



Draft

Title: **the Care of Older Persons**

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Draft text

1 As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, countries throughout Europe have been
2 confronted with the consequences of the privatisation of the care of older
3 people. Older people (65+) were locked in their rooms in residential care homes
4 and family members were not allowed to visit them. Even though we owe the Europe
5 as we know it today to them, whether they we're born in the EU or have a
6 migration background, many died in loneliness inside large-scale facilities
7 during this pandemic.

8 At the same time, due to COVID measures and lockdowns, a very large number of
9 older people still living at home have been deprived of informal care from
10 family members, caregivers or professional in-home caretakers. Those older
11 persons who live independently in their own homes have received little or no
12 assistance during the crisis.

13 How could this happen? Why weren't the rights of older people respected? How
14 can we ensure that their care is maintained to higher standards? Now is the time
15 for the UN convention on the (human) rights of older people to take shape!

1. Socialisation of care

17 In a growing number of European countries, the public authorities do no longer
18 ensure the delivery of high-quality long-term care services. No efforts are
19 being made to eliminate the huge waiting lists. On the contrary, older people in
20 need of care have been abandoned to their fate and have to find help in their

21 immediate environment. Access to professional care is determined on the basis of
22 an extensive number of criteria or 'points'. In other words, it is not the older
23 people in need of care and assistance who decide whether and when they should
24 get help but the public authorities. This shift in policy towards older people
25 has far-reaching consequences.

26 • It is based on the concept of the traditional family, whereas today many
27 family members have full-time jobs. We often see women taking on this
28 informal care, resulting in gaps in their curriculum vitae and extending
29 the current gender pay gap. In the long term, this also
30 leads to a gender pension gap, creating a higher risk of poverty and
31 social exclusion for older women.

32 • There is no formalising of the role and status of these informal
33 caregivers, let alone their support, coaching or supervision.

34 • In the past, older people also used to take up the role of informal
35 caregivers for their grandchildren. However, due to a higher legal
36 retirement age in many European countries now, it is no longer possible
37 for many older people to take up this role.

38 **2. Access to professional care**

39 When public administrations determine when and how frequently people can access
40 professional care, they apply a ranking to measure and determine the need for
41 care in order to decide whether someone is entitled to live in a residential
42 care home. An immediate consequence of this approach is that when older people
43 arrive in a residential care home today, they often need much more professional
44 care than before. It would appear that residential care homes are no longer a
45 place to live, but a place to die.

46 The offer of facilities run by public authorities is insufficient. People have
47 to turn to privately owned residential care homes where the bills become
48 unaffordable. Furthermore, we see that care workers in these homes do not
49 receive the necessary support and supervision to enable them to cope with the
50 permanently high work pressure resulting from the residents' needs.

51 Those people who are considered as not being sufficiently in need of care have
52 to rely on their immediate environment. In some countries, like The Netherlands,

53 people receive a 'care budget' and have 'to shop around' to see what is on offer
54 and how best to pay for their most urgent needs. This financing method is the
55 ultimate example of a neoliberal policy that leaves (the organisation and offer
56 of) care to the market. A Care budget should lead to more freedom of choice for
57 older People and should not be used by the governments to reduce the budget for
58 the Care for older People.

59 **3. Care of the elderly in the hands of the market: silver economy and pursuit of** 60 **profit**

61 As public authorities continue to withdraw from the care of older people, more
62 and more private companies are operating in this market . They are turning it
63 into an economy of its own: the so-called 'silver economy'.

64 These companies are listed: they have to make enough profit to be able to pay
65 dividends to their shareholders. Consequently, their care homes have no other
66 choice but to reduce the costs for care as much as possible. We were confronted
67 with the results of this policy in undercover documentaries about the harrowing
68 goings-on in care homes across Europe. In the meantime, major players like Orpea
69 keep channeling their funds to the mother company, while creating the impression
70 of being on the brink of bankruptcy with the help of some clever tax
71 engineering.

72 We also note that these groups take advantage of European rules on the freedom
73 of movement. For some years now, a real social dumping at the European level has
74 been going on, whereby caregivers from European countries with lower wages are
75 being employed under worse conditions than regular workers in that country. The
76 social dumping is also present in in-home care, as the budget that older people
77 can spend to provide for their needs often proves to be insufficient. This has
78 led to distressing situations.

79 More often than not, big multinationals are also able to circumvent legislation
80 to install European Works Councils. In this way, the trade union is sidelined
81 and no social dialogue can take place.

82 **4. Future-proof care of the Older People: respect for older people and their** 83 **right to a dignified existence**

84 When people are asked about how they imagine they would like to be taken care

85 of, they often express the desire to live in their own house and neighbourhood
86 for as long and as independently as possible.

87 Older people throughout the EU have the right to access a care system that
88 caters for their needs, is of high quality and is aligned to how they themselves
89 would like to grow old.

90 Therefore, it is very important that we take action now and push for a proposal
91 of the UN convention on the rights of older Persons.

92 **Therefore, we ask the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council to:**

- 93 • Call on the EU and its Member States to actively collaborate on drafting a
94 proposal for a UN convention on the rights of Older Persons in which the
95 right of dignified care for older citizens is included as well as the
96 right to live independently as long as possible;
- 97 • Ensure the signing of this convention by the EU Member States and its
98 ratification at the EU level;
- 99 • Guarantee that older people in EU Member States can enjoy the right of
100 access to timely, qualitative, affordable and nearby community-oriented
101 health services and long-term care services adapted to individual needs
102 and wishes and without discrimination of any kind;
- 103 • Design a European care strategy that delivers European standards on,
104 amongst others, the coaching and supervision of informal caregivers and
105 formalisation of the role and status of informal caregivers;
- 106 • Ensure the granting of care credits for both men and women, so that they
107 can assume care tasks on an equal basis;
- 108 • Forbid private companies from receiving public funds to organise the care
109 of older people only to become a listed company on the stock market;
- 110 • Call upon the European Commission to monitor whether Directive 2009/38 EC
111 * is being applied correctly by Member States where international private
112 companies in the field of residential care homes operate.

Background

** Directive 2009/38 EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 6 May 2009 (recast), on the establishment of a European Works Council or a procedure in Community-scale undertakings and Community-scale groups of undertakings for the purposes of informing and consulting employees.*