

EURECO & EHECADI

JOINT FORUM

Preparing Health and Social Care
Students for the New Realities of
Work in Health and Social Care
Services

FINAL REPORT



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Executive Summary

The **EURECO-EHECADI Joint Forum**, held on 21-22 November 2024, explored how to better prepare health and social care students for the evolving demands of the workforce. Co-organised by EURECO, a collaboration platform for academia and service providers, and the EHECADI Project, the forum addressed challenges in health and social care and emphasised the importance of skill development for inclusive and innovative services.

Key Themes and Objectives

- **Inclusive Community Care:** Discussions stressed the importance of transitioning from institutional care to personalised forms of support which promote independent living and inclusive communities, aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
- **Societal Challenges:** Presenters addressed the effects of digitalisation, urbanisation, migration, and the long-term impacts of COVID-19, including staff shortages, funding gaps, and organisational uncertainty.
- **Collaboration and Innovation:** The event highlighted the need for collaboration between higher education institutions (HEIs), service providers, and researchers to co-develop curricula that meet contemporary workplace demands.
- **Educational Tools:** The EHECADI Project showcased resources including a “European Menu of Research Questions” for undergraduate students, an online community through which HEI’s can develop their educational offer to students and a co-designed digital courses to enhance students’ professional skills and digital readiness.

The Forum identified the following recommendations to enhance cooperation between stakeholders and ensure that health and social care staff are equipped with the necessary skills to address future sectoral challenges:

- Strengthen partnerships between HEIs, researchers, and service providers to co-develop practical, inclusive education and training models.

The forum concluded with a unified commitment to equipping future professionals with the skills to deliver inclusive, high-quality care and to support the transformation of health and social care services across Europe.

Click [here](#) to access all the speakers power point presentations.

About EURECO

EURECO is a European collaboration platform uniting academic researchers and service providers to advance inclusive community planning and development, guided by the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Founded as a joint initiative between the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) and the Centre for Planning and Evaluation of Social Services (ZPE) at the University of Siegen, Germany, EURECO aims to foster cooperation between theory and practice in the disability services sector.

The platform's mission includes building a network of academics and research-oriented service providers focused on developing inclusive communities. Regular meetings are held, combining the features of academic conferences and project development workshops to encourage collaborative innovation. Over time, EURECO expanded to include influential partners such as the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IASSIDD) and ZonMW, further solidifying its role as a key driver of inclusive community development across Europe.

About EHECADI

The [European Health Care Final Dissertation](#) (EHECADI) Project is a European project designed to equip healthcare students across disciplines—such as nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and nutrition and dietetics—with the skills and knowledge needed to tackle pressing societal health challenges. These challenges include healthcare equity, epidemic preparedness, underinvestment in healthcare workers, and the health needs of migrant populations. To achieve its goals, EHECADI has developed a range of innovative resources:

- **Knowledge Hub:** An online repository hosting all project materials to support students, educators, and stakeholders.
- **The EHECADI Community:** A co-designed platform connecting academia and stakeholders to share knowledge, identify societal needs, and guide students' final graduate dissertations towards meaningful topics.
- **Digital Open Course:** A co-created course that enhances responsible research practices and helps students acquire essential digital and transversal skills.
- **User Guidelines:** Comprehensive resources for students, teachers, and institutions to support the implementation of international undergraduate dissertations with a focus on practical application and inclusivity.

Together, these tools aim to prepare healthcare students to meet the evolving demands of their professions while fostering innovative, human rights-based approaches to health and social care.

Day 1- EURECO EHECADI Joint Forum

Welcome

WELCOME



Rachel Vaughan
EASPD



Johannes Schädler
ZPE Siegen University

Johannes Schaedler, ZPE Siegen University

Johannes Schaedler extended a warm welcome on behalf of the EURECO Steering Committee, a research-oriented group dedicated to fostering collaboration between academia and service providers for the implementation of the UN CRPD. He emphasised EURECO's longstanding commitment to developing inclusive community structures guided by the principles of the UN CRPD. Schaedler highlighted the critical role of high-quality support services and skilled staff in achieving these inclusive structures. He stressed the importance of moving away from institutional care models towards independent living and inclusive communities, with education—particularly the involvement of universities and students—forming the foundation of this transformation.

Schaedler noted the challenges European societies face due to ongoing transformations, including political shifts, digitalisation, migration, and urbanisation, alongside the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted the significant difficulties faced by social services, such as staff shortages, funding constraints, and the rapid adaptation to digitalisation. These challenges, coupled with growing organisational uncertainty, have led to a resurgence of institutional care models, perceived as offering stability during turbulent times. This rollback, however, places the human rights-based approach to social services in a defensive position.

