

# Improving the attractiveness of social services jobs in Europe: social partners initiatives



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## Executive summary

Attractiveness, in terms of staff recruitment and retention, is crucial to maintain and develop the social services sector in Europe. All European countries covered by this report (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic) are confronted with this challenge, which contributes to the weakening of the overall care systems and an increasingly precarious balance.

Five main themes have been identified across the challenges reported by the interlocutors:

- Competition
- Image and communication
- Vocational education and training
- Working conditions and quality of life at work
- Recognition at different levels

This summary presents the key assessments and initiatives identified to improve attractiveness in social services.

### Methodology

The report is not an exhaustive study, but rather aims at capturing the partners' understanding of the current situation via:

- A questionnaire sent to all organisations that agreed to participate in a survey.
- Interviews with social partners (employers' organisations and trade unions) in Europe.
- An analysis of the issues and the identification of good practices implemented by the FORESEE partners organisations and others to address the challenges linked to the attractiveness of the sector.

Subsequently, project partners from three "target" countries (from Romania, Greece, Poland) will select and pilot some of the good practices by adapting them to their needs and local contexts.

### About the FORESEE project

The FORESEE project's ambition is to strengthen the capacity of the social partners in the social services sector in terms of social dialogue, and particularly to respond to the challenges of the sector regarding attractiveness. It should be noted that the social services sector does not include the same categories of activities in all countries. The report therefore deals with a variety of health, social care and support activities.

The work-package of the FORESEE project including this report is led by two members of the Federation of European Social Employers: Unipso (Belgium) (Elise Lay, Mathieu de Poorter) and Elisfa (France) (Joëlle Garello, Théo Bezerra, Sébastien Riquelme).

## a. Competition (territorial and statutory)

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### ASSESSMENT

Several different kinds of competition have been identified between:

- Countries, especially in border regions.
- Regions, often in federal states with regional social jurisdiction.
- Rural and urban areas: transport in rural, housing in urban areas.
- Non-profit organisations, for-profit organisations, sometimes offensive (lobbying, public contracts), and public service sector often more attractive.
- Sectors: Conflicting priorities of public authorities may lead to insufficient resources.
- Immigration or cross-border work sometimes helps to compensate staff shortage but may adversely lead to such shortages in the countries of origin.

### Initiatives

- Between countries: Engagement in and of European organisations (Federation of European Social Employers, European Ageing Network (EAN), European Public Services Union (EPSU)...), and the promotion of the social dialogue at the European level.
- Between regions: Creation and/or harmonization of national agreements.
- Between departments: development of the interdepartmental collaboration, for instance the streamlining of documents between the administrations.
- Between sectors: development of umbrella organisations.
- Between statutes:
  - ▶ Facing the public sector: promotion of the flexibility, of the organisation of the work, of the governance.
  - ▶ Facing the for-profit sector: valorisation of the social impact, governance, reinforcement of a European statute for the not-for-profit organisations.

## b. Image of social services in Europe

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### ASSESSMENT

The sector suffers from a negative image (or sometimes lack of recognition) amongst the public, funders and established social dialogue. The sector lacks tools and means to improve communication and change this image.

- Social services: a poor image concerning salaries and working conditions.
- A profession, often exercised by women, with little social status in society.
- A negative image maintained by the media and public employment services.
- A lack of attractiveness that seems to be worse among young people.
- The improving image of the social services sector is undermined by the perceived deterioration of the working conditions.

### Initiatives

- Promotion of the social services sector for the public: communication campaign to show the value of the social services sector for each and every one of us.
- Promotion of the social services sector amongst workers and the valorisation of their work.
- Promotion of the sector amongst students and development of relations between service providers and universities.
- Development of a brand, to increase an organisation to good reputation.
- Promotion of importance of this line of work, mostly during the Covid-19 related crisis.

## c. Vocational education, training and career paths

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### ASSESSMENT

There is little opportunity to progress on (further) training and career paths, few prospects for professional development.

- A lack of trained professionals; learning-by-doing rather than more formalised training.
- Initial education far from the professional reality.
- Vocational training is costly, and little use for career development.
- Few career prospects for employees in the same organisation or field, few opportunities to progress in related fields.
- Managers are overwhelmed by the daily routine and have few solutions to propose for career development.

### Initiatives

- Mapping of core competences needed in a sector.
- Establish common level of three to four core competencies that would allow staff to envisage a career path.
- Derive vocational training to offer employees the opportunity to move from one level to another.
- Work with schools to ensure that staff from social services are involved in primary and secondary education.
- Create partnerships (schools, employers, employment services) to initiate pathways that meet the needs of job seekers as well as employers.
- Identify skills not acquired through initial education and training and work and create tailored modules.
- Turn employees into ambassadors of social services who describe and promote their line of work.
- Work at European level for recognition between countries regarding the necessary diplomas.
- Implement training courses to enable migrant workers to speak the language of the country and acquire basic skills.
- Mentoring of new employees by senior employees (career development for seniors, integration for new staff).
- Taking stock of employees' ambitions in terms of training and progression during regular evaluations and assessments.
- Work on the role of managers in professional development.



## d. Working conditions and quality of life at work

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### ASSESSMENT

Shortcomings in the quality of life at work, particularly due to a significant mental and physical burden.

- Still strong inequalities between women and men.
- The health of professionals: significant psychosocial risks, musculoskeletal disorders at the heart of the social services professions.
- High absenteeism which reinforces the risks incurred by professionals, such as burn out.
- Short term or part-time contracts, discontinuous or atypical working hours that make recruitment more difficult.
- A difficult work-life-balance.

### Initiatives

- Limit musculoskeletal disorders by measuring the weight carried by the workers, reorganising of the workspaces, and investing in adapted equipment.
- Psychosocial risk: increasing the number of managers to share responsibilities, funding of psychological support or hotlines, establish pools of employees who can step in in case of absenteeism, professional practice analysis.
- Staff training in keeping healthy.
- Drafting of an assessment tool/document for occupational risks.
- Identification of an employee referent for health issues.
- Fight noise and air pollution.
- Create recreational spaces for breaks and exchange amongst staff.
- Promote work-life balance
  - ▶ Introduce more flexibility of working hours, particularly for single-parent families or young parents
  - ▶ Reinforce work-related equality between genders by measuring wage gaps, reduction of post-maternity hours
  - ▶ Integrate the new professionals: tutored, documents, facilitating the integration of foreigners into the sector.
- Calculate the working hours differently, by integrating the transport time between patients.

## e. Recognition at different levels

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### ASSESSMENT

Recognition, be it social, financial, or organisational, of the importance of the work done.

- For social services employers' federations or umbrella organisations, their lack of recognition within the framework of established social dialogue.
- For the service providers, the lack of recognition of the added value of social services and the need for additional means to carry out activities.
- For the employees, low levels of remuneration, a heavy emotional burden and physical workload; it is no longer possible to strike a balance between the importance and value of social and health care work and the workload that goes along with it.

This can lead to disempowerment, a feeling of having no control over the evolution of the organisation and one's own destiny and the absence of dialogue with the employer.

All these identified problems lead to an important lack of employees, and the difficulty to retain them. The health crisis due to Covid-19 has further worsened the situation: all interview partners report that they have unfilled positions due to difficulties in recruiting and the increasing number of resignations.

The future of social services may look bleak; nevertheless, all over Europe, initiatives are emerging to address the challenges.

### Initiatives

- Wage recognition, paying employees an adequate remuneration or a bonus, when finances permit; profit-sharing.
- Recognition through participation in governance, for instance through a cooperative approach, communication, and information for the teams.
- Valuing and thanking employees, via an annual event for staff, events to unite teams, incentives.
- Time for joint reflection on specific topics.
- Offering employees, the opportunity to participate beyond their usual tasks (European projects, mentoring for senior or experienced employees).
- Valuing previous experience.
- Encourage dialogue between employers and employees, time for dialogue between the employee and the manager, with individual listening time. Consider the employee's wishes.
- Give employees autonomy and responsibilities in the general running of the company (staff representatives, health /well-being officer).
- Lobby funding authorities and politicians to recognize the importance of social services and the need for adequate funding.

## Conclusion

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To meet the challenges concerning the lack of attractiveness of the social services sector, particular attention must be paid to the needs and demands of employees as well as social dialogue mechanisms, whether formal or informal. Organisational development and identified career paths can be promoted and explored through small actions or larger projects at several levels: company, regional, national, and European. So, let's go!

# Introduction

## *FORESEE, the right name for the right thing...*

Being an employer in the social services sector is not easy: funding is hard to get, the responsibilities are heavy, the social utility of the sector is not always fully recognised, recruiting professionals can be difficult, due to the many reasons we will explore in this report.

Being an employee in the social services sector is not easy either: salaries are low, jobs are not socially recognised enough, working conditions are difficult and the emotional burden is often heavy.

Nevertheless, being an employee and an employer in the social services sector also means: being present with beneficiaries at all stages of life (infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age), when people are in need (illness, disability, homelessness, isolated minority, asylum) and because it is necessary for a society to provide support regardless of age, skin colour, gender, nationality, etc. to those who need it.

We see this across Europe, and employers in the social services sector felt the need to come together in a federation, established in 2017, to bring their belief into social dialogue at the local, national and European level as a response to the challenges facing the sector today. In 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, the idea of a project that would bring together European employers' organisations and trade unions took shape through the FORESEE project, funded over two years by the European Union.

FORESEE aims to strengthen the capacity of social partners in the social services sector to engage in social dialogue, by stepping up social dialogue at EU level and in the Member States. The social partners, as those most involved, have one of the keys, that of social dialogue, to responding to the challenges of the sector and in particular that of its attractiveness.

Attractiveness, in terms of recruiting and retaining professionals, appears to be a key issue in maintaining and developing the social services sector in Europe. This issue is found in all the European countries involved in this report (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic) and it is undermining an ecosystem and a balance that is becoming increasingly precarious.

To define what social services are, we can use the definition given by the European Commission in its April 2006 Communication on "Social services of general interest in the European Union":

*"These services that play a preventive and social cohesion role consist of customised assistance to facilitate social inclusion and safeguard fundamental rights. They comprise, first of all, assistance for persons faced by personal challenges or crises (such as debt, unemployment, drug addiction or family breakdown). Secondly, they include activities to ensure that the persons concerned*

*are able to completely reintegrate into society (rehabilitation, language training for immigrants) and, in particular, the labour market (occupational training and reintegration). These services complement and support the role of families in caring for the youngest and oldest members of society in particular. Thirdly, these services include activities to integrate persons with long-term health or disability problems. Fourthly, they also include social housing, providing housing for disadvantaged citizens or socially less advantaged groups. Certain services can obviously include all of these four dimensions.”*

The sector directly employs almost 11 million workers (according to the 2018 Eurostat statistics, NACE codes 87 and 88, for EU & UK) in Europe, or 4.7% of the total EU workforce.

Work Package 4 of the FORESEE project focuses on attractiveness and aims to “develop tailored practices for more attractiveness: national-level employers’ organisations will cooperate to elaborate policy recommendations and strategies tailored to address the issue of attractiveness in the social services sector”. This Work Package was led by the Belgian cross-sectoral employer confederation UNIPSO and the French employers’ organisation Elisfa, both members of the Social Employers.

It was important for the project implementers to understand the views of the organisations involved and the different situations in the countries participating in the FORESEE project.

## Methodology

The first step of the project was therefore to conduct a questionnaire sent to all the partners in order to identify the characteristics of the organisation (members, number of employees, volunteers, statutes, governance, areas of activity), the country in which they are located and their specificities (responsibility for the social services sector, funding of the sector, organisation of social dialogue). In parallel to this step, we carried out a review of recent literature on attractiveness in the social services field.

The second stage consisted of qualitative interviews lasting approximately two hours with eleven employers' organisations (nine partner organisations in the FORESEE project and two non-partner organisations that are members of the Social Employers), two trade union organisations and one staff delegate.

We conducted interviews with the following employers' organisations:

- Germany: AGV AWO;
- Austria: Service Mensch;
- Belgium: UNIPSO;
- Spain: Lares;
- France: Nexem and Elisfa;
- Greece: Margarita;
- Luxembourg: Copas;
- Poland: WRZOS;
- Romania: Fonss;
- Czechia: APSS CR.

We also conducted interviews with two trade union organisations, CMKOS for Czechia and the CFDT Santé Sociaux for France and with the staff delegate of Service Mensch for Austria.

The interviews were conducted on the basis of an interview grid aimed at:

- understanding the employment situation linked to a certain number of parameters (state of social dialogue, country organisation, image of the social services, communication, quality of working life, training, recognition, etc.);
- determining the extent to which the sector is faced with problems of lack of attractiveness and understanding what are the reasons for this;
- mapping the good practices implemented or devised by the different organisations.

The third step consisted in analysing the different problems and studying the different good practices implemented by organisations and reviewing how they responded to the challenges of attractiveness. This step takes input from the literature review. During this analysis, we ask ourselves in particular what the role is that social dialogue can occupy to respond to the identified problems.

