

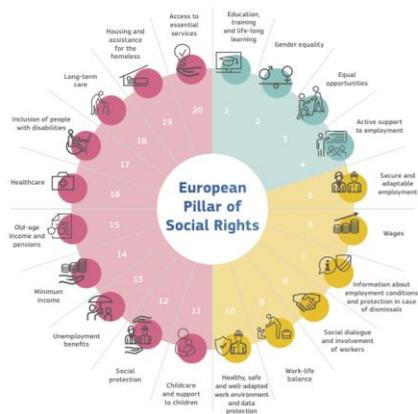
Long-term care policy: the European Union perspective:

European Care Strategy and Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care

Flaviana Teodosiu

Team Leader for Long-Term Care, DG EMPL, European Commission

LTC in social policy-making: some milestones



European Pillar of Social Rights
2017



European Care Strategy & LTC
Council Recommendation

2022



COVID

2014
1st EC-SPC Report on
LTC

2021
2nd EC-SPC Report on
LTC

2024
EU elections and new
Commission College

Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care

Scope: all people in need of long-term care & all formal and informal carers @ all care settings

Adequacy

- ✓ Timeliness (waiting times)
- ✓ Comprehensiveness (needs assessment)
- ✓ Affordability (protection from poverty)

Availability

- ✓ Volume of services
- ✓ LTC options (esp. homecare & community-based care)
- ✓ Territorial gaps
- ✓ Technology and digital solutions
- ✓ Accessibility

Quality

- ✓ Criteria/ standards for all settings and types of providers
- ✓ Quality framework based on agreed principles (e.g. person-centredness, continuity, focus on outcomes, transparency, respect...)
- ✓ Quality assurance

Carers

- ✓ Workforce: working conditions, wages, OSH, skills, legal migration, gender stereotypes, vulnerable workers
- ✓ Informal carers: identification and support e.g. training, counselling, respite care, work-life balance, social protection

LTC = a range of services and assistance for people who, as a result of mental and/or physical frailty, disease and/or disability over an extended period of time, depend on support for daily living activities and/or are in need of some permanent nursing care

Adequacy



Affordability:

- ✓ financial reasons are the main reason for not using (more) professional home care services, esp. in lower-income MS
- ✓ socio-economic gradient: 35.9% of people in the 1st (lowest) income quintile needed LTC vs with 17.2% in the 5th income quintile in EU-27

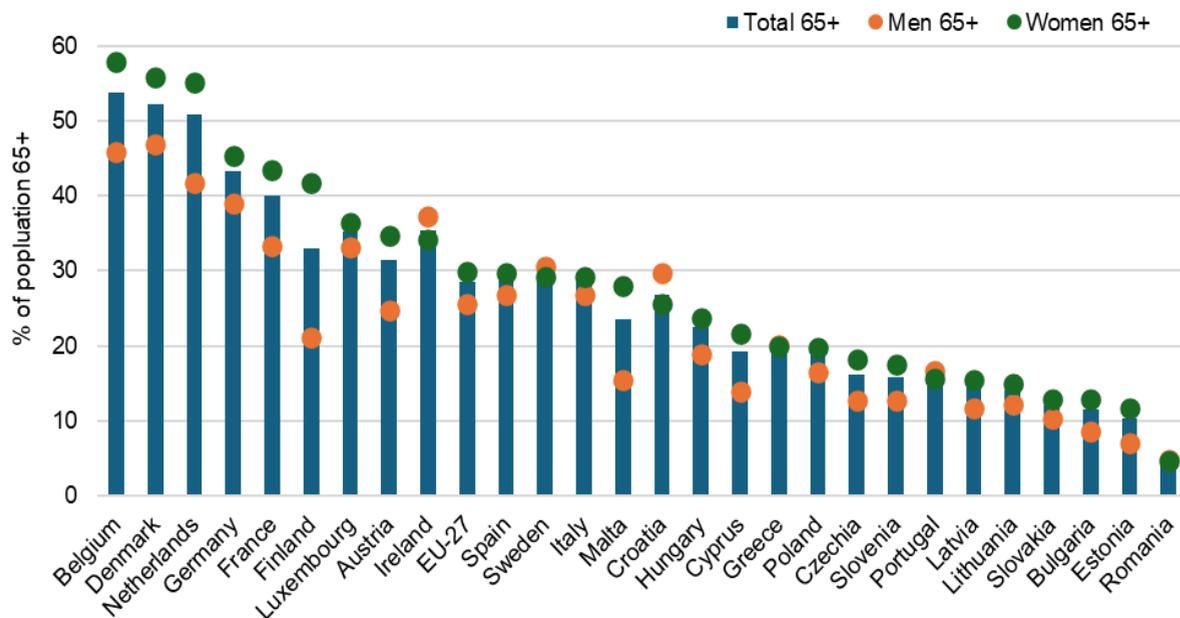
Comprehensiveness:

- ✓ standardised procedures for LTC needs-assessments in all MS
- ✓ comprehensive needs-assessments include all functional (ADL and IADL) as well as cognitive, behavioural and social limitations

Timeliness:

- ✓ maximum waiting times for needs assessment and for service provision

Availability

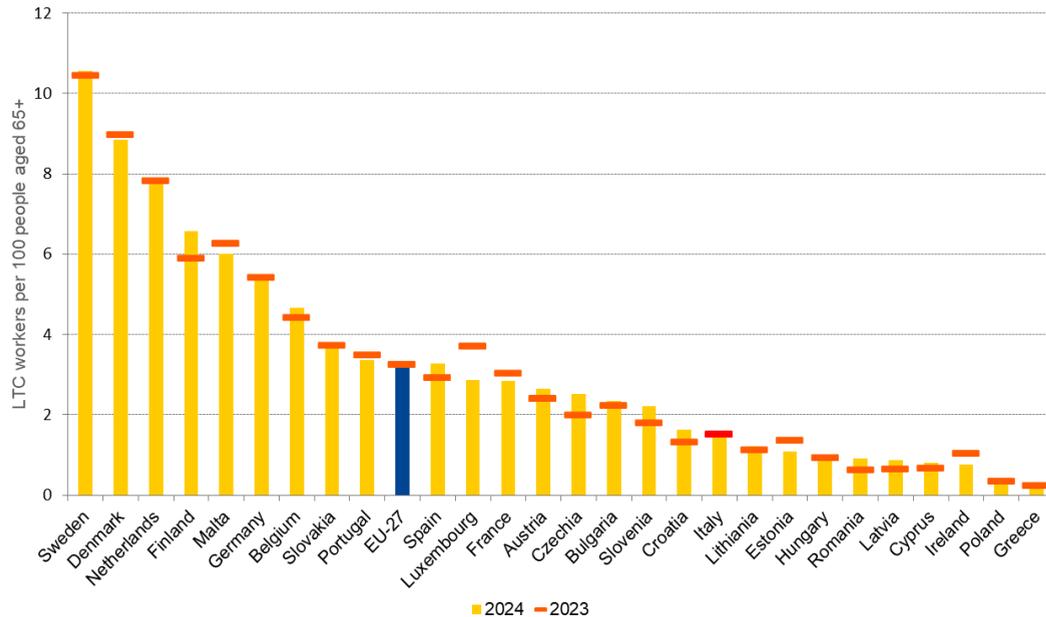


Some policy pointers:

- ✓ Access to homecare: EU average 28.6% covering very big discrepancies across the MS (EHIS 2019)
- ✓ Residential care gets the lion's share of the total public LTC expenditure: 46.2% for residential care, 28.8% for home care, 25% for cash benefits (Ageing Report 2024)
- ✓ Unmet needs: 46.6% of people aged 65+ with severe difficulties in ADL/IADL reported an unmet need for help (EHIS 2019)
- ✓ Territorial gaps (esp. rural areas)

Share of people aged 65+ with severe difficulties in ADL/IADL who used home care services for personal needs in the previous 12 months (%), Eurostat (hlth_ehis_am7ta) - EHIS wave 2019