He called for collaboration among educational institutions, researchers, service providers, and other stakeholders to equip students with innovative and practical methods for their professions. Schaedler praised the EHECADI Project for its ambitious objective of creating a

European framework for health and social care curricula through the "European Menu of Research Questions."



Keynote: Addressing current societal challenges through Final International Healthcare Dissertations: EHECADI's approach



KEYNOTE

Addressing current societal challenges through Final International Healthcare Dissertations: EHECADI's approach



Ester Goutan Roura

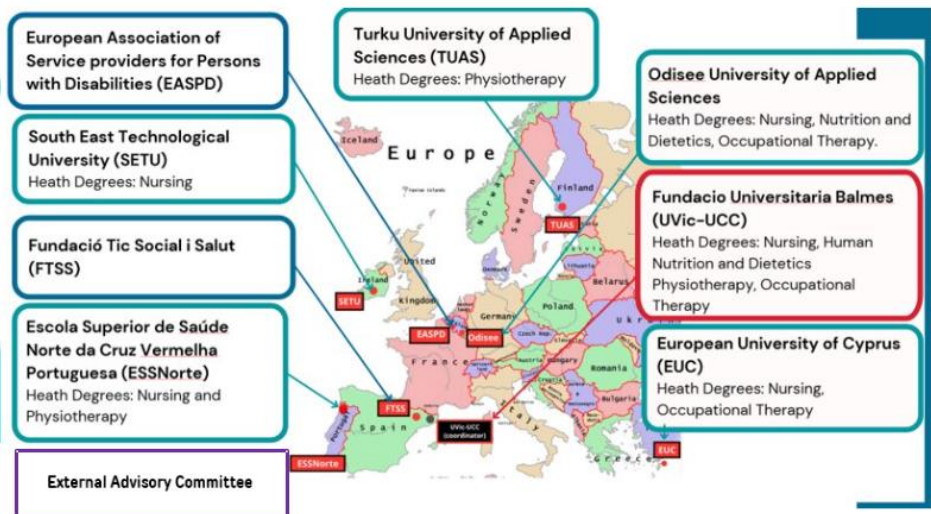
Fundacio Universitaria Balmes

Ester Goutan Roura, Fundacio Universitaria Balmes

Ester Goutan Roura introduced the EHECADI Project as a forward-thinking initiative designed to equip future healthcare professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to address contemporary challenges, such as economic shifts, digitalisation, and the green transition. She emphasised that higher education institutions have a vital social responsibility to prepare students to navigate potential disruptions while succeeding in their professional careers.



EHECADI Partnership



Goutan Roura explained that the EHECADI Project adopts a digital, international, and collaboratively co-designed model to tackle societal healthcare challenges. Through this innovative online platform, the project not only provides students with technical skills but also inspires them to explore beyond conventional topics, encouraging a deeper understanding of the societal impact of their roles within the healthcare sector.



EHECADI Outputs



1. EHECADI Community

Co-designed with students to:

- Share knowledge between academia and all the stakeholders.
- Detect societal needs and steer the international final undergraduate dissertations towards them.

2. EHECADI Course

A modular, open and digital course. Co-designed, piloted and evaluated with students that enhances responsible research, digital and transversal skills for students and others wishing to follow the course.

3. EHECADI Guidelines

Personalized guidelines on how to use the EHECADI resources for students, teachers and institutions.

Panel 1: Identifying skill needs for the inclusive transformation of health and Long-Term Care

Panel 1, moderated by Martin Reichstein, ZPE University of Siegen, addressed how to identify the skills needed by individuals entering the health and Long-Term Care to deliver support in person-centred and community-based settings.



PANEL 1 Identifying skill needs for the inclusive transformation of health and Long-Term Care



Melanie Schaur
Johannes Kepler
University Linz



Reninka De Koker
ODISEE University of
Applied Sciences



Marion Karppi
Turku University of
Applied Sciences



**Julia Maria
Zimmermann**
Fedas Luxembourg

Melanie Schaur, Johannes Kepler University Linz

Melanie Schaur discussed the growing importance of digital skills in reflecting broader trends in healthcare digitalisation. She emphasised the challenges posed by rapid technological advancements and demographic shifts, noting the increasing significance of digital communication in delivering social care services. Schaur pointed out that digital literacy is vital not only for care providers but also for care recipients.