The last stage, following the report, will aim to collectively build in the target countries (Romania, Greece, Poland), a "good practice kit" which the organisations will be able to take up in order to respond as best as possible to their needs by adapting them to their local contexts.

During the process, we were able to identify some of the difficulties we faced. One of the obstacles was the diversity of views of what social services are. Indeed, each interviewee has their own definition. Moreover, as we have seen, the definition is broad, and the field of intervention, and therefore the professions referred to, varied significantly from one organisation to another. We also had to take into account the differences inherent in the culture and organisation in

each country, as the boundary between healthcare and social care is sometimes blurred.

In addition, the period during which this project was set up is of course somewhat special, as the health crisis coincided with the start of the FORESEE project. This may have posed logistical problems, but the main difficulty was that this crisis revealed new issues related to attractiveness.

Indeed, it is an issue that has affected many sectors of activity, and the vision of work has changed among professionals and the general public. Social services have not been spared. Often on the front line, or second line, at the height of the health crisis, the social service professions and their central utility have been highlighted. However, this has not always been followed by an improvement in their image or financial recognition, which may have contributed to some employees becoming weary of their commitment.

At the end of the analysis, we identified five main issues related to attractiveness that were reported to us by the interviewees:

- **Competition**, whether between countries or regions, between rural or urban areas, or between the private non-profit, private for-profit or public sectors.
- **Image and communication**, the image the sector suffers from, both with respect to the general public and funders, and even within the world of social dialogue. The lack of tools in the social services sector to improve communication and change this image.
- **Training and career paths**, a numerus clausus, a lack of training organisations, training that is sometimes unsuited to the reality of the field. The lack of career development opportunities, in particular with too many steps between levels of responsibility which block career paths.
- **Quality of life at work**, and balancing private and work life, restrictive working hours, heavy mental and physical workload, and still significant inequalities between women and men.
- **Recognition**, whether social, financial or organisational, of the importance of the work done.

As a mirror, and in a more detailed way, we will present actions that have been devised by organisations in the field and implemented, on the same themes of competition, image and communication, training and career paths, quality of life at work or recognition. We will therefore present what we could call good practices. Some will be reproducible, others not, depending on the national context and the state of social dialogue. Nevertheless, they allow us to propose possibilities for improving attractiveness in the social services sector in Europe.



# Issues relating to the attractiveness of social services professions in Europe

As mentioned in the introduction, there are five main categories of challenges that affect the attractiveness of social services professions in Europe.

The first of these issues is **competition**, which may be territorial or statutory and economic. Territorial competition is which we notice between States, between regions or between territories, for example urban and rural. This competition calls for another, which we could call statutory or economic, and which is linked to the status of organisations and to competition between the public, private for-profit and private non-profit sectors. Competition in the recruitment and retention of professionals in the social services sector is therefore either territorial or organisational.

**Image and communication** are the second issue identified in the interviews we conducted. In all European countries, the sector suffers from a poor image. This image is conveyed by the media, the general public or politicians, as well as by employers and employees in the sector. Moreover, the professions within this sector remain poorly known to the general public and sometimes even to the organisations that define jobs. The professional skills they require are still often considered as 'natural skills' that are intrinsic to the quality of the person.

The third issue identified is that of **training and career paths**. For all the organisations interviewed, we note an insufficient number of trained professionals, whether this is due to insufficient funding or to difficulties in identifying candidates for open training courses. We also note on this issue the difficulty for employers to offer coherent and valued career paths to employees.

The **quality of working life** seems to be another essential issue for the attractiveness of social professions in Europe. The professions are morally and intellectually demanding with the development of psychosocial risks, but also physically with the problem of musculoskeletal disorders. In this report, we understand the quality of working life as an issue of non-discrimination and professional equality, particularly between men and women.

Finally, we could not understand the issues of the attractiveness of the social professions in Europe without asking ourselves about the **recognition** of these professions, whether by society in general, by the State or by employers, and whether this recognition is financial, organisational or symbolic.



# 1 Territorial and statutory competition on the attractiveness of social professions in Europe

## a. Competition between states in the recruitment of social services professionals

There is competition in Europe for social service professionals. Some countries are facing a high level of economic emigration, which leads to serious problems of recruitment and attractiveness of the professions. Conversely, some states recruit large numbers of foreign workers, which raises questions of integration and support for these professionals.

### ***Emigration jeopardises the work of social services in some countries***

The interview we conducted with Fonss, a Romanian federation of 44 NGOs and associations working in the social services, showed that there is a great need for social services workers, 11,000 according to the organisation. However, there is a massive emigration of students when they finish their studies, or after one or two years of experience in a Romanian facility. This emigration of professionals leads to a double problem: a structural lack of professionals in social services which does not allow the needs of the population to be answered, but also an important contribution of Romania to the training of professionals which is similar to an endless quest. According to Fonss, these departures are linked in particular to the low salaries of the social services professions in the country, whereas professionals would like to be able to extend their experiences in Romanian associations if they had more attractive salaries.

This issue also concerns Greece, according to the interview with Margarita, a Greek regional organisation. A large number of professionals, often young, have left the country since the Troika intervention, during which many salaries were not paid for several months, heading to France, Germany, the United States, Spain or Italy. This problem is reinforced by the non-recognition of Greek diplomas from private universities, diplomas that are recognised abroad.

Thus, competition between states is also visible in the area of education.

Beyond Greece, other countries, notably Spain, Belgium and Romania, finance numerous training courses, sometimes in a very sectoral manner (Spain) for Europeans. The efforts of the States in training are not rewarded by an increase in the number of professionals, who then prefer to move to countries where salaries and working conditions are better.

### ***The particular case of border areas***

Finally, the interviews reveal particular problems for certain border areas. For some organisations, the majority of professionals in these areas are drawn away by bordering countries. For France, this is notably the case for the border areas of Luxembourg and Switzerland. This may also be the case between the twin cities of Bratislava and Vienna, or between Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg. According to the European Commission, cross-border workers account for almost 1.7 million employees in Europe, all sectors combined.

The social services sector is no exception. The challenges linked to cross-border areas increased during the health crisis when the borders were partly closed. This is particularly the case in Luxembourg, where the possible closure of borders could have had disastrous consequences on the maintenance of services for users. The employment of many foreign professionals also raises several issues in Luxembourg, notably the mastery of languages (German, French, Luxembourgish), the recognition of diplomas, the production of internal documents for organisations which must be understood by all, the transport network which appears to be congested between the four countries, as well as potential diplomatic tensions when Luxembourg carries out overly active recruitment campaigns. The increase in salaries in Germany could also lead to many departures.

Belgian training courses for nurses and physiotherapists, for example, are filled by French students who come to the schools after failing the competitive examination. These students then return to their country of origin to practice their profession and are therefore not future workers for these professions in Belgium.

## b. Competition between the regions of federal states

There is also competition between regions within a country when the healthcare and social services sector is a regional responsibility. This is often the case in federal states, in particular Austria, Germany, Belgium and Spain. In these four states, the field of healthcare and social care is largely a regional responsibility, although it is sometimes shared at national level.

In Austria, elderly care is a regional responsibility. Wages, but also working conditions, can differ from one region to another, e.g. there is strong competition between Lower Austria and Vienna.

In Germany, the increase in collective agreements, by the Länder or by organisations, puts regions in competition with each other according to their level of financing of the sectors and can generate territorial inequalities in terms of access to social services. This inequality is reflected in the difference in minimum

wages that still exists between the West and the East, more than thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This competition between regions can also be found in Spain, where there is no national collective agreement, which leads to competition between regions, especially concerning salaries. Catalonia and the Basque Country in particular attract many professionals from neighbouring regions.

## c. Competitions between ministries and sub-sectors

Competition between ministries and sub-sectors of the healthcare and social services sector is emerging as one of the issues of attractiveness.

In several countries there is competition, for example, between support for the elderly and early childhood care, and thus between different categories of social care work and social intervention. This competition can be linked to different funding either between ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Cohesion, etc.) or between local authorities.

In Germany, elderly care is a national responsibility, and therefore broadly financed, whereas early childhood education and care is a municipal responsibility.

In managing its activities, the Luxembourgish organisation Copas is in contact with four ministries: Health, Education, Families and Social Security. Despite the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee, the increase in the number of parties involved sometimes leads to conflicts between the interests of the ministries, and to significant differences in funding depending on the sectors.

This problem also exists in Belgium, where the social services sector is split between different ministries and different levels of public authority (state, region, municipality, community). This makes it difficult for social partners to act together. For example, the profession of educator is currently better paid for people with disabilities than for children and adolescents. The measures taken in favour of nurses in hospitals through recruitment bonuses have also increased competition for other sectors (nursing homes, home care) which do not have this measure and are already

experiencing increased difficulties in meeting staffing standards and ratios.

In France, there can be significant differences in pay and working conditions between sectors under the responsibility of different ministries. The case of home care for the elderly, a sector the state has been structurally under-investing in for many years, is indicative of the consequences of under-funding certain sectors and the state's desire to create hierarchies between social services, for example, old age and early childhood, which are inversely funded in Germany and France. During the interviews, the problem of discrepancies between professions and sectors and the lack of a holistic approach was widely emphasised by the organisations.

#### d. Competition between rural and urban territories

The interviews also show strong disparities between urban and rural areas, which are subject to different challenges, for example housing in urban areas and mobility in rural areas. These territorial disparities have consequences for the attractiveness of social services professions and the capacity of a territory to provide social services to the inhabitants who need them.

In Romania, for example, competition between rural areas and towns is strong, with rural areas being less attractive. However, 50% of the Romanian population lives in rural areas and therefore needs social services. Nevertheless, it is noted that rural municipalities do not have the ability to recruit social services workers. As a consequence, this lack of attractiveness creates strong territorial inequalities.

We see this problem in France too. In the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, for example, social professions are not sufficiently attractive, particularly in terms of salaries, in city centres such as Lyon, because of the high cost of rent. In the region's rural areas, there are mobility issues, which are reinforced by the increase in energy prices.

#### e. Competition between the forms of organisations

##### ***Public sector is generally more attractive to professionals than the private non-profit sector***

The private non-profit sector in many of the countries surveyed suffers from a lack of attractiveness compared to the public sector.

In Austria, hospitals attract nurses with higher salaries than in the home care, which is private. In Czechia, funding is determined by the regional governments, which own their own facilities and want to limit competition.

In Luxembourg, there are wage differences of up to 17% between public and private non-profit sector jobs, depending on the profession, but there is also a higher social value placed on public employment.

According to our interviews, this pay gap is even greater in Spain, where hospitals pay much more than associations. The organisations that are members of Lares are thus subject to strong competition from the public sector, particularly with regard to nurses and salaries.

However, salaries are not the only reason why professionals prefer the public sector. Margarita (Greece) explained that the attraction of the public sector was also due to the stability and professional development it offered. The sector receives more funding than private facilities, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, its demand for professionals is high and is considered a more stable job provider.

According to the French organisation Nexem, the professions carried out by voluntary organisations also have a lower profile than those in public hospitals. This is particularly the case for nurses in the healthcare sector, but also in the early childhood education and care (Elisfa). According to French organisations (Nexem, Elisfa), there is also a low level of remuneration in the healthcare and social sector in France compared to the healthcare sector and the public hospital ser-

vice. This competition can be linked to the difference in status (public/private). Following the health crisis, for example, the hospital sector was boosted by the state, which could lead to a “flight of personnel” from non-profit organisations to public hospitals.

### ***An aggressive for-profit sector***

The interviews show that there is also strong competition between the for-profit and non-profit sectors in Europe. The funding of organisations is identical, whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit. However, non-profit organisations invest and reinvest all the public funding they receive in their activities, whereas for-profit organisations, public funds go towards private individuals.

This competition has an impact in terms of image. In Greece and Austria, numerous scandals linked to profit-making organisations have tarnished the entire healthcare and social care sector. This is particularly true for many nursing homes, and has led some states, such as Norway, to restrict the running of a nursing home to the public sector or to non-profit organisations, and therefore not being subject to profit requirements.

Despite this, the for-profit sector is involved in the entire healthcare and social care sector in Europe. In Germany, for example, almost 50% of care for the elderly is provided by the for-profit sector. Their lack of a collective agreement allows them to have higher

wages than non-profit organisations for highly qualified jobs, while having lower wages for less qualified jobs. These wage differences are accompanied by fewer rights for all employees.

According to several organisations, competition from the for-profit sector is also exercised through a greater capacity to finance communication campaigns, particularly for large groups that are investing in more and more sectors: early childhood, support for the elderly, but also sometimes in inclusive housing or support for certain populations (refugees, homeless people, disabilities, etc.).

In the French region of Nouvelle-Aquitaine, non-profit organisations are now competing with companies for the social services work they carry out among certain populations. Subsidiaries of large groups are investing in public contracts that have replaced subsidies by offering unbeatable prices. According to some organisations, the investment of the profit-making sector in sectors that were previously protected is linked to the acculturation by the States, whether over-interpreted or not, of the European Union’s competition regulations on State Aid, in a regulatory doctrine of the European Union that considers companies to be on the same footing as citizens’ organisations. According to some voluntary organisations, this leads to a confusion of roles, competition on public contracts and the employment market, a drop in the quality of service, an increase in the prices charged and, ultimately, affects the public interest.

