



Brussels, 25 March 2020

Joint EPSU/Social Employers Statement on COVID-19 outbreak: the impact on social services and needed support measures

As the coronavirus spreads all across Europe and States successively enter into lockdown, we raise awareness on the threat that the virus poses to care organisations and [the 11 million social services workers](#) in the EU, who play a crucial role for millions of EU citizens in need of care and support. These workers, in close contact with older persons, persons with disabilities, and other people in need of care and support, are on a daily basis exposed to Covid-19 and the risk of an infection.

The spread of Covid-19 is putting pressure on long-term care services, which have for years been underfunded and consequently often understaffed. Pre-existing financing and staffing difficulties are being multiplied in the face of the current crisis, which in the worst case leads to complete closure of some care centers and other facilities. For those that require homecare support, this situation is only sustainable if they can continue to count on the support of care professionals.

This is why we are calling Member States and the European Commission to support a set of immediate measures to help the social services sector cope with the situation at hand.

Concretely, we are calling to:

- **Ensure the continuity of care and support services and the stability of the actors involved in providing those services.** Since these services are essential to provide support to millions of Europeans, we need to protect providers and workers by ensuring that contracts already in place are maintained and funded even in case of disruptions of services.
- **Guarantee remuneration and income support to all the care workers in the sector, and prevent any loss of their jobs,** for instance by publicly funded short-term work schemes.
- **Equip care workers with adequate protection material** such as masks, hydro-alcoholic solution, protective spectacles and gloves and guarantee access to reliable information

and training in safety measures at the workplace in all the languages that are widespread in the workforce.

- **Ensure that nursing homes and other residential care services have safety protocols in place** to react quickly and protect residents/beneficiaries and staff in the case of an outbreak. These protocols also need to include preparations for a worst-case scenario, in which hospitals reach their maximum capacity and emergencies in nursing homes cannot be treated anymore.
- **Facilitate social services' access to EU and national funds for immediate financial support** for wages and other costs, including funding of innovative responses to the crisis, such as providing distant support.
- **Secure, through national laws or collective agreements, the right to paid sick days, flexibility and other accommodations that are necessary** to allow social workers to protect the health of the people they care for and their own.
- Provide support to **ensure childcare** is available for children of social services staff.
- As many care systems rely on cross-border movements, make exceptions for **care workers to cross the national borders that have been closed** as a response to the spread of the virus.

During this public health emergency, social partners in social services fully support the measures that Member States and the European Commission have so far taken to limit the spread of the coronavirus. At the same time, we sound a strong alarm calling for **the maintenance and further expansion of support measures for our sector, which is critical to support the most vulnerable persons in Europe.**

Through this statement we also jointly express our full solidarity and praise the efforts of social services employers and staff who are essential for the wellbeing of European citizens and key to overcome crises.



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