However, many care facilities lack the resources to train staff adequately, resulting in slower transitions to digital systems. She also highlighted findings from the Care4Skills project, which addresses urgent skills shortages and future workforce needs. The research revealed that the typical care worker is a 45–54-year-old woman with over ten years of full-time experience. Challenges such as low training uptake, difficult working conditions, and staff shortages are common across European countries. Schaur underscored the pressing need for workforce expansion in ageing societies like Belgium and the Netherlands, where integrating digital tools remains a significant challenge.

Reninka De Koker, ODISEE University of Applied Sciences

Reninka De Koker spoke about the importance of values and ethics in healthcare, describing them as a moral compass developed early in life and refined over time. She stressed that future care providers must be inspired to treat others as they would wish to be treated. De Koker noted that healthcare professionals operate in highly diverse environments, with varying perspectives influenced by gender, religion, language, and economic circumstances.

She emphasised the need for healthcare professionals to respect individual preferences while providing optimal care. De Koker also discussed the importance of empowering care providers with confidence and an ethical compass, enabling them to advocate for care recipients while setting appropriate professional boundaries.



Marion Karppi, Turku University of Applied Sciences

Marion Karppi explored how societal and technological transformations, such as the shift from industrial to post-industrial societies and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), have reshaped work cultures. She highlighted how AI has created new possibilities for care, making support more accessible, such as providing recommendations for minor health issues.

Karppi emphasised the need for future healthcare professionals to develop open-mindedness, flexibility, and critical thinking. She stressed the role of educators in teaching students to recognise their strengths, not only in terms of skills and knowledge but also their personal and social values, which contribute to their job satisfaction and sense of purpose.

Julia Maria Zimmermann, Fedas Luxembourg

Julia Maria Zimmermann presented findings from Fedas Luxembourg's study, *Lifelong Learning Realities*, which examined effective formats for skill development beyond university education. The study revealed that service providers favour inter-enterprise seminars such as study visits and peer learning, followed by intra-enterprise seminars and e-learning, which are particularly popular among managers.

Zimmermann noted that professionals demand more frequent and specialised training opportunities to support their professional development and career growth. She concluded by emphasising the importance of continuous learning in addressing the evolving demands of the social care sector.

Panel 2: Designing curricula and dissertations to prepare students for the labour market



PANEL 2 Designing curricula and dissertations to prepare students for the labour market



Júlia Casacuberta Roca
Fundació Universitaria Balmes



Esa Bärlund
Turku University of Applied Sciences



Johannes Schädler
ZPE Siegen University

Having identified the skills potential skills needs during Panel One the Forum's second panel aimed to explore how HEI can design curricula that best prepare students for the evolving needs of the workplace and support their smooth transition into work.

Júlia Casacuberta Roca, Fundació Universitària Balmes

Júlia Casacuberta Roca shared her experiences with the EHECADI project, where she collaborated with interdisciplinary teams to develop a course in Finland, aligning her dissertation with the project. She emphasised how this experience prepared her for the workforce, equipping her with vital soft skills such as empathy, communication, ethical reasoning, and leadership, which she now applies in her career.

She advocated for integrating interdisciplinary and patient-centred approaches into curricula, along with a stronger focus on digital skills and holistic care, to better prepare students for their professional journeys. Júlia encouraged students to seize opportunities like EHECADI, which foster not only technical knowledge but also adaptability and ethical reasoning in a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.



Esa Barlund, Turku University of Applied Sciences

Esa Barlund discussed the challenges of adapting curricula to meet labour market needs, including the complexity of coordinating diverse stakeholders and the constraints of limited resources and funding. While focus groups provide real-world insights, curriculum updates often face delays in implementation, with educators reverting to familiar methods.

He also highlighted the mental health challenges students face during clinical placements, such as difficulty handling feedback and low confidence. Barlund praised EHECADI for addressing these issues by fostering cross-country collaboration and creating a mindset that prioritises real-world readiness. He acknowledged the need for further iterations of the project to fully address student needs but noted its significant potential to bridge gaps between education and the labour market.

Johannes Schaedler, ZPE Siegen University, EURECO

Johannes Schaedler explored EURECO's role in preparing students for the workforce by tackling key issues like mental health and the implementation of the UNCRPD. He highlighted the benefits of connecting academia and the labour market, exemplified by EHECADI's efforts to develop a manual that bridges these sectors.

Schaedler noted that many students today bring a practical, work-oriented perspective from their professional experiences but risk undervaluing theoretical foundations and research. EURECO fosters collaboration among researchers, educators, and service providers, encouraging students to reflect on their needs and prioritise cooperation.

