of elderly care on a broader scale. **Emilia-Romagna's** best practices collectively demonstrate a holistic approach to domestic care services, encompassing training, support, and economic contributions. The innovative elements and sustainable frameworks contribute to their potential applicability and transferability in diverse socio-health contexts. Best practices from **Greece** highlight the **importance of education, support, and community engagement** in the caregiving sector. The transferability of these practices demonstrates their potential to inspire similar initiatives globally, fostering improved caregiving services and support systems. **Poland** highlights a comprehensive approach to caregiving challenges, incorporating **legal facilitations, community-based services, and continuous professional development** for caregivers. The transferability of these practices offers valuable insights for other countries seeking innovative solutions in the field of caregiving services. **Sweden** ratified the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention in 2019, aligning domestic workers' rights with general labor standards. The country manages **domestic care workers' rights and remuneration through collective agreements**, allowing deviations from statutory law in favor of negotiated agreements. Families in **Sweden** utilizing domestic care services benefit from diverse support mechanisms. Municipalities provide comprehensive services through family centers, including healthcare, social services, and parent-focused courses. Family counseling is universally available to address relationship and parenting

challenges. Financial aid includes housing allowances, parental benefits for home care, and temporary benefits for caring for sick children. Child support is mandated for non-custodial parents, while maintenance support assists single parents. A universal child allowance benefits all parents. Additionally, families with children having functional impairments can access specific allowances for care and associated costs. Elderly individuals in **Sweden**, who need support and help, are entitled by law to receive these services from public sources. The specifics of elder care services vary depending on the municipality, encompassing assistance at home and in various types of sheltered accommodation.

Common Themes Across Countries:

- **Caregiver Training:** All countries emphasize the importance of caregiver training and education, offering various programs to enhance skills and knowledge.
- **Sustainability:** Many initiatives focus on long-term sustainability, either through continuous updates, adaptability, or transparent funding mechanisms.
- **Transferability:** Several practices showcase high transferability potential, aiming to address similar challenges in other regions or countries.
- **Innovation:** Innovations include the use of technology, blended learning approaches, and novel support services to improve the quality of caregiving.

Diversity in Approaches:

- **Greece:** Emphasis on online platforms, comprehensive support, and personalized care.
- **Italy:** Blend of e-learning and in-person training, territorial activation, and additional economic contributions.
- **Poland:** Facilitations in employment, neighborhood services, and professional competencies development.
- **Spain:** Basic courses, support services, and communication skills training.
- **Sweden:** Work-life balance support, skills enhancement programs, and transparent employment contracts.

While each country demonstrates unique approaches to caregiving, there are common threads of caregiver training, sustainability, and transferability. The diversity in approaches reflects the nuanced



challenges and solutions in different cultural, demographic, and economic contexts. The best practices identified provide valuable insights for countries seeking to enhance their caregiving systems and support networks.

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