## 2 A poor image of social services in Europe

The interviews conducted in the framework of the FORESEE project show a very poor image of social services in Europe. They have a poor general image in terms of salaries and working conditions and are not socially valued. Moreover, they are still not well known, particularly by the organisations that define jobs, which reinforces the difficulties of recruitment. These factors are not likely to improve as the organisations interviewed explain that young people are increasingly turning away from these professions and that the health crisis has reinforced the poor image of social services in Europe.

### a. Social services: a poor image regarding wages and working conditions

Most of the organisations interviewed mention a general bad image of the social services sector in Europe.

In Austria, Service Mensch mentions a “bad image of the sector with low wages and bad working conditions”, in Germany AGV AWO talks about a “bad reputation and a reputation of being poorly paid, working hard and with difficult working hours”, while in Romania, Fonss mentions a “bad view of social services”.

In Spain, it is mainly the elderly care sector that gets a bad press, while the CFDT Santé Sociaux in France speaks of a bad image for the whole sector, as does the trade union CMKOS in Czechia.

The social professions therefore suffer from a poor overall reputation which excludes potential future candidates who could have flourished in these pro-

fessions. The sector is considered to be poorly paid, with difficult working conditions and in particular jobs exposed to psychosocial risks and musculoskeletal disorders, as well as atypical and chaotic working hours and possibly precarious short contracts.

In Czechia, for example, the trade union CMKOS tells us that professionals prefer to work in a supermarket rather than in the social services sector because the pay is the same, but the working conditions are less difficult. We note from these interviews that some elements of this bad reputation seem to be true, while others are less so and may be related to a biased image of the sector.

### b. Feminised professions with little social value

We also noted in our interviews that the professions are little valued socially, despite the communication campaigns conducted by professional organisations. Generally speaking, care professions are mostly carried out by women and are not recognised socially.

In France, the Alisfa branch is a so-called “unisex” professional branch in the sense that it is composed almost exclusively of women. Indeed, there is a strong feminisation of the professions, but also pay gaps between men and women. These gaps are linked to the structure of the job and the positions occupied. It is also due to the fact that women are limited in their access to professional and certification training. In addition, there is a gendered segmentation by branch of activity.

At the same time, and directly linked to the above findings, we note the persistence of gendered stereotypes, the maintenance of an unequal distribution of family tasks and, finally, a lesser recognition of jobs considered as feminine. In France, for example, a conference on professional equality in which Elisfa participated demonstrated these different elements by using classification grids. These show strong disparities depending on whether the work is done by women or men. This results in structural pay gaps, which are always greater when pay is higher overall. Other factors accentuate these disparities: age and maternity. There is also unequal access to vocational training, unequal distribution of domestic work (women do about 3 hours 52 minutes of domestic work per week compared with 2 hours 24 minutes for men), a decrease in the number of activities carried out by women according to the number of children, stagnation in the number of women in the workforce, continuing sexist and sexual violence at work (1/5 women are victims of such violence in the course of their working lives) and overexposure of women to work-related risks.

All of these factors lead us to believe that jobs are devalued when they are considered to be feminine. Even if not all low-value occupations are perceived as feminine, this dynamic is nevertheless found in many cases. Furthermore, in the social services sector, society seems to consider that these jobs are carried out almost 'naturally' by women, and that there is therefore no need for special skills or qualifications, and therefore no financial or social recognition. These inequalities are also mentioned by the Czech employers' organisation APSS CR and its trade union counterpart CMKOS. Both organisations mention strong inequalities between women and men. Nevertheless, some organisations do report a good image of certain sub-sectors of the social services sector, such as care for the elderly in Spain.

### c. A poor image maintained by the media and employment organisations

The interviews conducted for the report mention a poor image of the sector in the media. They are thus determined to be the main reason for the bad reputation of social services in Czechia. In France, the CFDT Santé Sociaux also explains the poor image of the sector by a bad internal image or perception of the organisations in charge of employment and supporting people in their job search.

### d. Increased non-attractiveness among young people

According to the interviews conducted, it appears that young people are increasingly difficult to attract to social services professions. This raises questions about recruitment and job retention, particularly in the future. Service Mensch, in Austria, also notes this difficulty in attracting young people, with the result that the composition of work teams is becoming increasingly older. This lack of attractiveness of the sector to young people could have a major impact in the coming years if new professionals are not hired, making it more difficult to meet social needs. In Germany, there is also an ageing workforce. This increases the need to work on career paths. This problem is also noted in France by Nexem, which is concerned about the decline in the number of students in social work schools. Its white paper<sup>1</sup> explains that "the number of students entering training to obtain a social work diploma fell from 32,000 in 2010 to 19,560 in 2017."

1 Nexem, *Reconnaître et valoriser nos professionnels et nos métiers : un atout indispensable pour la construction d'une société inclusive*, [https://www.unaforis.eu/sites/default/files/public/fichiers/telechargements/nexem\\_livre-blanc2021\\_attractivite-metiers\\_vdef.pdf](https://www.unaforis.eu/sites/default/files/public/fichiers/telechargements/nexem_livre-blanc2021_attractivite-metiers_vdef.pdf).

## e. A poor image reinforced by the health crisis

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The interviews also show that the health crisis has sometimes affected the image of the social services sector. Although we sometimes note a post-health crisis boost to the social, health or healthcare professions, their image has also been tarnished by the health crisis, depending on the issues in each country.

The sub-sector of care for the elderly in particular has been called into question in some countries, such as

Germany, where the image of the diligence of the professions has been tarnished.

However, it should be noted that the health crisis has also contributed to highlighting the need for functional social services and has demonstrated the importance of these jobs, and therefore of their funding, according to AGV AWO (Germany). A Eurofound report notes that the average hourly wage in long-term care and social services is 21% below the average for all sectors.<sup>2</sup>

2 Eurofound, Living conditions and quality of life, Wages in long-term care and other social services 21% below average, 2021, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/article/2021/wages-in-long-term-care-and-other-social-services-21-below-average>.

## 3 Training and career paths

The issue of training often came up in the interviews and is closely linked to that of career paths. We distinguish between initial training, which concerns the education given to young people (general training), and vocational training (acquisition of technical knowledge or knowledge related to a profession), which is the training taken by employees on a contract or seeking employment.

### a. Initial training

Concerning initial training, all the partners interviewed report a reliable training system, organised in different ways depending on the country: university (Greece, Romania), specialised schools (France) with, however, disparities and effects that are difficult to manage. Thus, there are sometimes obstacles such as a numerus clausus (Spain, France, Germany), in certain training courses which leads to recruitment tensions. In France, for example, the number of entrants to social work schools is limited. The success of schools in attracting students can be qualified. The cost to a nation of training social services workers who will then leave for countries with higher salaries is sometimes high.

On the other hand, some diplomas are recognised abroad when they are not recognised in the country itself. This is the case of private universities in Greece. A multitude of courses and training bodies (private or public schools or universities, national or regional, with equivalences at European level or not, national or regional certifiers) can make it difficult to identify

training courses. These can be of high quality, while sometimes being disconnected from the professional reality and the needs existing in the structures. Lastly, we noticed in the course of our interviews a lack of relationship between schools and the professional environment (internships, placements).

### b. In-service training

In-service training is developed in many countries, in a more or less formal way, internally or in partnership with training organisations. It is compulsory in very few countries and multi-year training plans are rare<sup>3</sup>. The problems associated with it are as follows:

The training is mainly recognised internally and therefore does not facilitate moving to other companies in the sector. Some employees do not feel sufficiently trained (1/4 of employees interviewed)<sup>4</sup>. There are significant and sometimes almost insurmountable steps between levels in the same sector (when the concept of sector exists). The difficulty of moving from an “executing” level to a level of responsibility, particularly for human resources, can be an obstacle to career paths. A lack of interest in or availability for training is sometimes noted, particularly for low-skilled employees. The cost of training, and the need to replace employees on training courses, makes the training of professionals problematic, which leads to favouring of short, non-qualifying training courses that do not allow employees to develop professionally. Finally, the lack of internal prospects for those trained can also hamper the training of professionals.

3 Social Employers Report: The Social Services Workforce in Europe, Current State of Play and Challenges (2019).

4 Ibid.



### c. Career paths with little anticipation

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The interviews show that there are sometimes few opportunities for progression from the bottom of the ladder to the top, with often very large steps to overcome. It was also noted that there are few positions available at the top of the hierarchy, particularly because of the small size of the organisations. Even if employees have trained and succeeded in acquiring the required skills, the higher up the hierarchy an em-

ployee climbs, the fewer places are available, leading to frustration. Moreover, a move up to positions of responsibility that are more human resources-oriented forces employees to change their paradigm (from assistance to team management or administrative work). A lack of anticipation and reflection on the career paths of employees in their teams by managers, sometimes due to a lack of skills, sometimes due to the daily grind that overwhelms them, is also visible. Finally, the career paths are poorly marked out or non-existent, and are focused on the diploma and not on the skills accumulated by the employees.

## 4 About working conditions

The quality of working life is the fourth point of reflection for thinking about the challenges of attractiveness.

### a. The health of professionals

The health of professionals is widely mentioned in the interviews, with mostly two angles concerning health, which are the increase in psychosocial risks that sometimes lead to burn-out, and musculoskeletal disorders, which are widespread in social services.

These health problems lead to high absenteeism, which in turn contributes to psychosocial risks and musculoskeletal disorders.

#### **Major psychosocial risks**

Psychosocial risks include stress at work (overwork, lack of resources, lack of autonomy, etc.); violence within the company (harassment, conflict, etc.); violence outside the company (insults, threats, aggression, etc.).

Exposure to these work-related risks can have consequences for the health of employees, particularly in terms of cardiovascular diseases, psychological disorders, burn-out and even suicide. For France, the social cost of work-related stress is estimated at between 1.9 and 3 billion euros per year. This estimate includes the cost of care and the loss of wealth due to absenteeism, premature termination of activity and premature death (Institut national de recherche et de sécurité, study carried out in 2010 based on figures from 2007).

European social services professionals appear to be highly exposed to psychosocial risks. Indeed, these professions are particularly subject to these risks because of their high level of contact with the public, and certain groups of people in complex situations that are therefore more difficult to manage. This is what the Austrian organisation Service Mensch explains, which has observed a high rate of burn-out in its organisation, despite the introduction of measures.

In France, the CFDT Santé Sociaux explains that the sector subjects professionals to a significant moral burden which can sometimes lead to rejection by professionals in their sector.

The Belgian federation UNIPSO, however, points out the difficulty of objectifying the rate of burn-out or turnover among their companies, or of measuring hardship.

The interviews thus show that it is necessary to quantify and qualify psychosocial risks, hardship and burn-out in the structures in order to be able to combat them effectively. According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work<sup>5</sup>, more than 50% of employees in all sectors are subject to psychosocial risks.

The agency lists the following risks: work overload, conflicting demands and lack of clarity about the function to be performed, workers' non-participation in decisions affecting them and their lack of influence on the way their work is carried out, poorly managed organisational changes and job insecurity,

5 EU-OSHA, Psychosocial risks at work, viewed on 22/12/2021, <https://osha.europa.eu/fr/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-stress>.

ineffective communication and lack of support from management or colleagues, psychological and sexual harassment, and violence by third parties.

### ***Musculoskeletal disorders at the heart of social services work***

Musculoskeletal disorders are also very common in social services in Europe. In Czechia, for example, home carers are, according to the APSS CR, the professionals with the most clients in Europe. However, all the organisations mention musculoskeletal disorders suffered by professionals.

Indeed, assistance to the elderly or early childhood jobs require heavy lifting and therefore support (training, access to care, more efficient equipment). This exposure to musculoskeletal disorders has direct effects on attractiveness, since on the one hand it does not favour the image of the professions and therefore influences recruitment, but on the other hand it also makes it more difficult to retain professionals.

These problems make it difficult for professionals to remain in the same profession throughout their career. The German and Austrian organisations explain, for example, that older professionals are sometimes forced to move into a different field because of the musculoskeletal disorders to which they are subjected.

In Poland, the working conditions of professionals are poor and antiquated, according to WRZOS. Professionals do not want to work in this sector, which is not respected, not digitalised and where working hours are high. The last law concerning professionals in the sector dates from 1999.

In France, the article published by the newspaper *Le Monde* on 07 December 2021 covers the strike led by professionals in the social services sector<sup>6</sup>. Employees in the sector report poor working conditions that

cause stress due to the increase in the number of beneficiaries in their care. The overload of work forces them to continue working into the evening in order to carry out the administrative tasks they could not do during the day. According to the French organisation Nexem, there is currently a shortage of 65,000 posts, while 150,000 retirements are planned between now and 2025. This shortage does not take into account the large number of professionals who are thinking of changing careers.