Reflecting on lessons from COVID-19, Schaedler emphasised the advancements in online education and innovations like telerehabilitation. He stressed the importance of aligning curricula with real-world service delivery, regularly updating modules to stay relevant, and ensuring students graduate with strong research skills and practical expertise.

Parallel workshops

Workshop 1: Academic Collaborative Centres (ACC)

Robert Jabroer, ZonMW

Robert Jabroer, ZonMW, opened the workshop by introducing the concept of Academic Collaborative Centres (ACCs). ACCs are strategic partnerships between academic institutions and care organisations, designed to bridge the gap between research and practice. These centres foster collaboration to address real-world challenges in long-term care by combining academic expertise with on-the-ground experience. Through co-created research and innovation, ACCs aim to improve care quality, enhance workforce development, and inform policy-making. Their focus on bridging research and practice, together with their aim to lead to a better prepared workforce, made the ACCs an ideal topic for the EURECO Network and the focus of the EHECADI project.



WORKSHOP 1 ACADEMIC COLLABORATIVE CENTRES (ACC)



Carlo Schuengel
Vrije Universiteit
Amsterdam



Judith Urlings
Living Lab in Ageing &
Long-term Care,
Maastricht University



Reena Devi
NICHE Leeds,
University of Leeds

Carlo Schuengel, ACC of People with Intellectual Disabilities

Carlo Schuengel discussed the role of Academic Collaborative Centres (ACCs) in Flanders, highlighting their focus on partnerships between universities of applied sciences and care organisations. ACCs are structured collaborations that integrate research, education, and practice to address real-world challenges in care settings. These centres promote joint research and participatory approaches to address shared goals, strengthen ethical principles, and foster collaboration.

Schuengel emphasised that while competition among researchers can pose challenges, partnerships with organisations sharing similar interests often lead to more impactful outcomes. ACCs act as responsive entry points for stakeholders, creating a cooperative research environment that bridges academic knowledge and practical application.

Judith Urlings, Living Labs for Long-Term Care (LTC)

Judith Urlings presented the Living Labs model, a collaborative initiative between care

organisations and universities of applied sciences designed to improve the quality of life, care, and work through scientific research. Living Labs serve as knowledge-sharing platforms and learning networks, engaging researchers, teachers, students, and client representatives.

Limburg Living Lab Model



Key activity

scientific research

Key stakeholders

residents, family, care professionals, management, teachers, researchers

Key characteristics

multidisciplinary collaborations & complementary linking pins

Key benefit

scientific knowledge



Research findings are disseminated via symposiums and other platforms to foster stakeholder engagement. A distinctive feature of the model is the "linking pin" role, where professionals work across academic and care settings to address real-world needs. Urlings highlighted the success of Living Labs in the Netherlands, noting that similar initiatives in the UK, Austria, Germany, and Belgium have contributed to the development of an international research network.

Reena Devi, NICHE

Reena Devi shared insights on replicating the Dutch Living Lab model through the NICHE initiative. The model combines the practical needs of care organisations with scientific research to enhance care quality and work environments.

A key to its success is the "linking pin" role, which bridges academia and practice, identifying on-the-ground challenges and integrating them into research agendas. Devi explained how shared learning networks and dissemination events like symposiums promote stakeholder engagement. She also noted the model's international influence, inspiring similar initiatives and contributing to the creation of a formalised international research network.

WORKSHOP 2

EQUIPPING STUDENTS THE WORKPLACE: INSIGHTS FROM THE EHECADI PROJECT

MODERATOR



Rachel Vaughan
EASPD

SPEAKERS



Ester Goutan Roura
Fundació
Universitaria Balmes



Antonio Ferrira
Red Cross
University
Portugal



Cheryl Brewster
The Walton
Insitute



Alix González Ponce-Benavides
TIC Salut Social

Ester Goutan Roura, Fundació Universitària Balmes

Ester Goutan Roura discussed the collaborative co-design approach used in developing the EHECADI platform. She explained how stakeholders, including lecturers and students, were actively engaged to ensure the platform met their needs. Methods included distributing questionnaires and conducting workshops to gather insights into users' emotions, experiences, and ideas. This feedback enabled the project team to refine and adapt the platform, ensuring it was user-centred and practical for educational purposes.

