

26 June 2023

Europe's care systems at risk

The number of people in need of care in the EU is projected to rise from 30.8 million in 2019 to 38.1 million in 2050, but currently, there are more people in need of care than places and care workers available. Moreover, public spending is not keeping pace. Today, Caritas Europa launches its latest report, which analyses the care sector's challenges in 13 European countries and calls for more investments, better labour conditions for care workers, and improved access to care for those who need it.

Caritas is one of Europe's biggest social service providers. In our latest European report "Growing old with dignity. Challenges of long-term care in Europe", we depict the current complex situation characterised by severe job shortages and lack of affordable care services. By analysing the root causes of various problems, the publication also proposes concrete solutions.

Higher wages, better working conditions, regularisation of informal and irregular care workers as well as more investments in non-for-profit care providers are among some of the most urgent remedies to ensure accessible and affordable quality care for all.

“ We firmly believe that respecting the dignity of older people means allowing them to live independently for as long as possible, offering community-based services and support in line with their needs and wishes. To do so, Europe needs to significantly reform its long-term care sector giving it the recognition and support it deserves, to truly allow all people to grow old with dignity.”

Maria Nyman,
Caritas Europa Secretary General

According to the latest European Commission figures, 46.5% of people in the EU aged 65 or over with difficulties in maintaining their own personal care reported that their needs were not being met. This lack of help was greater for those on a lower income. Moreover, the demographic trends imply that the current level of public investment is not sufficient.

The report stresses the following points:

- More and more people find it difficult to access care services and the high costs are leaving millions without care.
- By 2050, the number of people aged 80+ will increase by 88% and public spending is not keeping pace.
- Considering the high cost of care, the norm is still to rely on informal carers - family, neighbours and/or volunteers.
- Among the different forms of care work, live-in carers are less protected, and at greater risk of exploitation.
- The majority of care workers are women and often experience poor working conditions and low wages.
- Europe's care sector relies heavily on "cheap" migrant workers, many of whom have left their countries for better pay and conditions abroad, which in turn can negatively impact the families and communities left behind.

Fair standards and innovation

The report also showcases some of Caritas successful and innovative practices such as **"telemedicine"**, which connects low-income elderly Eastern European citizens to city doctors and nurses capable of monitoring their

patients' conditions through digital devices and intervene as needed. In Germany, the **CariFair** project links families searching for home-based assistance and caregivers from abroad (e.g. Poland). In fact, Caritas organisations across Europe continue to exchange and develop common high standards for dignified care services based on human mobility and the professionalisation of the care work force.

Notes to editor

The following Caritas organisations participated in the report. In the EU: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Spain. Outside of the EU: Moldova, Georgia, Serbia, Ukraine. Download the full publication [here](#).

Contact details

Shannon Pfohman

Policy and Advocacy Director

Tel: +32 (0)2 235 26 55

spfohman@caritas.eu

Susan Dabbous

Media Officer

Tel: +32 (0)2 235 03 94

Mob: +32 (0)478 58 54 35

sdabbous@caritas.eu

About Caritas Europa

Caritas Europa is a network of 49 member organisations in 46 European countries and one of the 7 regions of Caritas Internationalis. Our members assist and provide services to millions of people in need.

Caritas Europa aims at lifting people out of poverty by empowering them and by influencing unjust structures and unfair policies that keep people trapped in positions of disempowerment.



Co-funded by the European Union

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