### ***High absenteeism which reinforces the risks for professionals***

The interviews show an increase in absenteeism among professionals in recent years. We also note that absenteeism tends to increase with the age of the employees. This increase should be seen in the context of the general increase in absenteeism in all sectors.

In France, for example, in 2020, the annual barometer on absenteeism carried out by the consultancy firm Ayiming in partnership with AG2R La Mondiale<sup>7</sup> highlights record absenteeism during 2020. According to this barometer, absenteeism in France in 2020 concerned 41% of employees who had at least one day's absence, a quarter of which was related to Covid-19. These figures show an increase of 24% in absenteeism in France and make it a record high.

According to the German Federal Office for Occupational Safety and Health, absenteeism is also rising across all sectors in Germany and reached an average of 12.2 days per professional in 2015.

These absences, which are not always replaced, will ultimately increase the workload within the facilities and contribute to increased exposure to psychosocial risks or musculoskeletal disorders.

6 Les travailleurs sociaux font grève pour partager leur désarroi, *Le Monde*, 7 December 2021

7 Santé : absentéisme record en 2020 (baromètre AG2R La Mondiale), <https://www.argusdelassurance.com/les-assureurs/groupe-de-protection-sociale/la-flambee-de-l-absenteisme.187952>.

## b. Split, atypical working hours and short contracts

### *Involuntary short contracts*

Part-time work is a legal concept defined with reference to the legal working time, which varies from one European country to another. “Involuntary” part-time work is therefore not a legal concept, but also not a completely quantifiable one, since it is based on the statements of professionals and on qualitative interviews.

In *Temps partiel et temps partiel subi, facteurs de précarité pour les femmes actives*<sup>8</sup>, Sonia Baudry and Stéphanie Fillion define involuntary part-time work as a “halo” around unemployment and the precariousness of workers forced to opt for part-time work.

In France, according to the Dares<sup>9</sup>, 18% of employees in 2018 were under part-time work contracts (particularly women (31%), young people (24%) and the over-55s (28%)). The rise of short contracts in Europe could be linked to less sustainable funding of organisations. In France, for example, public funding has partly decreased and is less and less multi-annual. The instability of funding results in the instability of professionals’ contracts, and partly affects the attractiveness of the sector.

### *Split working hours*

We see a lot of split working hours in the social services sector, especially in certain sub-sectors, such as the home care sub-sector in Austria.

This is also the case for people running extracurricular activities in France, who work split hours that

make it more difficult to balance private and professional life. According to the CGT, this precariousness of contracts is the result of imposed part-time work and the educational commitment contract, which are exercised as “compensated voluntary work”<sup>10</sup>, and which concerns holiday camp and leisure centre instructors.

These forms of contract seem to be implemented in many European countries, as is also the case in Luxembourg and Germany. These issues are linked to those of occupational inequality, since jobs with split working hours are frequently held by women. The job search sites [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com), [jobsforher.com](https://www.jobsforher.com) and [2to3days.com](https://www.2to3days.com) offer what they call “Female Part Time Jobs”, “Part Time jobs for Women” or “Flexible and Part Time Jobs for Women”, jobs often in the social services sector, often low-paid, with flexible working hours to enable women to look after their children when the childcare systems in the countries concerned are not sufficiently effective, in terms of accessibility.

### *Atypical and often variable working hours*

The interviews and the various studies also show the need for atypical working hours in social services in order to meet the needs of the public. These atypical working hours have a significant impact on professionals in the sector, particularly in terms of work-life balance.

In France, the early childhood sector is increasingly affected. Indeed, nearly 13 million workers in France work atypical, extended or staggered hours, which means that there are major challenges in terms of childcare. According to the French Secretary of State for Children and Families, 9 out of 10 parents working

8 *Temps partiel et temps partiel subi, facteurs de précarité pour les femmes actives*, Sonia Baudry, Stéphanie Fillion, in *Regards croisés sur l'économie 2014/2* (no. 15), pages 211 to 214.

9 Dares analyses, July 2020, *Quelles sont les conditions d'emploi des salariés à temps partiel ?*, [https://dares.hosting.augure.com/Augure\\_Dares/r/ContenuEnLigne/Download?id=B6126A27-5EE6-4747-8FA8-9306C4F87140&filename=Temps%20partiel%20%28au%2004%20ao%C3%BBt%29.pdf](https://dares.hosting.augure.com/Augure_Dares/r/ContenuEnLigne/Download?id=B6126A27-5EE6-4747-8FA8-9306C4F87140&filename=Temps%20partiel%20%28au%2004%20ao%C3%BBt%29.pdf).

10 *Libération, Mini-salaires, horaires hachés, sous-effectifs... Les raisons de la grève des animateurs du périscolaire*, viewed on 22-12-2021, [https://www.liberation.fr/societe/education/mini-salaires-horaires-haches-sous-effectifs-les-raison-de-la-greve-des-animateurs-du-periscolaire-20211214\\_QZOWNVBOWNCHTHER2KRPADQFUM/](https://www.liberation.fr/societe/education/mini-salaires-horaires-haches-sous-effectifs-les-raison-de-la-greve-des-animateurs-du-periscolaire-20211214_QZOWNVBOWNCHTHER2KRPADQFUM/).

atypical hours have difficulty finding childcare solutions<sup>11</sup>. The Ministry defines atypical working hours as “any situation where people are required to work at times usually reserved for family time or rest, before 8 a.m. and after 6 p.m., on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays”. However, according to the French Observatory for the Quality of Life at Work, “atypical working hours are often accompanied by low salaries, in sectors where there is little tension in terms of employment, and therefore no issue of attractiveness for companies”. This is not the case in early childhood education and care, where we can see strong issues in terms of attractiveness.

### c. Strong gender inequalities in the social services

Social service professionals are predominantly women, and in some sectors in some countries this is overwhelmingly the case (e.g. 97% women in early childhood work in France). Most of the interviewees mentioned the fact that the professions are largely female and that the most qualified professions are carried out by men.

According to the Eurostat barometer<sup>12</sup>, the gap between the employment rate of women and men remains significant in Europe, and women are also the most likely to be in involuntary part-time work. Despite the desire of the European Commission, parental leave is still not compensated at the level of sick

leave, which contributes to “chosen” part-time work, which nevertheless remains “involuntary”. Finally, according to Eurostat, men earned on average 15.3% more than women in the European Union in 2018.

According to the Union of Employers in the Social and Solidarity Economy (Udes, France), with 69% female employees but only 56% female managers, 45% female board members and 37% female chairpersons, the social services sector is not immune to gender inequalities: non-mixing of professions, glass ceiling, part-time work, salary inequalities, etc. There is still a lot of room for manoeuvre<sup>13</sup>.

### d. Heavy responsibilities

Finally, the interviews show that there are major issues concerning the responsibility and possible loneliness of professionals in the context of their work. This is particularly the case in the home care sector, where professionals go into the homes of elderly or disabled people and thus have to face heavy responsibilities in the choices they make. Service Mensch in Austria, for example, talks about the loneliness of professionals when they are in the home of an elderly person. In particular, they have to take responsibility for making decisions if the person has a health problem. It is therefore important for the organisation to have trained and experienced professionals and to be supported by the organisation.

11 *Tour de France des solutions d'accueil du jeune enfant en horaires atypiques*, Secretary of State for Childhood and Families, October 2021.

12 Eurostat Barometer, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?query=BOOKMARK\\_DS-053312\\_QID\\_826F367\\_UID\\_-3F171EB0&layout=TIME,C,X,0;SEX,L,X,1;GEO,L,Y,0;AGE,L,Z,0;UNIT,L,Z,1;INDIC\\_EM,L,Z,2;INDICATORS,C,Z,3;&zSelection=DS-053312INDIC\\_EM,EMP\\_LFS;DS-053312AGE,Y55-64;DS-053312UNIT,PC\\_POP;DS-053312INDICATORS,OBS\\_FLAG;&rankName1=UNIT\\_1\\_2\\_-1\\_2&rankName2=AGE\\_1\\_2\\_-1\\_2&rankName3=INDICATORS\\_1\\_2\\_-1\\_2&rankName4=INDIC-EM\\_1\\_2\\_-1\\_2&rankName5=TIME\\_1\\_0\\_0\\_0&rankName6=SEX\\_1\\_2\\_1\\_0&rankName7=GEO\\_1\\_0\\_0\\_1&sortR=ASC\\_-1\\_FIRST&sortC=ASC\\_-1\\_FIRST&rStp=&cStp=&rDCh=&cDCh=&rDM=true&cDM=true&footnes=false&empty=false&wai=false&time\\_mode=ROLLING&time\\_most\\_recent=true&lang=FR&cfo=%23%23%23%2C%23%23%23.%23%23%23](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?query=BOOKMARK_DS-053312_QID_826F367_UID_-3F171EB0&layout=TIME,C,X,0;SEX,L,X,1;GEO,L,Y,0;AGE,L,Z,0;UNIT,L,Z,1;INDIC_EM,L,Z,2;INDICATORS,C,Z,3;&zSelection=DS-053312INDIC_EM,EMP_LFS;DS-053312AGE,Y55-64;DS-053312UNIT,PC_POP;DS-053312INDICATORS,OBS_FLAG;&rankName1=UNIT_1_2_-1_2&rankName2=AGE_1_2_-1_2&rankName3=INDICATORS_1_2_-1_2&rankName4=INDIC-EM_1_2_-1_2&rankName5=TIME_1_0_0_0&rankName6=SEX_1_2_1_0&rankName7=GEO_1_0_0_1&sortR=ASC_-1_FIRST&sortC=ASC_-1_FIRST&rStp=&cStp=&rDCh=&cDCh=&rDM=true&cDM=true&footnes=false&empty=false&wai=false&time_mode=ROLLING&time_most_recent=true&lang=FR&cfo=%23%23%23%2C%23%23%23.%23%23%23)

13 *Egalité professionnelle femmes/hommes dans l'ESS : Des ambitions aux actes*, Udes, <https://www.ud.es/fr/actualites/egalite-professionnelle-femmeshommes-dans-less-ambitions-aux-actes>

## 5 Recognition

The interviewees mentioned the lack of recognition at very different levels, with implications that have multiple consequences.

### a. For the leading network organisations, recognition at an institutional level

For some interviewees, the lack of recognition of their organisation in the framework of an **established social dialogue** undermines the contribution of social services. Several countries have a strong sectoral social dialogue, but do not yet include social services in it, as they are considered minor, or the applicant organisations are considered too small.

### b. For the operating structures, recognition of the added value of social services

In the course of the interviews, we noticed that the “users or beneficiaries” of social services are aware of the importance of the service provided, but often do not have the means to pay for it. Local authorities provide the service themselves or, when it is delegated to service providers, pay less for it. The general public (and sometimes funders) do not always rec-

ognise social service workers as having a job, but rather as having ‘occupations’ that anyone can do, especially as the workers are mainly female. Finally, the lack of knowledge and consideration of the time needed to support people, which goes far beyond the technical act, is mentioned by many organisations.

### c. For employees

In each of the countries, we note a low level of remuneration in the social services. Even in countries where social dialogue exists and a minimum wage is in place, wages are sometimes below the minimum wage. A Eurofound report notes that the average hourly wage in long-term care and social services is on average 21% below the average for all sectors<sup>14</sup>. This leads in particular to a lack of recognition of the emotional burden of work in social services, but also a lack of recognition of the physical burden; a lack of perspective. Employees wonder why they should invest so much time in their work when they know that they will not be paid more and that few career paths are possible. Employees sometimes feel that they are not heard, that they have no control over changes to their work or the organisation. Finally, the lack of time for dialogue with the employer, whether formal as in social consultation bodies or informal at company level, appears to be an obstacle for employees in the social services sector.

14 Eurofound, Living conditions and quality of life, Wages in long-term care and other social services 21% below average, 2021, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/article/2021/wages-in-long-term-care-and-other-social-services-21-below-average>.

The employers we met are all aware of the various causes of staff turnover and the difficulty of recruiting. As they do not have control over funding, they feel powerless to respond to the need to ensure quality social services provided by employees who are good at their jobs. Caught between a rock and a hard place, regardless of the European country to which they belong, they know that difficulties in recruiting result in an overload of work for existing employees, leading to burn-out or disillusionment, with the dan-

ger that the service provided will become worse, and therefore funders less inclined to finance. To break this vicious circle, there is no miracle cure, but a multitude of smaller and larger actions that can be put in place. Just as the problems mentioned above are not common to all (fortunately), our interviewees have each in their environment put in place practices that are not necessarily financially costly. The aim of WP4 is to present several of these initiatives which could be inspiring and shared.



# Practices to improve attractiveness carried out by social partners in Europe

In this chapter, we will look at various practices that have been put in place by social partners in order to resolve certain problems linked to attractiveness. These practices will again be discussed by theme.



