

Supporting live-in carers in Austria: an ecosystem under political constraints

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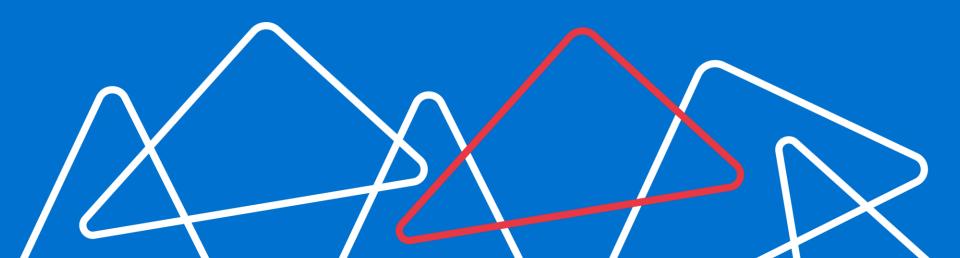


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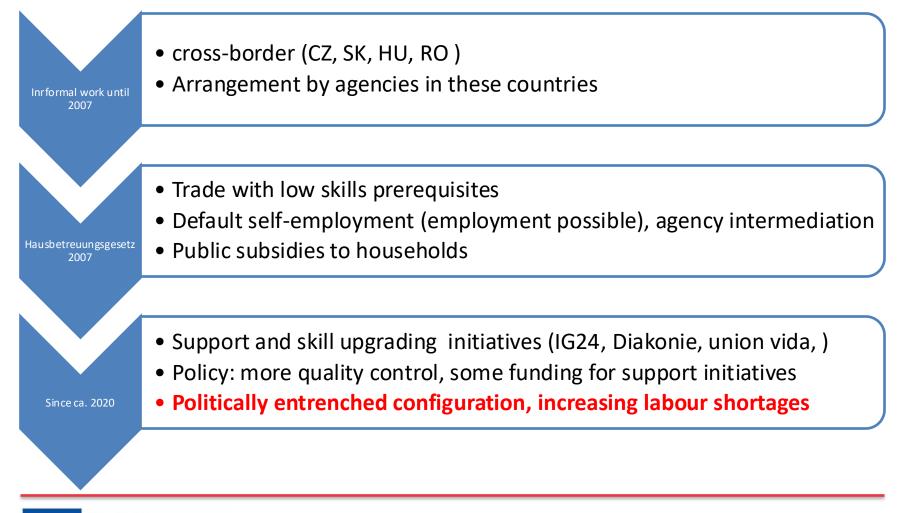


The context: live-in care in Austria



Live-in care in Austria: precarious regularisation





The rural aspect



- Not entirely a rural phenomenon, but in rural and periurban areas:
- Ageing populations with outmigration or long commutes of younger relatives who might provide family care
- Limited services and long distances to clinics/day centers/doctors
- Space: owner-occupied housing (sometimes "too large" and requiring considerable housework)
- Risks: isolation, expansion of tasks (gardening), some underprovision of healthcare



Challenges and Solutions in Live-in Care

Challenge	Impact	Proposed Solution	
Long Working Hours	Physical & emotional strain	Fair working hours, adequate breaks, proper compensation	
Low Wages & Insecurity	Financial insecurity, dependency on clients	Extend comprehensive social security coverage	
Social Isolation	Limited peer support & loneliness	Establish support systems for emotional & professional help	
Lack of Representation	Limited voice due to language & self-empployment and dominance of agencies in Chamber of the Economy	Create platforms for caregiver participation in policy decisions	

Results based on Mairhuber et al. (2024): Das Unsichtbare sichtbar machen: Datenerhebung zu Personenbetreuer_innen in österreichischen Privathaushalten. FORBA. <u>https://www.forba.at/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Kurzfassung-der-Projektergebnisse.pdf</u>)

The work situation

WeLaR

- mostly middle-aged women from SK, RO, HU, increasingly further afield
- Known as "24-Stunden-Betreuung" though legally not 24/7
- large majority (ca. 95%) self-employed (57,634 registered self-employed live-in carers; 912 agencies)
- Work arranged via private and some non-profit agencies that often offer extra services to carers (also dominate interest representation)
- Some intransparency over employment status, services and fees
- rotational shifts every 2–4 weeks
- working time depends on clients' needs

Selfemployed status a bit dodgy!





The support ecosystem



The ecosystem



	Curafair project		Trade union vida subsidiary	Vorarlberg pe care pool
n Cor	 Legal aid Carers' cafés in rural areas training "Ensuring that the system works well for all involved" 	•	Agency /platform with digital matching (!) Training project in rural region with online German classes "inter- mediation on an equal footing"	 High-quality non-profit a Regionally b Training Quality cont Housing bet jobs

IG24

- Bottom-up
- transformation
- Regularising employment (c "real" selfemployment)
- Support and advice
- Ties with research

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The common ground



- Information, advice, peer support (essential in this line of work)
- In-person (rural areas with volunteer support) and digital language-based communities (Facebook, WhatsApp)
- Skill upgrading and more permeable careers in care



Collaboration and competition



- IG24: most "transformative", collaboration of activists, social scientists, carers – much visibility but frustratingly few "real" impacts
- Collaboration and resource sharing (employment of advisors, handover to Curafair for legal aid)
- Controversy over role of "good" agencies



Transforming Live-In Care: possible directions



- Politically entrenched regime (in favour of care recipients and public finance)
- labour shortages across care sectors
 - 24-hour caregivers plugged into local networks
 - Skill upgrading and possible transition into more regular employment in long-term care
 - Empowered "real" self-employment
 - cooperative models
 - Possibly regional "live near" or extended mobile care solutions where housing space is available



WeLaR is Horizon Europe research project examining the impact of digitalisation, globalisation, climate change and demographic shifts on labour markets and welfare states in Europe. It aims to improve the understanding of the individual and combined effects of these trends and to develop policy proposals fostering economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and generates opportunities for all.





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