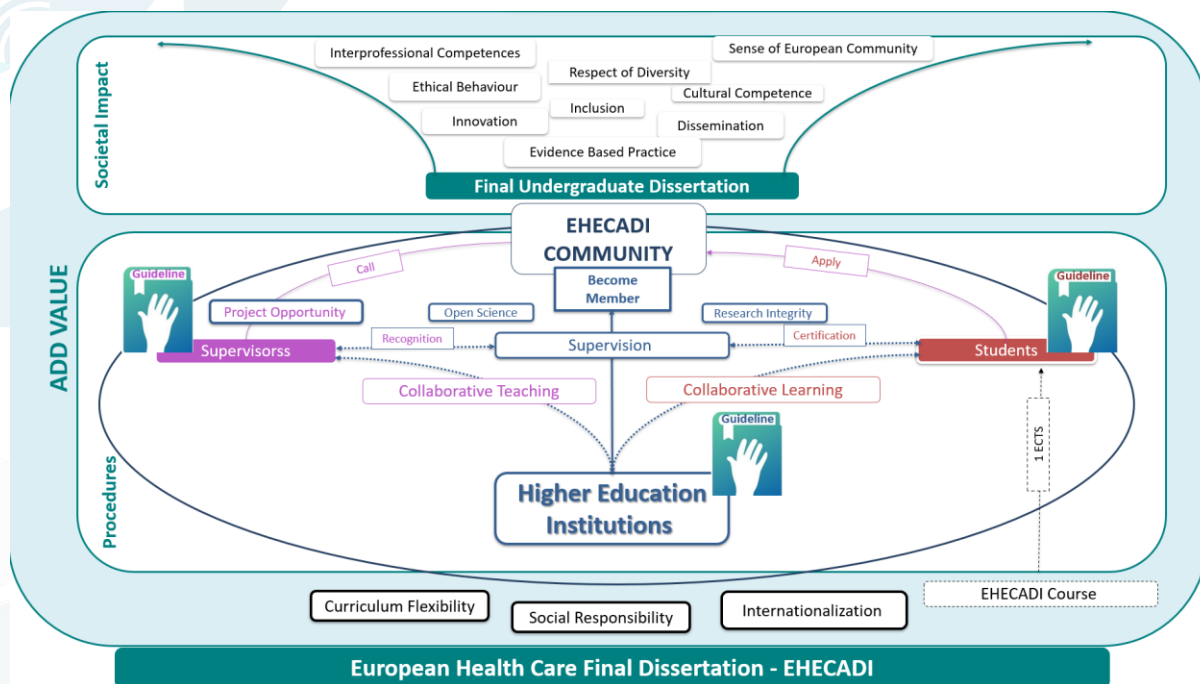
Antonio Ferrira, Red Cross University Portugal

Antonio Ferrira presented the structure of the EHECADI platform and how Higher Education Institutions can become a member of the EHECADI Community.

During his intervention Ferrira highlighted the benefits to institutions of joining EHECADI highlight that via their membership HEIS can demonstrate their commitment to:

- Promoting the implementation of research that makes a social impact.
- Offering tailored service-learning opportunities to students.
- Increasing partnerships and community engagement.
- Developing sustainability practices.
- Supporting their diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

Having outlined the added value of the EHECADI approach Ferrira presented the internal pathway Institutions, Supervisors and Students can follow within EHECADI as summarised below.



Cheryl Brewster, The Walton Institute

Cheryl Brewster demonstrated the platform and discussed the challenges faced during its development, particularly in creating a programme flexible enough to accommodate diverse university regulations. She emphasised the added value of EHECADI in terms of curriculum flexibility, social responsibility, and fostering innovation. Brewster highlighted that the project promotes a sense of European community and collaboration in the health and social care sector.

Audience Feedback

The audience response to the presentation was overwhelmingly positive. Attendees praised the platform's ability to foster cooperation and collaboration between universities and students, viewing it as a significant step towards developing better-skilled professionals in health and social care. The project's bottom-up approach, which prioritises stakeholder input, was commended as a strong model for innovation and inclusivity.

WORKSHOP 3

CARE4SKILLS: RAPID RESPONSE TO TRAINING AND SKILL NEEDS

MODERATOR



Renaud Scheuer
EASPD



Kallianne Farren
EASPD



Melanie Schaur
Johannes Kepler
University Linz



Daniele Bregoli
Social Services
Europe

Renaud Scheuer, EASPD, introduced the workshop by outlining the four central questions to be addressed:

- What is the Care4Skills project about?
- How do we tackle skills mapping?
- What is the Care4Skills Rapid Response Training, and how can it be used?
- What is the Large-Scale Partnership, and who can join?