# 1 Competition

## a. Actions taken to overcome competition between States

The interviews conducted in the context of the FORESEE project show that the first of the actions initiated by the organisations to overcome competition between the Member States of the European Union (EU) is participation in European organisations. Founded in October 2017, the Social Employers represents employers in the social and social services sector before the EU institutions. The organisation aims to strengthen the position of social employers at European, national and regional level in each state; to influence European legislation in particular through social dialogue; to establish common positions among its members and to stimulate the exchange of good practice. The Social Employers has 30 members from 18 European countries (EU and North Macedonia). The European Ageing Network (EAN) is an organisation representing 10,000 organisations providing services to older people in 28 countries in Europe. EAN identifies common issues in Europe and therefore, seeks common solutions. Social Services Europe, also a member of the Social Employers, aims to strengthen the profile and position of social services, and to promote the role of not-for-profit social service providers throughout Europe.

Finally, on the trade union side, the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) is an organisation that brings together the trade unions of employees in the social sector in Europe, some 8 million workers in the social sector. EPSU brings together the European trade union organisations of employees in the social and medico-social sector, and works to improve working conditions, health and safety at work and professional equality. The organisation promotes

the development of a social Europe. EPSU is itself a member of Public Services International (PSI) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), which promotes the interests of employees in Europe.

In order to overcome competition between States, the Social Employers and EPSU are asking the European Commission (EC) to create a European sectoral social dialogue committee for social services. This would make it possible to respond to the challenges the sector is facing, which have been aggravated by the Covid-19 health crisis and the ageing of the European population. The latest study conducted by Eurofound recognises the representativeness of the Social Employers and EPSU, and the two organisations also recognise themselves as partners in the development of European social dialogue. If the Commission is in favour of the creation of a social dialogue committee for the sector, the European social partners will work around four main themes: recruitment and retention of staff; working conditions; public procurement; capacity building of social partners in countries where social dialogue is weak.

This promotion of European social dialogue is an extension of the actions already undertaken by the Social Employers and EPSU. For several years, the two organisations have been cooperating to identify and then bring common issues to the attention of the European Union institutions. The Social Employers and EPSU have thus developed several joint actions – joint positions on various subjects: on the European action plan for the social economy, the European Care Strategy, on recruitment and retention in European social services, on digitalisation in the social services sector, on the impact of Covid-19 on social services, etc. This is also where FORESEE comes in.

Finally, we also see an increase in bilateral cooperation between different European employers' organisations, facilitated by membership of the Social Employers and participation in European projects. This cooperation allows for an exchange of practices between organisations, particularly with regard to employees' working conditions. It can also be developed between countries to facilitate employee mobility.

## b. Actions taken to overcome competition between regions

Competition between regions is mainly linked to the federal states in which social care and healthcare is a regional responsibility. The competition is particularly on a financial level between regions that have more or less funding.

In Austria, Germany and Belgium, the social partners are trying to harmonise regional collective agreements in order to limit this competition between regions and have similar rules. The Austrian social partners have thus developed a national collective agreement that covers all social care and healthcare sectors (except hospitals), including the for-profit sector. This was not possible in Germany, due to the refusal of the for-profit sector. The general wage increase after the health crisis nevertheless limits competition between regions. In Belgium, in order to make up the existing income gaps between the Walloon region and the French community (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) for the same professions, the social partners are working on catch-up measures as part of social agreements for the non-market sector.

In Spain and Greece, we note initiatives to create a national collective agreement in order to have similar rules across local authorities. This initiative may be carried out via an umbrella organisation. This is the case for The Net in Greece, for example, which was created with the aim of providing a national collective agreement for the entire social services sector. In Spain, work began towards the creation of a national collective agreement for the social economy, which

allows standardisation of salaries and working conditions. This agreement was strongly encouraged by the Spanish government, which hopes that it will be shared widely.

## c. Actions taken to mitigate competition between ministries

Actions to limit competition between ministries are particularly mentioned by the Belgian and French trade unions. Indeed, in Belgium, what they refer to as "administrative lasagnas", or overlapping administrative responsibilities according to different fields of action and responsibilities of the federated entities, have the effect of multiplying the number of parties with whom the social partners deal. In France, the social and solidarity economy has in recent years been attached to both social ministries (ecological and solidarity transition) and the Ministry of the Economy.

In Belgium, responsibilities are divided by level of power (federal - federated entity) or within the same level. The strengthening of inter-ministerial contacts between the social partners and the administration of the federated entities makes the rules easier to read and understand for the organisations. This therefore facilitates dialogue between the ministries and the development of greater consistency for the organisations on the ground.

In France, the social and solidarity economy (SSE) actors requested that SSE be placed under the Ministry of the Economy, rather than within the Ministry of Ecological Transition or a Ministry of Solidarity. Indeed, these actors consider it imperative to keep a strong link with the Treasury Department in the framework of issues related to the financing and taxation of enterprises. The Udes (Union des employeurs de l'économie sociale et solidaire) had thus called for "in order to guarantee a collective work favourable to the development of the social and solidarity economy and to pursue together the numerous works engaged in the last few years, the SSE actors can absolutely benefit from a single interlocutor within the governmental organisation chart".

Finally, limiting competition between administrations also requires administrative simplification, such as pooling the documents they request from organisations. Indeed, the documents requested may differ widely from one administration to another and lead to an administrative overload for the directorates. The single document makes it possible to limit this workload and make relations between organisations and administrations more fluid. The aim is to implement the “only once” principle in terms of administrative simplification.

#### **d. Actions taken to limit competition between sub-sectors**

We note the establishment of inter- or multi-sectoral “umbrella” organisations in the different countries in order to mitigate competition between the sub-sectors of the social services sector. The aim of these organisations is to facilitate exchanges between organisations from different sub-sectors when they are not merged into a single organisation, and to encourage the emergence of common positions. The umbrella organisation allows for dialogue, even to the extent of harmonising certain measures, as well as respecting the specificities of the sub-sectors.

In Austria, Volkshilfe is a non-profit, non-partisan and non-confessional social organisation. Founded in 1947, Volkshilfe’s activities range from care and assistance, poverty reduction, labour market policy, childcare, work for people with disabilities and humanitarian aid in the event of disasters at home and abroad, to asylum and migration.

In Greece, as mentioned above, The Net was established to bring together various social sector organisations with the aim of creating a national collective agreement and to bring the voice of social sector employers to the national level.

In Spain, social sector actors are trying to come together in a confederation of non-profit social employers in Spain (Cessle) in order to have a common position before the public authorities.

In France, the Union des employeurs de l’économie sociale et solidaire (Udes) brings together 23 employers’ organisations from various non-profit sectors (home care, early childhood, sport, healthcare and social care). The objectives of the organisation are to unite employers’ representations, to represent them to the public authorities and to negotiate collective labour agreements.

In Belgium, the Union des entreprises à profit social (UNIPSO) is an intersectoral confederation of employers in the social profit sector (non-market) in Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. It represents 30 federations of employers from the public and private sectors. These are active in the field of social, educational, socio-cultural, healthcare, socio-professional integration and other services. UNIPSO represents employers in various consultation forums.

#### **e. Actions taken concerning competition between statutes**

Faced with competition from the public and private for-profit sectors, the not-for-profit sector can use arguments to make itself more attractive.

- **Compared to the public sector**

Various organisations mention the advantages of non-profit status over public status. In particular, they emphasise the flexibility of working hours and organisation, which can be adapted to the constraints of the employee, particularly in certain contexts (young parents, single-parent families, family carers, etc.). This is accompanied by a promotion of the responsibility that non-profit organisations can provide to their employees. This explains the arrival of employees in the second half of their career, as they are consequently more experienced and can therefore benefit from this promotion. This practice can be observed in particular in the transition of employees between public hospitals and home-based nurses. Finally, the non-profit status allows for the possible involvement of employees in governance, which can contribute to the attractiveness of the sector.

- **Compared to the private for-profit sector**

There are many differences between for-profit and non-profit organisations in Europe. Social impact, participatory governance and commitment are sometimes assets for non-profit organisations to attract and retain employees. Indeed, by basing their activity on the success of a social, family or environmental project, and not on earning dividends, non-profit organisations by nature carry out their activity in a different way. This is reinforced by the governance of the structures, which may involve employees, as is the case in Italian or French cooperatives, but also in an increasing number of associations. For example, the Fédération des centres sociaux de France has a board of directors composed of a group of professionals.

The specificities of the non-profit field compared to the for-profit field in Europe lead some organisations to ask for specific statutes for associations and NGOs. In France, the “Social and Solidarity Economy” law, adopted in 2014, encourages a change in scale of the SSE, creates a more robust growth strategy, empowers employees and supports local sustainable development. Several French organisations want to go further by safeguarding the associative model. Uniopss<sup>15</sup> even believes that certain areas should be excluded from economic competition, which requires the introduction of “regulation in areas of the economy considered vital”. This is also the position of the Association des collectifs enfants parents professionnels (Acepp), which demands that the public authorities “fight against the commoditisation of education, and in particular of early childhood education, and promote and support associations and

their special place in the field of early childhood in a context where the sector is becoming increasingly commercial and competitive”. These demands seem all the more legitimate as they are emerging in the midst of abuse scandals in for-profit organisations, particularly in Greece, Austria (Senecura, acquired in 2015 by Orpéa<sup>16</sup>), in France and in Belgium (Orpéa), scandals that some interviewees fear will bring the whole sector into disrepute. This is the case of organisations that explain that funding for the development of crèches cannot be similar if the childcare arrangements are more expensive for families. These organisations question the existence of the for-profit economic model for childcare.

## f. Migration<sup>17</sup>

Several social partners raise the issue of immigration and the employment of foreigners. This is the case of APSS CR and UZS, in Czechia, which will carry out a project on the integration of foreigners to the labour force in 2022<sup>18</sup>. This project should make it possible to identify the actions that can be taken within the organisations in order to strengthen the integration of foreign workers. Nevertheless, there is inequality of treatment between European and non-EU workers.

With regard to emigration, the social partners report various projects for worker mobility, particularly in the context of bilateral cooperation between countries, such as between Romania and Switzerland or between Vietnam and Czechia. These co-operations facilitate the integration of foreigners into the labour force.

15 Union nationale interfédérale des œuvres et organismes privés sanitaires et sociaux (Uniopss), 15-02-2022, *80 % des EHPAD n'ont pas d'actionnaires à rémunérer !* <https://www.uniopss.asso.fr/actualites/80-ehpad-nont-pas-dactionnaires-remunerer-0>

16 Capgeros, “Following the acquisitions of Senevita in Switzerland and Silver Care in Germany in 2014, ORPEA is starting 2015 with a new strategic transaction with strong development potential.

*This acquisition of an asset with a unique competitive position in Austria and Czechia offers a new source of growth and profitability for ORPEA, as well as value-creating development opportunities. The Group is thus continuing to build its European network, adding a new building stone to its future growth capacity, while strictly respecting its profitability criteria.*

*Thanks to its financial flexibility and the financing opportunities available to it, the Group will continue its strategy of international expansion, through authorisations and targeted acquisitions”, Yves Le Masne, directeur général d'Orpéa, 2015, <https://www.capgeris.com/les-groupes-de-maison-de-retraite-327/orpea-met-le-cap-sur-l-autriche-et-la-republique-tcheque-a33639.htm>*

17 The interviews were conducted before the invasion of Ukraine and therefore do not take into account the consequences of that war.

18 Foreign workers in social sector (FWSS) project: <https://socialemployers.eu/en/projects/fwss-/>

Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that migration is not used to reduce wages and working conditions, i.e. to engage in social dumping, which could be counter-productive in terms of the attractiveness of professions and which would fuel nationalist discourse that is often unfavourable to the social sector.

***Immigration that makes it possible to respond to the social needs of the population, but which needs to be accompanied and supported***

The interviews we conducted revealed numerous cases of immigration of social services professionals to various countries, some of which are also countries with a high level of emigration. This immigration, which often makes it possible to respond to the social needs of the population, nevertheless needs to be accompanied and supported by the host countries.

Greece, while being a country of high emigration, is also a host country for professionals from Romania, Bulgaria, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Spain receives professionals from Latin American countries. In Czechia, it is mainly professionals from Slovakia, Ukraine or Vietnam who come to work in the social services sector. Ukraine also provides a number of professionals to Poland. While Luxembourg draws many Belgian, German and French professionals, Germany is a very attractive area for all European professionals who go there in search of more attractive salaries.

The interviews show that, while immigration is often essential to the stability of the sector in the destination countries, it also raises important integration issues. Language appears to be the most important issue for the various organisations, especially those whose main activity is caring for the elderly. This is the case in Austria, where Service Mensch explains that the organisation active in the care of the elderly can only recruit professionals whose mother tongue is German. Indeed, even if German is well mastered by non-native speakers, the diversity of dialects and the fact that older people still use them extensively often makes it necessary to have a native speaker of German. This issue also came up in the interview with the Luxembourg employers' union Copas, which explained that professionals in the social services sector in Luxembourg have to be proficient in all three official languages, namely German, French and Luxembourgish, which limits the possibility of recruiting foreign professionals, even though the country employs a large number of cross-border workers. This linguistic issue comes on top of the issue of training, recognition of diplomas and potential harmonisation of diplomas at European level.