Workforce



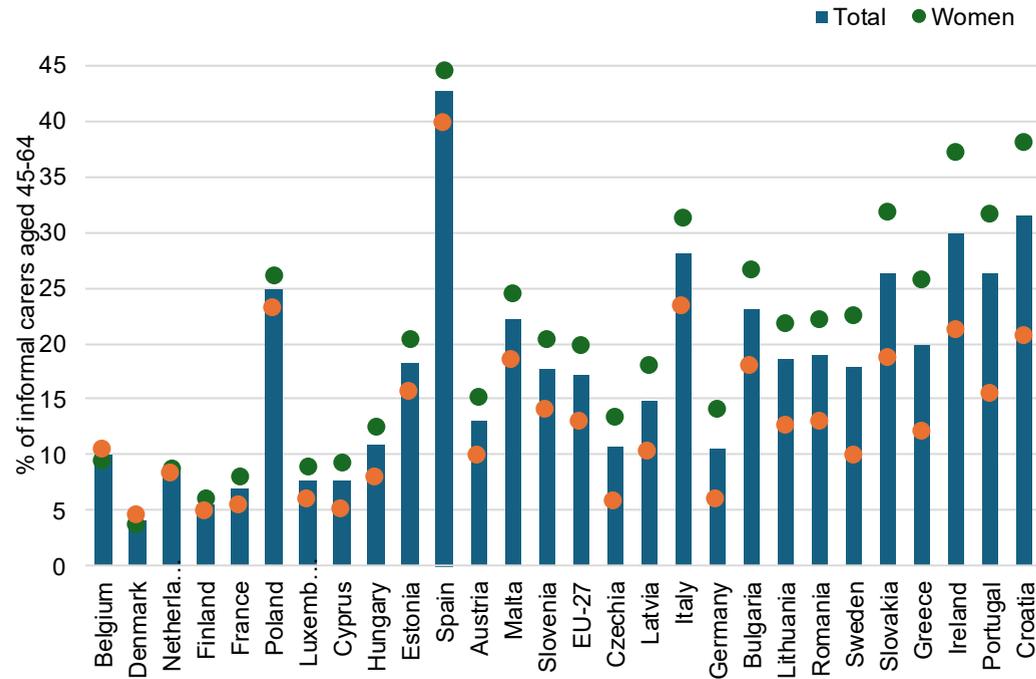
The ratio of LTC workers per 100 persons aged 65+, DG EMPL calculation on special extraction from Eurostat, LFS 2023 and 2024

Identification of LTC workers: crossing sector (NACE) codes 87.1, 87.3, 88.1 and occupations (ISCO) codes 2221, 2264, 2266, 2634, 2635, 3221, 3255, 5321, 5322

Some policy pointers:

- ✓ 3.2 million LTC workers, 1.6% of EU workforce (Eurostat, LFS 2023) + 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

