

Eurocarers' Network Development Strategy

2023-2030

**Towards carer-friendly
societies in Europe**

Why do carers and the work of Eurocarers matter?

Research confirms that informal carers provide over 80% of all care in Europe, with women providing approximately two-thirds of care mainly as daughters (in law) and wives/partners and often as mothers of children with disabilities.

Estimates suggest that the economic value of unpaid informal care in the EU ranges between €320 and €368 billion per year. The projected budgetary impact of a progressive shift from informal to formal care by 2070 would result in a 109% increase in the portion of GDP allocated to Long-Term Care, on average for the EU.

Carers will play a crucial role in addressing the demands of societies where older people and people with long-term conditions live longer lives. Preserving the principles of free choice and personal autonomy should remain a central tenet of any initiative aiming to support them. However, the lack of professional care and support options too often leads to situations where informal care becomes the primary component of the care network, with a severe impact on carers' ability to experience equal opportunities in their personal, social and professional life.

The right to long-term care services for individuals dependent on such care was affirmed for the first time at Union level in the EU Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar calls for accessible and affordable services of quality, with an emphasis on maintaining the well-being and functional abilities of vulnerable or dependent individuals for as long as feasible, ultimately enhancing their autonomy. This ambition takes on even greater significance in the context of ageing demographics, which generate a growing incidence of chronic conditions, an increasing demand for care and a serious sustainability test for European social and health-care systems.

Eurocarers' mission statement

Eurocarers brings together carers' organisations as well as relevant universities & research institutes – a unique combination that enables evidence-based advocacy. Our network recognises unpaid/informal carers as equal partners in care. Our collective efforts seek to ensure that the existing and growing care needs of an ageing European population are addressed in a universal and equitable way and that the essential contribution of unpaid/informal carers in the provision of care is valued, recognised as central to the sustainability of health and long-term care systems, and supported to prevent the negative impact of caring on carers themselves.

We believe that carers should have the right to choose freely whether they want to be a carer, and to what extent they want to be involved in caring.

The mission of the Eurocarers network is therefore to act as a voice for informal carers, irrespective of their age or the particular health need of the person they are caring for by:

- ✿ Documenting and raising awareness about the significant contribution made by carers to health and social care systems and the economy as a whole, the impact of caring on carers' ability to maximise their life prospects and maintain an active and productive life, as well as the need to address the daily challenges facing carers across Europe;
- ✿ Contributing to evidence-based policy development at national as well as European level that take account of carers, i.e., promote their social inclusion, the development of support services, enable them to remain active in paid employment and maintain a social life;
- ✿ Promoting mutual learning and an exchange of good practice and innovation throughout the EU.

Playing an active role in the development of carer-friendly societies in Europe

This Network Development Strategy, in conjunction with the implementation of our proposed EU Strategy to support and empower carers, directs our development effort and investment towards developing carer-friendly societies in Europe.

As the positive momentum around care and caring continues to evolve, various opportunities arise where our network possesses a comparative advantage. But the policy environment is complex, the competition is fierce and success is not assured. Besides, policy developments of relevance to carers have often been implemented in a fragmented and uneven manner and have therefore not always resulted in tangible improvements in carer support. Much more therefore remains to be done to generate evidence, to inform the policy-making process, to connect the dots between existing EU, national and regional policy initiatives and to trigger new ones in support of carers.

This Strategy offers a structure to prioritise and advance the most promising opportunities that arise from our research, networking and advocacy efforts. It is rooted in the guiding principles established by our network (see figure below) and serves as our primary vehicle to develop a comprehensive approach to matters of importance across the network.

10 guiding principles

- ✓ Recognition
- ✓ Social inclusion
- ✓ Equality of opportunity
- ✓ Choice
- ✓ Information
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Time off
- ✓ Compatibility of care and employment
- ✓ Health promotion and protection
- ✓ Financial security

The development of our network involves many players and is shaped by multiple policy issues, contexts and interests. The best development outcomes are achieved when stakeholders and opportunities are aligned towards a clear common purpose and guided by consistent principles of good development.