The Greek case, where some degrees issued by Greek universities are not recognised in Greece, or the case of Luxembourg and Spain, show that recognition of degrees or possible bridges is an important issue for the social services sector. In Belgium, for UNIPSO, the issues are focused on language skills, but cooperation agreements exist with Romania or Lebanon concerning the recognition of diplomas.

## 2 Image and communication

### a. Promotion of the social services sector

Those involved in the social services sector stress the importance of communication campaigns in strengthening the image and attractiveness of the sector. In our interviews, we noted three types of communication campaigns, aimed either at the public, professionals or specifically at students.

- **General communication campaigns**

In Czechia, communication campaigns are carried out to increase the attractiveness of the sector, in the media including television and social networks. These campaigns are based on four aspects: remuneration, occupational health, retention of professionals and the health crisis. The aim of these campaigns is to increase the attractiveness of the sector to professionals, but also to improve the image of the sector to the public. These campaigns are therefore somewhere between a communication campaign and a lobbying campaign. The aim is also to request additional funding from the public authorities. The last campaign, carried out between APSS CR and the employees' trade unions, was followed by a press conference in which the social partners explained the difficulties of the sector. For example, they explained the need to reduce the sector's capacity and therefore to refuse patients. They were also able to demonstrate the need for a significant increase in salaries through an increase in funding for the sector. This campaign was largely successful as it led to a 33% increase in salaries for nurses, 19.4% for technicians, 10% for nurses.

- **Communication campaigns for professionals**

In France, Elisfa has carried out a communication campaign with trade unions. The aim of this campaign is to promote early childhood jobs, which are mainly considered to be female jobs and therefore not very mixed, in order to encourage men to apply. This would make it possible to have a more diversified group of workers but also to fight against gender stereotypes. This campaign is based on several communication channels: a first portal to learn about the early childhood sector and related professions ([www.metiers-petite-enfance.fr](http://www.metiers-petite-enfance.fr)) but also flyers, digital communication on social networks (Facebook, YouTube), etc. Also in France, in 2021, the State supported a campaign entitled "Jobs working with older people, what if it were you?" via the "France Relance" scheme in order to make these jobs more attractive. It resulted in the production of two films, a communication kit sent to the campaign partners, a website and a toll-free number to answer questions about the professions in this sector.

Another French employers' federation, Nexem, a member of Social Employers, has launched a campaign with a dedicated website, "Discover jobs that change lives", which features videos and podcasts of professionals presenting their jobs.<sup>19</sup>

In Belgium, another communication project, led by the Association des services d'aide aux familles et aux aînés (Assaf), was launched. It is entitled "Working with today's workers to build the way to attract tomorrow's workers to the sector". In Belgium, ASsAF states: "*During this health crisis, we became aware that the public was not very fa-*

19 Campaign "Discover jobs that change lives" <https://organisation.nexem.fr/actualites/decouvrez-des-metiers-qui-changent-des-vies-nexem-lance-sa-campagne-publicitaire-pour-lattractivite-des-metiers-555b-32135.html>



*miliar with our jobs. And this reinforced our desire to communicate about the work done by our home help workers who do much more than shopping, cleaning or cooking. Historically, this is a profession that was built on self-help, then on mutual aid, solidarity and support. But today, it has become a real profession that requires specific skills.” “This project will enable us to motivate people who are looking for a career change. Because the demand is constantly growing: faced with the needs of the population and the phenomenon of ageing, requests are exploding. Older people now want to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. More and more of them prefer to be cared for at home rather than move to a nursing home or stay in hospital.”* This project, financed by the Daniel De Coninck Fund (King Baudouin Foundation), was launched in spring 2022.

- **Communication campaigns for students**

Other organisations prefer to target their communication at a student audience. For example, APSS CR in Czechia ran a campaign called “Become a Nurse” on social networks and in cinemas. It increased the number of applications by about 10% and improved the attractiveness of nursing schools. “Deep human stories” is another campaign to raise the profile of work in the social sector. In Belgium, the Instance Bassin EFE (IBEFE) in Namur has created two interesting tools. The IBEFE is a place for dialogue and permanent consultation between social partners, local parties involved in the education granting qualifications, vocational training, employment and integration.

These tools, intended for teachers and/or various group leaders, help people learn about the profession of family assistant and to fight against prejudices and other preconceived ideas that often circulate about it.

- Production of a video on the family help profession for young people<sup>20</sup>;

- Production of an educational kit for teachers and trainers<sup>21</sup>.

## b. Creation of an employer brand

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Several organisations mention the need to build an “employer brand” in order to overcome problems of attractiveness. This is particularly the case for Service Mensch GmbH in Austria, which pays a lot of attention to the image that the organisation projects. The construction of this image is based on the organisation’s employees, who are considered as ambassadors. Indeed, they are asked to present their job in schools and universities. This requires a calm social climate within the organisation. This climate can be ensured through good social dialogue between employees and management, a pleasant working environment, training opportunities for employees, etc.

In France, the Union des employeurs de l’économie sociale (Udes) has called upon committed employers to develop a critical reflection on the “employability” of employers<sup>22</sup>. The aim is to analyse the capacity to exercise the role of employer properly, to question the social and ecological dimensions within management. This campaign is entitled “Being employers obliges us. Being employers in the social and solidarity economy commits us”. Udes explains that “an employer is rarely judged on its ability to create quality jobs, to offer jobs that take into account the new aspirations of citizens, to involve employees in the definition and management of the company’s project or to ensure social dialogue”. For employers, it is therefore a question of “providing a response to the search for meaning in work and guarantees of quality of life at work”, “encouraging employees’ career development”, “establishing the democratic dimension of structures”, but also “developing permanent social and professional dialogue and encouraging virtuous managerial practices”, “doing their part in the fight against global warming and the ecological transformation of companies”, and finally, “regularly measuring the implementation of these commitments”.

20 <https://www.cdmnamur.be/la-cite-des-metiers/videos-metiers/?sector=c-sante-bien-etre#videos>

21 <https://www.bassinefe-namur.be/aide-familial-2>

22 Udes, *Appel des employeurs engagés*, [https://www.udes.fr/sites/default/files/public/users/lmorin/2022\\_01\\_12\\_appel\\_employeurs\\_engages\\_udes\\_0.pdf](https://www.udes.fr/sites/default/files/public/users/lmorin/2022_01_12_appel_employeurs_engages_udes_0.pdf).

## 3 The issue of training and career paths

The interviews show that employers are well aware that the issue of the attractiveness of professions goes far beyond employment alone, and that in order not to face a shortage of professionals, it is important to act at several stages:

- Prior to recruitment;
- At the beginning of an employee's working life;
- And throughout the employee's working life.

Another key element is the issue of the image of social services, which are not always presented in the best light, as one interviewee rightly said, *"they are mostly talked about when there are problems"*. Interesting practices on communication, partly addressing this issue, were already explored in the previous part of this report.

### a. Prior to recruitment

**At the level of initial training or schools preparing for the social services professions:** In addition to awareness-raising activities, the presence of social services professionals in schools makes it possible to balance theoretical contributions and contribute, via teaching, to the acquisition of professional skills. This not only helps people to enter working life, but also raises awareness of the social services. As a representative of Service Mensch from Austria said, *"there is no better ambassador than committed employees"*.

**Close partnerships with all local and national employment actors:** Even if the general unemployment rate is decreasing in Europe, there are still many people looking for work, for various reasons: not having

the right diploma, a diploma from a foreign country that is not recognised, a diploma that is recognised but not sufficient for certain jobs. Bringing together all the parties linked to the social services working in the area of employment with the employers makes it possible to create pathways and opportunities for people seeking employment. Experiments are taking place in France, involving several actors, including training organisations:

- In the north of France, workshops of integration sites which are intended for people who are very far from employment, and which, by enabling them to access social services companies, prepare them to acquire a certification, a genuine passport to employment<sup>23</sup>.
- In the west of France, networking between:
  - A multi-employer organisation at the tip of Brittany (12 crèches) with a shortage of substitutes with specific pedagogical skills;
  - A local training organisation, which worked on a reference framework and training to give the skills expected by the employer to unemployed employees (372 hours of training);
  - 12 unemployed people with a CAP in early childhood (first degree in early childhood);
  - A skills operator, Uniformation, able to piece together different training schemes.

This networking led to employment for 9 out of 12 people who have completed the course, and who are now employed on permanent contracts. On the employer's side, this experiment has enabled the creation of a pool of substitutes with the expected skills, which makes it possible to cope with absences.

23 <https://csalma.org/chantierinsertionprofessionnelle/>



Shortage of employees, insufficient initial training, unemployment, a possible answer: In the west of France, a pathway for job seekers who are graduates but do not have all the skills expected by employers. A partnership between employers, training bodies and employment organisations.

Tutoring is defined by Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training<sup>25</sup> as “Any activity offering a learner guidance; counselling or supervision by an experienced and competent professional. The tutor supports the learner throughout the learning process (at school, in training centres or on the job).”

In a recent European report on early childhood education and care (ECEC)<sup>24</sup> the expert group concludes its analysis with “it is essential for decision makers, ECEC employers and training providers to identify the barriers most relevant to their national, regional or local context (e.g. through surveys or studies) in order to design efficient measures and incentives, and facilitate participation in CPD”. Although they refer to continuing education, this recommendation can be applied to job seekers.

## b. During initial training and when a new employee arrives

**The issue of support for apprentices or new employees:** this was frequently raised by our contacts, particularly during the first project seminar held in February 2022, during which this support practice was voted as a good practice to be developed following the testimonies of several partners. At present, different practices can be observed on the subject: support during the first month of joining the facility in Austria, tutoring in France, reinforced support for young employees in Greece, etc.

Tutoring, mentoring or guiding can contribute to the attractiveness of an establishment because, for any new employee, whether a beginner or not, it enables them to understand the codes, to be in contact with the team in place and to acquire the movements and postures. And for the company, a fresh pair of eyes or questions from a newcomer enable it to question the practices in place. In order for tutoring to be carried out smoothly, it is important to give the tutor time to work and possibly to pay for this task. In Belgium, a website has been set up by the Social Funds and contains tools to facilitate tutoring: [www.tutorat.org](http://www.tutorat.org).

## c. Lifelong learning, a professional and human journey

**Training for those who come from elsewhere:** several of the people interviewed mentioned the movement of people around Europe, and even around the world, in response to the lack of attractiveness. Some have organised recruitment within the framework of agreements between states, others in a more ad hoc manner, even if we all remember that recruiting elsewhere means reducing the workforce in the country of origin and possibly creating difficulties there. In any case, several actions have been taken to enable these immigrants to integrate:

24 European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Early childhood education and care: how to recruit, train and motivate well-qualified staff: final report*, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/489043>

25 Cedefop Glossary Quality in Education and Training, 2011 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4106>

- For unregulated professions (which concern the majority of the needs of interviewees), for EU nationals the decision to recruit will be up to the employer. For regulated professions (notably that of social worker), the host country has set up procedures. A European site [ENIC NARIC](https://www.enic-naric.net/)<sup>26</sup> provides information on the equivalences and procedures to be followed.
- Faced with the language barrier, which is most frequently mentioned, an obvious response is tailor-made language training for better communication within the team and with users. In Belgium, the “Fédération Wallonie/Bruxelles” provides training in French as a foreign language to help people find their way into the workplace<sup>27</sup>. In sectors other than social services, support to understand cultural differences and therefore behaviour with service users has been introduced, as well as translation of essential working documents into the mother tongue.
- Basic skills (see box):

Basic skills and competences: for foreigners or people with no education, a good project to start would be to work at European level on the design of training on basic skills in each of the social services.

**Giving employees prospects:** one aspect of the poor image of social services in society is the lack of prospects in the sector and the confinement to one level of responsibility. Even if it is not easy to imagine career paths for everyone, the chapter on recognition will highlight that it is possible to give employees the opportunity to avoid fatigue or discouragement. In the field of skills acquisition, the European report on *early childhood education and care* (ECEC)<sup>28</sup> proposes a mapping of key skills for a particular sector

of activity which could make it possible to envisage an informed pathway for people wishing to progress (see box). This is a paradigm shift for some countries where the level of training often determines the hierarchical level, and where it is necessary to obtain a specific diploma to carry out a specific function. Training is thus thought of in a different way.

Another major project: a working group established for early childhood with a mapping of essential competences in this sector in 6 areas: knowledge and understanding, professional practice, the relationship and work with children, the relationship with families and the local community, work with internal or external colleagues, professional development. A cross-referencing that allows each person to situate themselves, and to understand what skills they need to progress and have a professional career path.

**Tailor-made training practices:** all the partners interviewed are implementing training practices in their organisations at different levels. It is necessary to identify the gaps in initial training and to set up training sessions to remedy them. It is also important to capitalise on what the group can bring in. In this way, in Greece, there are regular team meetings without “users”, in France, professional days or practice analyses, and in Austria, training for managers.