Informal carers

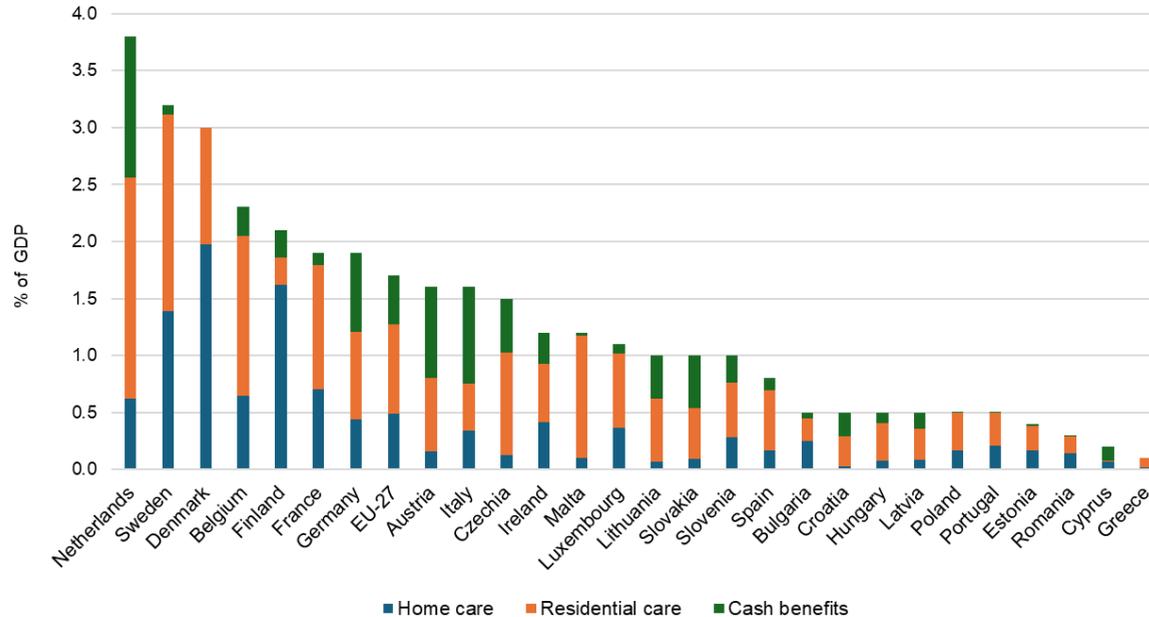


Share of informal carers aged 45-64 providing high-intensity informal care (20h+ per week), EHIS 2019

Some policy pointers:

- 17% (19.1% of women, 14.8% of men) of the population provide informal care at least once a week across the EU
- gender gaps widest for people in the 45-64 age bracket (8 pp vs 4 pp across the entire age range)
- strong impact of high-intensity care (e.g. informal carers' health and well-being, ability to combine work with caring activities)
- gender gap in high-intensity care in most MS: 20% of female and 13% of male informal carers aged 45-64 provide more than 20 hours of informal care per week
- gender gap in using formal LTC in nearly all MS: 66.8% of informal carers' main care recipients use formal LTC services at least once a week in the EU (73% if male informal carer vs 61% if female informal carer)

Expenditure



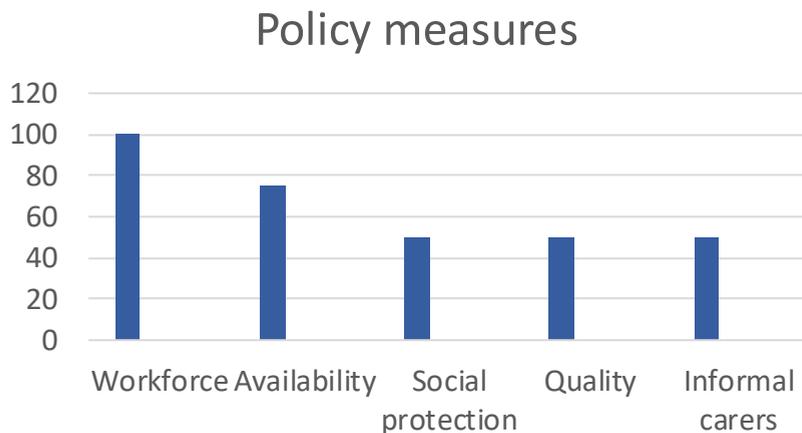
Total public expenditure on LTC as a share of GDP and by settings, 2024 Ageing Report

Some policy pointers:

- Adequate and sustainable financing is a major challenge, given public budget constraints, limited fiscal space and competition with other priorities such as industry and defence
- EU average of 1.7% GDP covering very large disparities (from 3.8% in the Netherlands to 0.1% in Greece (Ageing Report 2024))
- LTC services are a social investment: countries can recoup approximately 55% of their investments through increased tax and social security contributions (ILO)
- Significant economic value of informal care work: informal carers contribute an estimated 2.5% of the EU's GDP

Policy responses at Member States' level

National implementation plans for the LTC RECC (2024) show ambitious policy measures and investments at national and regional levels, with workforce and availability of services at the top of the policy reforms agenda



- more than two thirds of the MS focus on availability and workforce-related measures
 - Workforce as a key challenge
 - Visible efforts to expand home and community-based care,
- more than half of the MS report measures related to adequacy, quality, and support for informal carers
- many MS work towards improving governance and coordination, stakeholder involvement, and evidence-based approaches for LTC
- Some additional challenges
 - overcoming systems' fragmentation
 - balancing responsibilities at local/regional level and available budgets
 - digitalisation in the sector
 - administrative capacity

EU-level support actions

❖ 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.

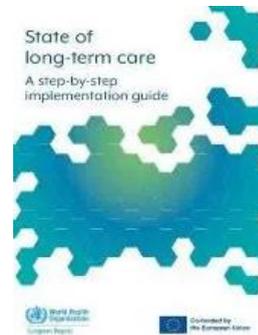


Pact for Skills: launch of large-scale skills partnership for long-term care

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 (ctd)

❖ **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](#)

Thank you!