Melanie Schaur, Johannes Kepler University Linz

Melanie Schaur presented the Care4Skills project, contextualising it within the European Care Strategy, which emphasises the need to upskill and reskill long-term care (LTC) workers to address challenges such as digital transformations and the shift towards home and community-based support.



Care4Skills



Care4Skills (2024-2028) is a Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills in Long-Term Care

- bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders from across Europe, including LTC providers, VET providers, higher education institutions, and certification body.
- tackling the skills gaps in the sector, covering not only the needs of frontline staff, predominantly women, but also of managers and directors of services.

She explained that Care4Skills is a sectoral cooperation initiative that unites a diverse range of stakeholders, including LTC providers, vocational education and training (VET) institutions, higher education bodies, and certification agencies, to address skills gaps across the sector. The project focuses on the needs of frontline staff, predominantly women, as well as managers and directors.

Schaur then highlighted key findings from the project's ongoing qualitative and quantitative research. An online questionnaire involving 500 respondents revealed significant variations in challenges and opportunities between countries, as well as a disconnect between what managers perceive as necessary skills and what staff actually require. While digital and interpersonal skills training is less commonly sought, practical, task-oriented sessions remain the most popular.

Kalianne Farren, EASPD

Kalianne Farren introduced the Rapid Response Training Programme, which aims to:

- Advance person-centred approaches in care and support.
- Increase the adoption of digital technologies in care settings.

The programme targets 1,500 professionals from 10 countries across three key occupational groups: social work assistants, nursing associate professionals, and social care workers. Delivered through two formats—a 6-8 hour MOOC hosted on the EASPD Knowledge Hub and in-person sessions with local trainers—the training is designed to accommodate participants' varying educational backgrounds.



The Rapid Response Training programme

Aims:

- To up/re-skill the workforce
- To integrate and complement existing induction programmes
- To spark debate within care organisations around the topics
(It is not certified)

Format:

Training programme of 6-8 hours study load (length was decided following a survey among delivery partners)

- MOOC (hosted on the EASPD Knowledge Hub)
- In person (additional effort of local trainers)

Entry requirements:

- Literate in one of the languages in which the course is available
- Basic digital literacy

Farren provided a demonstration of the MOOC and its four modules, showcasing the platform's accessibility and effectiveness in supporting the professional development of care workers.

Daniele Bregoli, Social Services Europe

Daniele Bregoli introduced the Pact for Skills and the Large-Scale Skills Partnership (LSSP) for the LTC sector, which seeks to address current and future workforce challenges, including:

- Skills gaps and evolving requirements.
- Workforce shortages.
- Underfunding and difficult working conditions.
- Coordination among stakeholders.
- The need for continuous training opportunities.

Bregoli outlined six objectives of the LSSP:

- Expanding the partnership.
- Improving LTC workers' skills across Europe.
- Developing and implementing micro-credentials.
- Raising awareness about the LTC sector.

- Facilitating dialogue between public and private stakeholders.
- Establishing synergies with other EU projects and identifying best practices.

He concluded with an explanation of the application criteria and procedures for joining the partnership, inviting stakeholders to contribute to this collaborative effort.

Panel 3: Next Steps: Boosting upskilling and reskilling of health and long-term care workers

Konstantina Leventi, EASPD, moderator of the Panel Three, opened the panel by emphasising the rising demand for health and social care services amid an ageing population and persistent staff shortages. She posed the central question: how can we best prepare the future workforce for the health and social care sector in this ever-changing context?



PANEL 3
NEXT STEPS: BOOSTING UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE WORKERS

Katarina Ivankovic Knezevic
European Commission

Antonella Candiago
European Network for Independent Living

Lyudmil Ninov
BeWell Project

Jiří Horecký
European Aging Network

Samantha Howe
EPSU

Katarina Ivankovic Knezevic, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Katarina Ivankovic Knezevic outlined the European Commission’s initiatives for workforce development, upskilling, and reskilling in the care sector. She shared that approximately 3.1 million workers are employed in the EU health and social care sector, representing 1.5% of the workforce—a number insufficient to meet growing demands. By 2035, the sector is expected to grow by 25%, necessitating approximately 11 million trained workers.

The European Care Strategy, implemented through projects like Care4Skills, aims to train 3.8 million LTC workers while addressing informal care provision, which disproportionately involves women (95%). She highlighted recent initiatives, including a Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee established in 2023 to address working conditions, skills shortages, and the attractiveness of the sector. Knezevic also referenced the Council’s recommendations on long-term care and the importance of intergenerational fairness in upcoming policy directions.