This Strategy provides the common direction for the development of our network in the period 2023-2030.

Eurocarers' network development strategy

**Maximising our network's
potential to inform and actively
contribute to the development of
carer-friendly societies in Europe**

Our focus	Our priorities	Our results
<p>I. Developing the voice of carers</p>	<p>1. Define and implement a proactive partnership and recruitment process to strengthen the expertise of our network and ensure impact at national/regional level</p> <p>Our goals for sustainable membership expansion stem from an analysis of current needs and available resources, with the aim to broaden the Network’s scope and provide high-quality support. Consequently, the aims are to:</p> <p>(a) develop a partnership and recruitment approach targeted at established and emerging organisations and institutions from underrepresented geographic areas (e.g., Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, etc.), and</p> <p>(b) reinforce and diversify the range of expertise within our membership throughout all European countries and regions. To do so, our network will utilize various approaches, including a twinning programme, delegations for peer support, enlisting ambassadors, organising study visits, and more.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✱ The Eurocarers network includes at least one carer organisation or, in the absence of it, condition-specific organisation whose activities target carers in each member state of the Council of Europe (and at the very least in each EU member state). ✱ The Eurocarers network includes at least one research institute or university with expertise and experience in the fields of care and caring in each member state of the Council of Europe (and at the very least in each EU member state).
	<p>2. Generate the conditions for partnerships and development of new and emerging national or regional carers organisations</p> <p>Stimulating and supporting the development of carers’ organisations in countries and regions of Europe where these do not currently exist is also part of Eurocarers’ mission. This occurs through the mapping of care actors, identification of existing barriers and formulated interests, organisation of training sessions, development of toolkits, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✱ New carers organisations have emerged / are emerging as a result of our work at EU and national level, in particular in countries where these currently do not exist. These new organisations join Eurocarers and come to reinforce the European carers’ movement.

II. Developing carer evidence

3. Identify the research gaps that remain to meet the needs and preference of carers across Europe

International and national research is still needed to develop a comprehensive and informed understanding of carers' situation and needs. Filling this knowledge gap is essential to inform policy-making in all areas with a bearing on carers (e.g. health, care, youth, education, employment, social protection, transport, housing). It is also urgent to identify and categorise promising practices that bring real added value to carers and their caree. Collecting and generating data and practices about care and caring is our member organisations' core business and the bedrock of all our activities.

4. Foster knowledge-sharing among member and partner organisations to reinforce the European Carers' movement

Promoting mutual learning and the exchange of experience and expertise amongst members and partners of our network and throughout the EU is and will remain at the core of our mission.

5. Build members' capacity to understand the European policy and research environment to empower them and maximise their chances of advancing their agenda in their country

Speaking with one voice entails being able to understand the ever-changing policy environment in which we operate and adapting to it. Our programme of activities will continue to include capacity-building sessions allowing to explore and build consensus on the opportunities and challenges arising from policy and research.

- * **The Eurocarers network and members of our Research Working Group (ERWG) are at the forefront of research and practices in the fields of care and caring.** - **The topics listed in the Eurocarers research priorities document are all investigated** through practice-focused projects. - **The Eurocarers Repository gives access to relevant research outcomes and evidence (incl. promising practices)** regarding the topics listed in Eurocarers' research priorities. - **Eurocarers activities also serve to collect carers' testimonials and experiences** about the various negative and positive aspects of caregiving.

- * Our annual programme of activities includes **study visits, knowledge-sharing seminars and the dissemination of regular information about the state of the art in policy and practice** on care and caring.

- * **Eurocarers members positively assess the quality of our mutual learning and capacity-building activities.** They play an active role in these sessions by sharing information and by (co)hosting events.

