

ELDERLY PEOPLE IN SOCIETY

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An ageing society, but one in which solidarity with the elderly has yet to be built

As it stands, our society does not have the proper mindset to deal with its ageing population, often resulting in elderly and dependent people infantilization, thus reducing them to a financial burden to the remainder of our community.

To counteract this, voicing their role in a positive discourse should be considered, most notably in terms of modern life help or children care. The latter was particularly noticeable during lockdown, when the number of video calls between elderly people and youngsters increased by a third.

If the elderly and the inactive in our society are to be considered, so must their carers

The lack of consideration for seniors affects the professionals who work in the field, especially home care workers. These thankless jobs, largely held by women, have very poor working conditions: with an average salary of €802, part-time work, split hours and long, often ignored, travel times, home carers face a poverty rate of 17% (compared to 6% for the average employee in France). Moreover, the workplace accident rate is at a record high in the elder care industry: 100 claims per thousand (compared with 60 per thousand in the construction sector and 34 in France on average).

The recent pandemic has only highlighted the lack of consideration felt by home carers, which have been omitted in the country's praise and payback, in terms of access to equipment or wage increase announcements in the wake of the crisis.

In addition, the field faces limited training issues and little career development perspectives, as their remuneration generally does not increase during the first 10 years of practice.

Training caregivers as a start

Training home carers is thus a great first step. Besides training them in core matters such as the handling of cognitive disorders, soft skills such as emotional intelligence must be assessed and valued during the hiring process, as a lack of motivation can also lead to a dejection feeling across the field.

Furthermore, proper care to people in need is strongly linked the carer's own life situation: the goodwill expected from them must also be shown in return; both in attitude and financially.

Bringing humanity back in the job

- ▶ By giving time back to caregivers

Productivity, efficiency, and time saving are some of society's core goals, despite its quick ageing adequate time. Well-trained, autonomous, well-regarded, and respected carers make the people they care for and their families more confident. Carers are therefore campaigning for home caregivers to visit for a minimum of two hours. Smarter travel paths for caregivers would also benefit the system greatly. Through this, caregivers would be in a better position to devote more time to the people in their care.

- ▶ By integrating dependent people into host families

Another way to solve this involves family-based care, where the elderly or disabled person lives in the home of a trained host approved by the departmental council. The caregivers thus houses, feeds, and cares for 1 to 3 people in need, each contributing €1,200. Most of these carers are women (91%) aged 55 on average (in the second or third part of their career). Two thirds initially worked in the medical and social fields and consider it a coherent next step.

Such a solution, which is all-inclusive, provides an opportunity for the hosted people to feel useful again as they find their place within a family that needs them.