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For effective social care services, workers and managers must improve their generic competences

Cedefop's research paper, [Quality assurance in the social care sector: the role of training](#) analyses the range of competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) needed by social service managers and front-line workers in community-based services. The study also identifies innovative training programmes and makes policy recommendations for improving training in the field.

Social changes have led to a greatly increased need for care services, especially for the most vulnerable – the elderly, the homeless and the disabled. As a result, the sector has expanded into one of the largest providers of jobs. **In the EU-27, over 21 million people are employed in health and social services.** This represents an **increase of 24% since 2000** and 10% of the total workforce in 2009. Despite the crisis, employment in social services continued to grow in 2009.

Women constitute over 78,5% of the labour force in the social care sector.

Many workers are **migrants**, who are likely to be less familiar with local care traditions, less proficient in the local language and new technologies, and less qualified - or less likely to have their qualifications recognised.

The **share of employment** in health and social services is relatively low in southern, eastern and central countries and higher in the North and West of Europe - ranging from a little over 4% of total employment in Cyprus and Romania to over 18% in Denmark.

Social care is moving away from institutions and into the community – i.e. it brings services to the users, rather than users to the services. Social services operate in an increasingly market-driven environment and are under severe pressure to limit expenses. These conditions require not just specialist skills, but an array of **generic competences** as well.

This forms the focus of Cedefop's study, which reviews the literature on generic competences such as **communication, entrepreneurship, leadership, transdisciplinary teamwork** and **knowledge management skills**.

The study also reports from focus groups set up in five Member States with different social care traditions – **Germany** (services to the elderly), **Poland, Portugal, Sweden** (services for people with disabilities) and **the UK** (services for the homeless). These reports identify similarities and differences in social care, and to define the generic competences needed to respond to the challenges facing the field - which, despite growth, continues to be understaffed and undervalued.

Eighteen case studies of **innovative training** in the five selected countries are examined to determine whether their successes can be duplicated elsewhere.

The study ends with **policy recommendations**, including measures to ensure quality in training. These include the systematic involvement of stakeholders, cooperation with knowledge centres, programme flexibility, and assessing the effects of training on the quality of care provided.



The paper can be downloaded for free from Cedefop's website.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/16821.aspx>

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About Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), an agency of the European Union based in Thessaloniki, Greece, supports European policy-making in the field of vocational education and training.

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