- * **Synergies and collaborations emerge among members as a result of Eurocarers activities.** Knowledge and practices are transferred from countries to countries, with a specific focus on less carer-friendly regions (Eastern and Southern Europe).

III. Developing carer policy

6. Capitalise on existing and potential policy hooks at all levels of governance and contribute to policy dialogues relevant to care and caring

Our advocacy work has become even more relevant since the signature of a partnership agreement with DG EMPL and given the momentum generated by the EC's work in the fields of care and caring, among others. Since then, Eurocarers has established strategic links with a diversity of stakeholders and decision-makers, including the WHO, DG Education and Culture, DG Connect, DG Santé, member of the Social Platform, the European Patient's Forum, the European Forum for Primary Care, etc. These will be nurtured through evidence-based recommendations.

- * Eurocarers actively contributes to the implementation of the EU Care Strategy by informing and monitoring its transposition at Member State level, with a focus on both informal and professional long-term care.
- * Our collaboration with DG EMPL is strengthened and we actively support the work of the SPC in the areas of social protection, health and long-term care.
- * Existing relations with the WHO, OECD, EU institutions and CSOs are maintained and developed as required.
- * The EP Interest Group on Carers has developed into an influential and broad pool of champions of care and caring at European policy level.

7. Ensure that the policy momentum developed at EU and international level translates into national, regional and local initiatives and support

The call for a comprehensive EU-level strategy aiming to address the challenges facing carers across Europe has been part of Eurocarers' mission since its creation. Our proposal for an EU initiative on Carers and our 10 guiding principles are now well captured in the context of the EU Care Strategy. Our policy work will therefore seek to support the implementation of the Care Strategy at national/regional level, including through the collection and dissemination of innovative practices of relevance to our mission.

- * The objectives of Eurocarers' proposed EU initiative on carers are realised as part of the EU Care Strategy (i.e. national / regional strategies or coordinated policy packages are put in place) in a majority of – if not all – Member States and carers (or organisations representing them) are involved in their implementation.
- * The European Carers Movement is reinforced and coordinated around a common narrative and communication platform (incl. a European Carers' Day and a logo).
- * The Eurocarers network publishes annual country profiles and assessments of countries' "carer friendliness". These serve to inform policy change, including through the European Semester process.

8. Ensure EU funding is used to trigger progress in the fields of carer support and caring

Eurocarers members have access to relevant information on the EU Funding opportunities and process at national/regional level and can build on each other experience

- * Eurocarers members are engaged in transnational partnerships and projects funded through ESF +, Horizon 2020 and other programmes; and are engaged in activities at regional / national level through the European Structural Investment Funds

IV. Developing Eurocarers' members' capacity

9. Continue to provide a package of support that meets the needs and expectations of member organisations

The strength of our network lies in our collective knowledge and expertise. Member organisations' buyin is essential to maximise our impact and each one of them should therefore reap clear benefits from its membership with us.

- * - **Member organisations actively contribute to our joint activities** and the implementation of our annual work programmes.
- * Member organisations provide **positive feedback to our annual surveys** on the quality, relevance and added value of our activities.
- * **Member organisations** benefit from a package of services and **financially contribute to our collective work programme** at a level that is commensurate to their capacity and needs.

10. Maintain and strengthen the financial sustainability of the network

Money is the sinews of war and the financial sustainability of our network and secretariat currently depends on three main funding sources, i.e., EU grants (both operating and action grants), membership fees and sponsorship. These sources need to be preserved and nurtured in order to cover our activities for the period concerned by the present Strategy and beyond.

- * **The framework partnership agreement with DG EMPL is successfully carried out** up until its termination in 2025 and plans are made for its renewal beyond that date.
- * **The work of the ERWG and Eurocarers Research priorities document is reflected in EU/international agendas on care and caring** (as a result of our advocacy work) and leads to new opportunities for research funding.
- * **The funding generated through membership fees and sponsorship is – at the very least - maintained** and allows us to cover our cofinancing of the EU operating and action grants for the period 2023-2030.