

**Policy Commitment document prepared by Barcelona Activa within the framework of the +RESILIENT project financed by the INTERREG -MED program of the European Commission.**

**Care work in dependent elder people: recommendations and policy commitments for the improvement of the sector**

### **Context**

Care work has not traditionally been considered a sector of economic activity in terms of job creation or contribution to the gross domestic product of a country, as it has been largely carried out for decades by families, and particularly by women within those families.

In recent years, however, care work has become an economic sector that it has, in fact, great potential for growth and job creation, but its social, economic and institutional organisation is particularly complex, and the sector has a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to make the most of the business and employment opportunities it offers. This is a reality shared by many European countries and, therefore, interesting collaboration synergies can be generated, as demonstrated by the +RESILIENT project.

One of the main challenges is the qualification of human resources, which includes the improvement of the training currently on offer, the accreditation of skills and the facilitation of access to training. This is an area in which Barcelona Activa operates and for this reason this is the area that the pilot project carried out within the framework of the +RESILIENT project has focused on.

Following the pilot, which has seen the participation of many of the actors of the dependent elder people care sector in Barcelona, the following challenges are recognized, and these challenges are the ones in which it makes sense to continue working.

### **Human resources qualification:**

In the care sector, there are still significant challenges in accessing training (due to legal barriers and lack of online training on offer) and more resources are needed for the recognition of work experience. Without qualification, it is not possible to advance in the professionalization of the sector, and thus it is proposed to work in the following aspects of transversal character:

- Make qualification processes accessible, either through training or through the recognition of experience.
- Reduce legal barriers to access training and improve online training to ensure universal access for caregivers. In this sense, it is necessary to explore hybrid training formats, which make schedules and formats more flexible. It is thus proposed to generate more conciliatory alternatives to facilitate access to the regulated training offer (Certificates of Professionalism) and the construction of a professional career for these working people.

- Provide more resources for the recognition and accreditation of work experience.
- Articulate continuing education in the sector urgently.
- Identify specializations in the sector that allow a professional career in terms of recognition and salary (specialization in data processing, specialization in intensive care and high dependency, specialization in economic management and planning ...). These must also be reflected in any agreement in the sector.
- Propose innovations in the structure of training: currently the care sector is not articulated in a hierarchical way, and training proposals should include this reality to improve the employability of the people who work there. Training structures by skills, horizontally, rather than vertically, which is common in most sectors.
- Fostering entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship: Entrepreneurship must be understood in two ways. On the one hand, entrepreneurial skills, understood as internal entrepreneurship (initiative and pro-activity, ability to detect needs, adapt the service, etc.), that is, those skills that have to do with the ability to self-organize the job. On the other hand, within the entrepreneurial competencies they may also have to do with the self-organization of work in cooperative business formulas under the Social and Solidarity Economy.
- Promote the use of new technologies and digital skills as an essential support tool in the tasks of the care sector in dependent elder people.
- Linking Vocational Training itineraries in the care sector to real workplaces from the outset, so that regulated training is practical and linked to work experience.

#### Articulation of the sector:

- In order to continue advancing in the improvement of Care Work in dependent elder people, a clustering of the sector should be promoted, and the work done in recent years within the framework of the +RESILIENT project should not be neglected. The consolidation of a group that promotes the necessary actions proposed in this document, and detects future areas for improvement in care, could be a very valuable tool.

Some ideas that have been pointed out as possible elements that would help optimize the capabilities of companies in the sector would be:

- Encourage the continuous training of its staff, to improve the quality-of-service provision and help improve wages.
- Generate as far as possible specializations that allow develop professional career within the same companies.
- Promote the incorporation of ESG (environmental, social, and corporate governance) criteria.
- To support new initiatives of entrepreneurial people who want to create organizations dedicated to this sector in a cooperative format or incorporating ESG values.

In general terms, it would be interesting to invest resources, raise awareness about the sector and break with its invisibility to highlight the social function of Care Work, its weight in the economy and the need to professionalize, dignify and end the feminization.