EQUAL-CARE

Enhancing Gender Equality
in the Disability Care Sector

Project 101191171

Empowering Carers – Connection, Growth, and Professional Development

Webinar #5 Programme

Date: 26 November 2026
Time: 10AM CET
Duration: 1,5 hours approx.
Format: Online (Zoom)
Link: Link
Language: English

Objective: To support the empowerment of carers—especially women—by promoting inclusion, learning, and personal and professional advancement in both formal and informal care contexts.

Focus:

- Building social support and reducing isolation among informal carers
- Professional development, career pathways, learning opportunities, upskilling, and formal recognition of caregiving skills
- Intersectional barriers to professional development in the care sector, including gender-based discrimination compounded by age, ethnic origin, and disability by association
- From passive to active: engaging carers in advocacy and policy
- Carers' organisations as drivers of change
- The future of care systems: gender-equal, inclusive, and sustainable

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AGENDA

Welcome & Opening Session (10 min)

Moderator:

- Welcome and technical housekeeping
- Introduction to the EQUAL-CARE project (brief overview)
- Objectives of the webinar

Empowering Carers – Connection, Growth, and Professional Development (40 min)

Part 1: Presentations (10 min each):

- **Overcoming Isolation: Building Social and Professional Support Networks**
  Speaker: **Melanie Kollegger-Fladerer**
  Melanie is a qualified early childhood educator with extensive experience at Chance B. She has coordinated a volunteer-based family support project (*Familienpatenschaften*) and currently coordinates assistance for children with special needs in mainstream schools. Drawing on her professional and personal experience as a working mother, she promotes community-based support, peer connections and volunteer engagement to empower informal carers and strengthen their well-being.

- **Recognising and Valuing Skills: Pathways for Upskilling and Career Growth in Care**
  Speaker: **Irene García Muñoz**
  Irene is a political scientist specialising in policy, applied research and knowledge exchange, with extensive experience in international development, NGOs and academia. Her expertise includes social justice, gender equality, institutional change and connecting research with practice. She currently works at Home Care Lab, the research and innovation cooperative of Grupo SSI, a cooperative group with 40 years of experience in the care sector, focusing on skills development, professionalisation and workforce transformation.

- **Breaking Barriers: Addressing Intersectional Inequalities in Care Professions**
  Speaker: **Antonio Marcianó**

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Antonio is the Legal Representative of Minerva ETS, an Italian Third Sector organisation established in 2014, dedicated to promoting the rights, well-being and social inclusion of people with disabilities. He supports initiatives that foster personal autonomy, equal opportunities and active participation in community life. His work focuses on building partnerships with public institutions, families and local organisations to strengthen support networks, combat discrimination and promote a more accessible and inclusive society.

- **From Experience to Influence: Carers as Advocates and Agents of Change**
  Speaker: **Andrea Gredecká**
  Andrea is a law student and member of IG24 - Initiative for Justice in Live-in Care in Austria. Originally from Slovakia, she is a legal advisor for care workers in Austria as a part of her activities in IG24, which span from organising protests to participating in policy research. The focus of her further studies is international migration law.

Part 2: Moderated Q&A (20-30 min)

- Discussion with speakers, guided by audience questions

Closing Remarks & Next Steps (10 min)

- Summary of key insights
- Reflections on empowerment and inclusion

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