Antonella Candiago, European Network for Independent Living

Antonella Candiago emphasised the importance of integrating care recipients into skill development for support staff. She advocated moving away from a paternalistic, medical model of disability toward a social model that prioritises co-production and decision-making with individuals receiving care.

Candiago explained how engaging care recipients fosters independent living by promoting choice, control, and self-determination. She introduced the concept of "ablesplaining," where non-disabled individuals patronisingly explain issues to disabled people, advocating instead for engagement and collaborative processes to empower both care recipients and providers.



Lyudmil Ninov, BeWell Project

Lyudmil Ninov presented the BeWell Project, which focuses on developing skills strategies for the digital and green transitions within the health and care sectors. Key objectives include:

- Creating skills intelligence to assess workforce needs at local, national, and European levels.
- Developing actionable recommendations for policymakers.
- Promoting a Pact for Skills strategy to enhance training opportunities and align workforce skills with emerging challenges.

Ninov stressed the need for a coordinated effort to integrate workforce requirements into policy design and implementation.

Jiří Horecký, European Aging Network

Jiří Horecký discussed the disparities in recruitment practices and training standards across Europe. He compared the Netherlands, where high qualification requirements exist but lead to staff shortages, to the Czech Republic, where minimal requirements suffice but skill development is limited.

He highlighted key issues, including retaining staff, improving wages and working conditions, and expanding training opportunities. Horecký emphasised the need to recognise qualifications across EU countries and to address the limited intersectionality between health and social care, which hinders workers from transitioning between the two sectors.



Samantha Howe, EPSU

Samantha Howe introduced the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Social Services, established in 2023, as a significant step in aligning workforce needs with EU policies. She discussed the development of a Framework of Action for retention and recruitment, which addresses education, training, work-life balance, and gender equality.

Howe emphasised the importance of accessible, lifelong learning opportunities to attract younger workers and equip the workforce to handle current and future challenges. She concluded by advocating for collaborative efforts to meet the growing demand for high-quality care services.

CONCLUSIONS



Johannes Schädler
ZPE Siegen University



Thomas Bignal
EASPD

Thomas Bignal, EASPD

Thomas Bignal closed the forum by emphasising EASPD's mission to support members and service providers in transforming their services to deliver high-quality care. He expressed gratitude for the collaboration with the European Commission, which enables many of EASPD's activities, and highlighted the value of working with the academic community—an effort that gave birth to EURECO, bridging the gap between researchers and service providers.

Bignal noted that the discussions went beyond academic perspectives, focusing on the training and skills of staff and the future workforce in the social sector, demonstrating EURECO's flexibility and importance. He praised the EHECADI project for offering valuable insights and frameworks for collaboration between universities, which help prepare students for their professional careers.

Looking ahead, he urged participants to consider the next steps for EURECO and its future direction. He concluded by thanking Renaud Scheuer, the EASPD team, and all participants for their contributions to the forum.

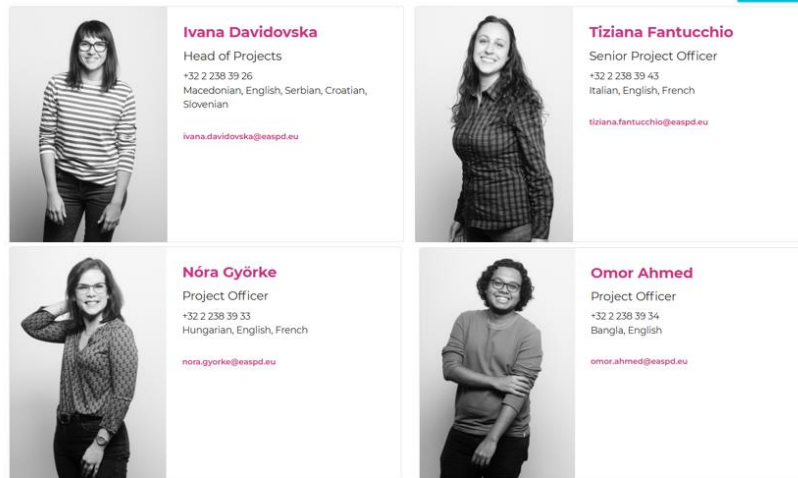
Johannes Schaedler, ZPE Siegen University, EURECO

Johannes Schaedler reflected on the discussions, emphasising the importance of collaborative teaching in fostering critical thinking and preparing a future workforce better equipped for the challenges of the social sector. He highlighted how the EHECADI project has inspired new ways to make education more European and career-focused.