**The role of managers in career development and continuous training:** during the interviews and the FORESEE seminar in February 2022, one subject was particularly prominent, that of the role of managers. They are often overworked, busy with day-to-day management and organisation, but the partners nevertheless consider them to be a key element in the issue of skills acquisition and support for their teams’ career paths. Indeed, they play a central role to:

26 <https://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx>

27 <http://www.languefrancaise.cfwb.be/index.php?id=10830>

28 European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Early childhood education and care: how to recruit, train and motivate well-qualified staff: final report*, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/489043>

- **Organise dialogue with employees**, listen to their aspirations for development, and allow them to train in order to progress, or even change direction. In France, professional interviews every two years, which are compulsory by law, aim to check on the one hand that employees have received training and on the other hand to see what their wishes for development are. If no training has been provided after six years, the employer may pay a “fine”.
- **Train managers**: while some countries have specific initial training for managers, as in Austria, this is not the case in other countries, where social services workers can become managers in the course of their career without having received specific training. Moreover, they are not necessarily aware of the role they have to play other than that of manager. Again, at the FORESEE seminar organised in February 2022, the participants were very motivated on this topic and see it as an interesting opportunity. A tailor-made training course would be an appropriate response and a good project to work on between European partners. In Belgium, there is a site created by the Social Funds of the non-profit sector which provides assistance for skills management, including tools and advice, for example on creating a training plan (<https://www.competentia.be/>).

## The question of funding for costly training

Apart from the financial efforts made by companies to train their employees, which are made in all countries, there are other avenues to explore:

- **A national legal constraint**: Several European countries, those where national collective agreements apply, have, within the framework of

the law and social dialogue, introduced compulsory levies on all companies. This makes it possible to set up a mutualised fund for continuous training. These funds are mainly intended for small and medium-sized enterprises.

- **Mutualisation**: called for by many of the participants in the seminar, one example was explored, that of France and its OPCOs (Opérateur de Compétences). The OPCOs are state-approved organisations, managed on a paritarian basis, whose mission is to help companies support and promote the professional development of employees through continuing training. By facilitating access to training for the active population, the OPCOs enable professionals to better cope with the technological, economic and environmental changes in their sector of activity. There are 11 OPCOs covering all sectors of activity.
- **A commitment by Europe** to support lifelong learning in the coming years (see box).

European funding: the EU, for which continuing education and training are priorities, has a number of often overlooked programmes that can help small and medium-sized enterprises to finance the acquisition of skills by employees. At the European Social Summit in Porto in May 2021, a target of 60% of employees going on to further training was set for 2030. To achieve this goal, the European budget for 2021/2027 will allocate billions of euros to this end<sup>29</sup>.

What's next? Training, skills acquisition and career paths are fields where actions of any scale can be taken: at company, regional, national and European level. There are therefore many avenues, new ways of conceiving training (such as micro credentials<sup>30</sup>) and projects in the pipeline.

29 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027/spending/headings\\_en#heading-2-cohesion-resilience-and-values](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027/spending/headings_en#heading-2-cohesion-resilience-and-values)

30 <https://socialemmployers.eu/files/doc/SE%20position%20on%20micro-credentials.pdf>

## 4 Quality of life at work

### a. Actions taken concerning health

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- **Risk mitigation and control**

The first of the actions to be taken concerning health is naturally the prevention of risks to which employees are subjected. This limitation and control of risks can be achieved in several ways:

training, assessment documents, adaptation of premises, development of links with occupational medicine, financing of contingency actions, etc. Here are some of them:

- **The Single Occupational Risk Assessment Document**

In France, for example, labour code, transposing the 1989 EU directive, specifies the foundations of the general principles of prevention in terms of occupational risks. There are 9 of them, which are hierarchical, which means that the employer must apply the first principle before the second one, which applies before the third, and so on. The first principle is "Avoidance of risks". This obviously means avoiding the risks that can be avoided, i.e. those that are not intrinsically linked to the performance of the employee's activity. When exposure to a risk inherent in the employee's activity cannot be avoided, such as contamination by Covid-19 in the case of the pandemic, the risk that cannot be avoided must be assessed. This assessment principle is the second principle. This second principle will be used to act to combat the identified risk by following the 7 other principles: combating risks at source; adapting work to the individual, in particular with regard to the design of workstations and the choice of work equipment and work and production methods, with a view in particular to limiting monotonous work and work at a fixed pace and reducing their effects on health; taking account of the state of development of technology; replacing what is dangerous by what is not dangerous or by what is less dangerous; plan prevention by integrating, in a coherent whole, technique, work organisation, working conditions, social relations and the influence of environmental factors, in particular the risks linked to moral harassment and sexual harassment, as defined in French law; take collective protection measures by giving them priority over individual protection measures; give appropriate instructions to workers. The formalisation of this identification and the application of the following principles will lead to the establishment of the single occupational risk assessment document, which will define the risks and the prevention measures. <https://abbet.be/Guide-du-bien-etre-au-travail>.

- **Training as a tool for limiting occupational risks**

Several trade unions mention the need to develop training in order to limit occupational risks. In Austria, for example, the employees of Service Mensch GmbH have access to training and working groups to facilitate their relations with the people they support. In France, the National Institute for Research and Safety<sup>31</sup> which offers training courses, explains that “the training courses, designed with representatives of the sector, are adapted to the activities and responsibilities of each person and aim to equip participants with skills in preventing the risks of occupational accidents and diseases. They enable home care workers to understand work situations as contributors

- **Psychological support for staff**

It is essential to prevent psychological disorders, such as burnout. It is important that managers encourage and promote this support and that staff are well informed about its availability. Support can be offered by an external psychologist, as in the Austrian example presented, but also by peers. In Romania, social workers and psychologists set up a hotline during the pandemic to offer psychological support to other professionals. Training on work-life balance or webinars on health issues, such as musculoskeletal disorders, can also be useful. The discussion left open the question of whether such offers should be voluntary or mandatory for staff.

- **Combating musculoskeletal disorders**

As we saw in the first part of the report, musculoskeletal disorders are common in the social services sector, particularly in certain sub-sectors such as home care and childcare. Faced with this observation, organisations are defining actions to

fight against musculoskeletal disorders and the risks that weigh on employees.

As is often the case in the field of health, the first action is to measure the risks. In Czechia, APSS CR launched a one-year study to measure the weight that is physically carried by employees. Measuring the weight and comparing it with other EU countries could enable the Czech social partners to limit the weight carried, for example by financing additional posts or checking that the equipment is sufficiently adapted.

In the area of health, there are also actions to set up pools of replacements in some organisations, particularly in Luxembourg. The aim is to make employees available to join or create additional teams in order to improve working conditions. These teams, which require additional funding, make it possible to operate with reserve teams rather than calling on employees who are off duty. The replacement team does not have a specific patient caseload and helps to limit the spiral of absenteeism and employee burnout.

In order to limit musculoskeletal disorders, organisations can also adjust or readjust their premises. This is the case, for example, of a French social centre, which changed its premises following work carried out with an ergonomist. The ergonomist proposed a series of measures to limit the risks: raising the workstation to be at the same height as the users; installing ergonomic seats; using trolleys at a fixed height; defining a system of user participation by photographically referencing the places to be restored to their original state, etc.

The Social Employers and EPSU also organised a webinar as part of the European Occupational Health Agency’s (EU OSHA) “Lighten the Load” campaign on 21 September 2021 to raise awareness of the issue of preventing musculoskeletal disorders.<sup>32</sup>

31 Institut national de recherche et de sécurité, *Formation à la prévention des risques professionnels des acteurs du secteur de l’aide et du soin à domicile*, <https://www.inrs.fr/media.html?refINRS=ED%207404>.

32 See <https://socialemmployers.eu/en/news/the-social-employers-epsu-joint-webinar-preventing-musculoskeletal-disorders-msds-in-the-social-services-sector/>

- **Limiting psychosocial risks**

In order to combat psychosocial risks, some organisations try to relieve the workload of the managers by funding deputy managers. This is particularly the case in French organisations in which managers are increasingly exposed to psychosocial risks, in particular due to a very large increase in the administrative workload. These organisations are calling for the funding of deputy manager positions in order to limit the exposure of managers to psychosocial risks. The study carried out by an Elisfa member federation, *Experimental support for the managers of the Loire and Haute-Loire social centres on work management and psychosocial risks*<sup>33</sup> demonstrates the importance of mobilising several types of actors to limit psychosocial risks, in particular funders, occupational medicine, professional training actors, social partners, etc. This work now makes it possible to study the reduction of the administrative burden caused by the public authorities but also the pooling of resources between different structures to reduce this burden.

- **The training courses**

Training is an important tool for limiting risks and improving working conditions for employees. The development of in-house training for employees on occupational health is mentioned by many social partners, both employee and employer organisations. This training can concern both managers, who can be trained in developing a good working atmosphere, limiting risks and developing a working group, and all employees. We note that many organisations offer training to improve the health and quality of life at work of their employees.

### ANALYSIS OF PRACTICES, A KEY TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE AT WORK

The analysis of practices appears, throughout the interviews, to be an important tool for controlling risks and improving working conditions. This analysis can take several forms:

- The drafting of studies on occupational health, for example in observatories;
- The drafting of risk assessment documents, as seen above;
- The organisation of reflective work on the organisation;
- Setting up one day a month for exchanges, between professionals and volunteers in an organisation. This is an action that has been implemented in Greece, but which is requested by many organisations.
- The introduction of a day to thank employees in Austria appears to be an element of recognition for employees, but also a tool for strengthening team cohesion and exchanging practices.
- Flexible working hours, as one example of how to improve employees' working conditions: in Austria, a "leisure" and a "flexible" model have been introduced and staff work only 37 hours per week. In France, some categories of staff in the social care sector are given eight extra days off per year. Other initiatives mentioned were good teamwork, team events or the provision of transport for staff in remote areas.

Many participants agreed that these factors influencing working conditions are at least as important as a good salary in retaining staff in the sector.

33 Fédération des centres sociaux de Loire et Haute-Loire, *Démarche expérimentale d'accompagnement des pilotes des Centres sociaux Loire et Haute-Loire autour du management du travail et des RPS* <https://loire-hauteloire.centres-sociaux.fr/prevention-des-risques-psychosociaux-cest-finit-mais-tout-commence/>

## b. Flexible working hours

### ORGANISATION OF WORKING TIME AS AN ATTRACTIVENESS TOOL

Several organisations are already using the organisation of working time as a tool of attractiveness, particularly in comparison with the public sector. The private not-for-profit sector does indeed allow for greater flexibility in the organisation of work. While the term flexibility is sometimes used as going against the interests of employees, we note in our interviews that it can also enhance the quality of life at work, particularly in terms of work-life balance, especially for single-parent families or families with a young child.

This is the case in Austria, for example. There is also the introduction of reduced working hours post-maternity to enhance the quality of working life for employees.

Flexible working hours can be an asset for workers, but also a challenge for employers who have to keep in mind the smooth running of services. An exchange between employers and employees on their different needs can help to find adapted solutions. In this context, digital tools can be a means to help workers organise their time, while helping employers to identify if staff are struggling to manage their workload. An inspiring example is the “Buurtzorg” project in the Netherlands, where nurses work together in local teams and organise their own time to meet the needs of “their” user group. Even if providers do not go as far as this project, it is important to improve time management in order to improve the work-life balance of workers and to meet the needs of users.

Finally, how can we talk about the organisation of working time and the organisation of work without mentioning the development of working remotely. In France, Elisfa allows its employees who have a personal project far from the workplace to continue their activity by working remotely, when possible. The introduction of regular days of working remotely also helps to strengthen the work-life balance.

## c. Age management

Several actions can be carried out regarding the age management of employees. Organisations develop actions in the field of initial and continuous training, professional mobility, career paths, the fight against musculoskeletal disorders, forward-looking management of employment and skills, etc. These actions are detailed in other parts of the report, particularly in the section on training. In Belgium, there are end-of-career funds that make it possible to hire a younger worker and provide tutoring. There are also the so-called Maribel Social Funds which allow for commitments to limit hardship at work.

## d. Strengthening professional equality

The first of the actions to be carried out consists of measuring the professional inequalities that may persist within a sector. This is what is done in France by the Alisfa Observatory, which conducts studies to measure occupational inequalities and thus alert social partners to the actions that can be taken. These good practices can also be found in Czechia.

Also in France, as we saw earlier, a campaign to increase the professional mix (and therefore the number of men) in the early childhood sector has been carried out. This aims to destigmatise these jobs and show that they can be done by men.

Still in France, a collective agreement on professional equality between women and men, signed by UDES and trade unions, was accompanied by a toolbox<sup>34</sup>

In Greece and Austria, it is possible for post-maternity women to reduce their working hours, in order to return to their jobs gradually.

34 <https://www.udes.fr/outilsguides/egalite-professionnelle-entre-femmes-hommes-dans-less-passer-de-conviction-laction>



## e. Responsibility and autonomy

Professional development is an important factor in the quality of working life for all organisations, whether employees or employers. Indeed, it allows employees to develop perspectives and to see changes in their work. In Greece, the Margarita organisation, for example, enables its employees to invest in other professional projects, particularly European ones.

In Austria, the organisations emphasise the greater responsibility and autonomy of employees working in the home, compared to hospital duties. This responsibility and autonomy can be valued by employees, especially those with experience. It should also be recognised by organisations, society and therefore the State.

## f. Recognition of working time

The recognition of working time is an essential issue for the attractiveness of social services professions. As the researchers Amandine Barrois and François-Xavier Devetter explain<sup>35</sup>:

*The traditional measurement of working time consists of counting the time actually worked, the latter being defined as corresponding to periods when the employee is "at the disposal of the employer without being able to roam freely about his or her business". This definition leaves areas of vagueness, as numerous social conflicts have shown, as well as a fairly large body of case law on the delimitation of working time. Knowing what is work and what is not can easily become problematic when there is not a single work-*

*place, or it is poorly defined or when schedules are fragmented and interspersed with shorter or longer interruptions... However, beyond the existence of a watertight boundary between work and non-work, the question raised is also that of the articulation between work and non-work periods. While the Fordist regime of temporal availability was based, among other things, on relatively short but compact working days broken up only by a clearly defined lunch break, the new forms of temporal conventions involve a diversification of situations [...]. We are thus witnessing the growth of jobs marked by several periods of work, as well as the development of multi-activity situations that lead to working days "in several parts" [...]. The overall impact of work on the day can thus increase even though the time worked may have been reduced.*

This situation is clearly visible in Austria, where the organisations indicate that it is becoming increasingly necessary to pay, and thus finance, the transport time between patients of home carers as working time.

## g. Integration

Organisations are taking a number of actions to integrate professionals into the teams. These actions are sometimes part of a broader framework of team building. Integration can be achieved in different ways, through mentoring, through the setting up of time for exchange between employees, etc.

Regarding the integration of foreigners in particular, several organisations have started a European project to strengthen their integration into employment in the social sector.

35 Amandine Barrois, François-Xavier Devetter, *Durées courtes, journées longues – Fragmentation du temps de travail et pression sur le salaire*, <https://lilloa.univ-lille.fr/bitstream/handle/20.500.12210/331.3/nrt-3272.pdf?sequence=1>.



## 5 Recognition

This chapter will address the issue of recognition at different levels and using different techniques.

After having analysed a series of good practices on the subject of quality of life at work and training, we will conclude with the question of recognition. This theme concerns many of the practices already identified in the previous chapters.

Social service workers, like workers in any other sector, want recognition for their work and commitment. They also aspire to be recognised as people with aspirations and values. To ensure this recognition, employers have several levers at their disposal, which are used by our partners in European countries. These levers are used at different levels: national in countries with a developed formal social dialogue, or at a more local level, within organisations. Whether these practices are induced by a formal social dialogue or by specific initiatives, they all aim to recognise the investment and skills of employees.

### A. Within the company

#### a. Recognition through human resource management

It is possible to think of remuneration more broadly than in terms of salary. Although this may represent a cost and difficulty for the employer to implement, these other elements of remuneration enhance the attractiveness of an organisation for employees. Examples include:

- Organisation of a profit redistribution system in several possible forms (profit-sharing, employer participation in employee savings plans, specific bonus)
- Facilitation of the private life of employees: Service Mensch in Austria offers its employees a whole range of benefits: discounts in various shops, or employer contributions for private events (marriage, birth of a child, first attendance of school by a child, health-related trips)
- Possible coverage of elements that have a strong impact on the employee's life, particularly in terms of health or daily life (additional days off due to the difficulty of the work, coverage of health insurance, pedometer watch).

In France, where social security covers part of the costs of illness, there may still be a significant out-of-pocket expense. A law applying to all companies obliges employers to offer supplementary healthcare to employees, and to finance at least 50% of it, thus encouraging people to seek treatment if necessary. In Belgium, in some social services there may be an employer's contribution to group insurance (life insurance) or meal vouchers.

- The provision of an adapted work rhythm and organisation (these elements have been developed in the Quality of Working Life section), additional leave, understanding of difficult moments in employees' lives, all of which recognise employees' expectations and their investment.

## b. Developing the meaning of work

The question of the meaning given to one's work, as we have observed, is essential. A meaningful job translates into more positive emotions, a feeling of well-being and usefulness in accomplishing a task. It also means experiencing a certain degree of satisfaction in carrying out one's activities, missions and professional ambitions by having the feeling of participating in the **overall goal of one's company**<sup>36</sup>.

After giving so much during the two-year health crisis cause by Covid-19, many employees reflected on the meaning of their actions, and the limited positive returns they could have from their commitment. Employment is an aspect of people's lives, and as we saw earlier, salary has a strong impact on the decision to take up or stay in a job. But this is no longer sufficient. Many social services workers have resigned because the mental and physical demands are too great. But this same movement of job fatigue and a desire for change has been found in all branches and sectors and could eventually benefit social services. It is conceivable that people working in catering or IT might want to move into a job that is supportive of people's well-being. Are social services able to attract them? This also relates to the issues of training (it would be necessary to envisage courses) and communication (see the previous chapters), making people aware of what is valuable in social services, improving the image of these jobs, showing the added value, the social utility and the absolute necessity of this type of employment.

## c. The feeling of being heard and of having a say in one's life

In Greece, France and Austria, specific times are set aside for employees and employers to discuss, review the past professional year and plan for the employee's future. They are thus made aware of the employee's aspirations and the means to be put in place to achieve them.

In France, the law makes a professional interview compulsory every two years between the employee and his or her manager. This interview must enable each employee to assess his or her career development prospects and training needs. In the Alisfa branch, this obligation is coupled with a strong incentive for an annual assessment interview that allows both parties to take stock of the positive and negative elements and the means to be put in place to remedy them.

## d. Participation in the governance, decision-making or organisation of the structure

There are many possibilities, and they require little or no financial resources:

- Invite employees to the governing bodies, so that they can speak for the employees or simply give an opinion, whether or not they are staff representatives.
- Propose a different economic model such as the cooperative where all members are equal and owners of their work tool, and take part in decisions concerning them<sup>37</sup>.
- Encourage employees to share their ideas, to co-construct the company's project.

An interviewee of the Greek organisation Margarita explains: *When it came to proposing new projects for Margarita, the president and I had different ideas. We exchanged views, weighed up the pros and cons, and it was my project that was chosen and which has just been implemented, the creation of an employment platform for people with disabilities. This is the kind of thing that makes me want to stay.* Here is the result of this pooling of ideas: <http://www.ergasiamou.gr/>

36 <https://www.monde-economique.ch/les-collaborateurs-en-quete-de-sens-2/>

37 <https://cecop.coop/stories>

## e. A day of thanks and/or team building

A day dedicated to the employees is about thanking them for their investment in a special way. This can take the form of an offer to work in a different setting, the organisation of motivating events or a fun day. This is what Service Mensch does every year by offering its employees a day to thank them for their investment:

*“Once a year, we organise a day for all our employees. We start with a breakfast for all, and then there are greetings from our president and managers. Then a specialist speaker gives a talk on a general topic (e.g. motivation) or one that is more specialised in the field of home care, support or early childhood. During the lunch break (which is rather long) the employees can visit an exhibition (professional books, specialised equipment, advice on health at work, human resources, etc.). In the afternoon everyone is invited to a show. And at the end there is always a lottery where employees can win a mobile phone, weekend breaks with a nice car, hotel vouchers, etc. Our ‘employee day’ gives our colleagues the opportunity to meet each other in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.”*

## f. Assigning specific responsibilities to employees, such as health advisors, tutors or knowledge brokers

There are many ways in which employers can make the most of employees’ skills and at the same time lighten the load on management. We have already seen the importance of entrusting experienced employees with the support of apprentices or new recruits. The positive effect is threefold: knowledge that is not lost, new recruits who are not lost and left to their own devices, and experienced employees whose skills are

recognised. In some collective agreements, this tutoring is accompanied by a bonus for the tutor or working hours are freed up. Many workers in an organisation need to have a subject contact person, whether it be on the subject of health and prevention, equality, the identification of psycho-social risks or MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders), an improvement in the environmental approach at work, etc. Whether these subject contact people are made compulsory by law or collective agreements (as in France), or whether it is an organisational decision, the benefits are twofold: the subject contact person’s findings and analyses contribute to the implementation of new actions that will make life at work more comfortable and safer, and the employees in charge of these files will go beyond their usual duties to contribute to the improvement of the workplace or to alert on malfunctions.

## g. Taking a step back from the daily routine through participation in European and other projects

During the first workshop of WP4 of FORESEE, the question was asked to the participants of the investment in this European project and its connection with the usual missions of their post. All of them gave the same feedback, namely that it was not their core business, that it was a separate process and for some of them a bonus. For an employee, the prospect of getting away from the daily routine of work can prevent boredom and fatigue and at the same time enable the organisation to be represented in more inter-partner working groups, and thus make the voice of the sector and the organisation heard.

## h. The importance of the collective, limiting isolation

If there is one practice that is shared by most of the partners interviewed, it is that of organising collective times, outside of contacts with the public or beneficiaries.

In Margarita, for example, one day a month, the whole team meets and the subjects worked on are chosen by the employees. They can be related to real-life situations or be forward-looking.

Regular team meetings allow us to take stock of current issues, to resolve difficult situations collectively, to measure the gaps between actions and projects, to better understand what others are doing and what individual actions contribute to the group. As a time for information and sharing, they allow for the appropriation of the project and the feeling of belonging to an organisation whose meaning can be seen.

In a small social centre in the west of France, the introduction of short weekly team meetings has made it possible to make everyone's work more fluid through knowledge of each other's cases, but also to break down the barriers between sectors. This makes it possible to see further ahead and to bring transversality and autonomy to the action.

### i. The usefulness of work for others.... And oneself too!

The waves of resignations in all sectors following the Covid-19 crisis have often referred to employees' desire to have work that is useful to society. If social service workers were to doubt the usefulness of their work, it is because their employer's communication and the tasks assigned to them are totally decontextualised, as it is clear that without social services, millions of people in Europe would have a much more difficult life. But just as salary is not the only parameter of attractiveness, a sense of social usefulness is not enough to drive someone to get a job. In the opinion of a French trade unionist interviewed for this report, young people have changed their vision of work, do not envision themselves staying in one job forever and wish to capitalise on professional experiences, even if brief. During our interviews or the seminar, we did not hear of any interesting practices that could meet this desire to take account of experience, even brief experience, in the careers of employees.

### j. Recognition of the work done by the social services in Europe

The communication campaigns in Czechia, Austria and France, mentioned in the previous pages, aim to raise awareness nationally and regionally of the work of social services, without distinguishing between public, private non-profit and for-profit operators. To perfect this kind of campaign, it might be possible to tailor them to the non-profit organisations. Both for funders (a recent scandal in France raised the question of public money financing for-profit companies in the ageing sector) and for future employees, who are looking for meaning in their work.

### B. Being recognised at national level

- How can social services get the recognition they deserve in every country in Europe? The crises we are currently experiencing (notably those caused by Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine), demonstrate once again the importance of social services in addressing societal challenges. However, once the crises subside, the employees who have given so much do not usually see their daily lives change, and the organisations are no longer recognised. Here are a few examples of how European partners have ensured this recognition, within the framework of a structured social dialogue: The home care sector in **France** has conducted tripartite negotiations (state, trade unions, employers' organisations) to catch up on salaries that had been frozen for ten years
- **Czechia**, after negotiations with the State, was able to significantly increase wages.
- Also in **France**, pressure from social workers and employers' organisations and trade unions, in view of the worrying figures for the number of unfilled posts (¾ associations had more than 15% unfilled posts), led to the announcement by the Prime Minister in February 2022 of a €160 pay rise for some categories of social service workers. The announcements go further than financial measures, as they commit the State to set up a committee for socio-educational professions to reflect on all the challenges shared by the sector and related to it (attractiveness, training, VAE).

- In **Belgium**, in the context of the crisis in the non-market sector, tripartite agreements have made it possible to increase salaries, to adjust the end of careers and to make new commitments.
- In **Romania**, where social dialogue is not yet structured, FONSS has set up a federation “Romanian Social Platform”, alongside other NGOs, to play a role in lobbying for social services and finally see this field recognised in a sectoral social dialogue.

### C. Finally, at European level

The work which begun years ago by both the employer organisations (Social Employers) and the employee trade unions (EPSU) to obtain the creation of a sectoral social dialogue committee will soon

be completed. The idea of a European sectoral and structuring social dialogue is of course an opportunity to enhance the value and recognition of social services. Whether it is within the future committee or the Social Employers, it would be essential to make them places for exchanges on the practices implemented in each country, the evaluation that is made of them, and the developments observed. In the midst of the war in Ukraine, social services have once again demonstrated their adaptability by accompanying millions of refugees and their usefulness by being on the front line, just like during the Covid-19 crisis. As one of Europe’s founding fathers, Jean Monet, said: *“Europe will be made in crises and will be the sum of the responses to these crises”*. May this be true for social services and the recognition they could receive.

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