Schaedler noted the significance of being in Brussels and participating in a forum that showcases the strength of European collaboration. He stressed the importance of protecting and nurturing this unity to ensure continued growth and success in shared goals. He thanked everyone for their active participation and contributions to the forum.

Day 2 - Project Development Workshop

EASPD Project development Workshop



The EASPD Projects Team facilitated the Project Development Workshop, offering participants practical guidance on designing projects and navigating EU funding opportunities. The session combined presentations on key concepts with group work to refine project ideas collaboratively.

Key Principles of Project Development

The workshop highlighted essential steps in project development:

- **Needs Assessment:** Define the problem, target groups, and available resources.
- **SMART Objectives:** Set clear, measurable, and achievable goals.
- **Partnerships and Sustainability:** Engage diverse stakeholders and ensure long-term impact.
- **Innovation and Risk Management:** Introduce unique approaches while planning for challenges.

The team underscored the importance of aligning project frameworks with funding priorities and delivering sustainable outcomes.

EU Funding Opportunities

Participants received an overview of funding programmes, including Erasmus+ KA2, Horizon Europe, EU4Health, and CERV. Emphasis was placed on tailoring proposals to programme objectives and integrating co-production with underrepresented groups.

Group Discussions and Proposals

Attendees developed and shared innovative project ideas, such as:

- A health promotion initiative leveraging digital tools for physical activity.

- An AI-powered platform to enhance collaboration in social services.
- A resilience-oriented tool for community-based psychosocial support.

Feedback focused on ensuring alignment with EU funding calls and refining sustainability plans.

The session concluded with advice on finalising proposals, fostering strong partnerships, and adhering to funding application guidelines.

Key messages

The discussions and insights from the forum have laid a solid foundation for advancing workforce development in the health and social care sector. Moving forward, the following key actions are proposed:

- **Strengthening Collaboration:**
 - EURECO and EHECADI must continue to foster partnerships between universities, care organisations, policymakers, and service providers. This includes expanding the Large-Scale Skills Partnership (LSSP) and engaging more stakeholders at local, national, and European levels.
- **Advancing Training and Skill Development:**
 - Implement and scale up the **Rapid Response Training Programme** to ensure a broader reach across occupational groups and EU countries, as part of the **Care4Skills project**.
 - Encourage the integration of digital and green skills training in line with the **BeWell Project** and the digital transformation goals.
 - Promote co-production models, as discussed by Antonella Candiago, to empower service users and ensure the training aligns with their needs.
- **Addressing Workforce Shortages:**
 - Build on the European Care Strategy and initiatives like Care4Skills to train and retain 11 million workers needed by 2035.
 - Explore ways to standardise and recognise care qualifications across EU countries, addressing disparities highlighted by Jiří Horecký.
- **Enhancing Curricula:**
 - Leverage the **EHECADI platform** to promote interdisciplinary, flexible, and inclusive curricula that align with workforce demands.
 - Encourage collaborative teaching approaches to foster critical thinking, as emphasised in the panel discussions.
- **Policy Integration and Advocacy:**
 - Strengthen the role of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Social Services to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and address staff shortages, working conditions, and training gaps.
 - Advocate for policy designs that incorporate workforce needs, following recommendations from the **BeWell Project** and **Katarina Ivankovic Knezevic**.
- **Expanding Research and Knowledge Sharing:**

- Continue building on initiatives like **Living Labs** and the EURECO network to create platforms for sharing best practices and actionable research findings.
- Publish and disseminate reports from projects like Care4Skills to provide comprehensive data on skill gaps and training needs.
- **Engaging Students and Future Professionals:**
 - Encourage students to take advantage of opportunities like EHECADI to build both technical and soft skills.
 - Increase efforts to prepare students for professional realities by integrating training on ethical reasoning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and adaptability.

Next steps

The EURECO partners are currently exploring potential follow-up research and projects based on the key messages of the Forum. As a number of crucial topics and avenues for future research have been identified, it will be important to capitalise on the Forum's momentum to strengthen cooperation between various stakeholders and shape the policy and research agenda.

Additionally, researchers and academics who wish to join the EURECO network can do so by visiting the EURECO website. Joining the network will ensure that you receive information on future events and 35 research or funding opportunities, as well as being connected with other researchers to identify topics or initiatives of interest. For updates on upcoming studies and events, please contact: Renaud Scheuer EASPD

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