CARES

Care sector in Romania

National Report

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List of abbreviations

CARES	Caregivers Advancing Regulatory Environment and Skills
CERV	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme
CLNR	Center for Not-for-profit Law (Centrul pentru Legislatie Nonprofit)
CNASR	The National College of Social Workers from Romania
CRC	Romanian Qualifications Framework
CRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HETFA	Hétfa Kutatóintézet Korlátolt Felelősségű Társaság

NGO	Non-Governmental organisation
POCU	Human Capital Operational Programme (Programul Operațional Capital Uman)
WSI	Welfare Society Institute (Gerovės visuomenės institutas)

Executive Summary

The social care sector in Romania is facing major challenges related to an ageing population, underfunded services, and a shortage of qualified staff. Progress has been made in developing social services for vulnerable people, but these services are unevenly distributed, and the financial resources allocated are insufficient to meet the population's needs. This analysis provides an overview of the sector's characteristics, the main stakeholders involved, the types of services offered, and the challenges associated with training specialists in this field.

Romania is experiencing an accelerated demographic decline, an aging population, and a growing demand for social care services. Between 2003 and 2024, the Romanian population decreased from 21.6 million to 19.06 million, mainly due to low birth rates and external migration. The share of people aged over 65 has increased significantly, and it is estimated that will exceed 30% by 2100. At the same time, life expectancy rose from 70.5 years in 2000 to 74.3 years in 2022, with important differences between urban and rural areas. However, the number of healthy life years at age 65 is declining, reaching just 3.9 in 2022 – less than half the EU average.

This demographic transition is generating increased demand for social care services, especially for older people and people with disabilities. The number of children and adults with disabilities has steadily increased, especially among those living in the community, which emphasises the need to further develop and diversify services. Deinstitutionalisation, improvements in quality standards, and better access to personal care have been key priorities in recent reforms. Nevertheless, access to financial support and social services remains unequal, and a significant portion of care responsibilities still falls on families.

Romania has an extensive legislative framework for the protection of vulnerable persons, supported by recent national strategies for active ageing, social inclusion, child protection and the rights of people with disabilities. Special emphasis is placed on developing human resources in the social care sector, increasing its attractiveness, and supporting informal carers.

Romania’s regulated social care system that provides over 80 types of social services, both residential and non-residential, aimed at various vulnerable groups. These services are provided by both public institutions and accredited private entities. Between 2017 and 2023, the number of licensed social services increased by 65%, reaching over 5,400. However, social services development remains limited, particularly in rural areas, where fewer than 30% of social care workers care employed, despite the fact that almost half the population resides in these regions.

The workforce in the social care sector is insufficient and unevenly distributed. Romania has a low number of social workers relative to its population, especially in rural areas. The workforce is predominantly female (87% of survey respondents) and aging (56% of survey respondents are over the age of 46), and many are affected by overwork and burnout. They are often not

adequately trained to meet the growing demand. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of employees decreased by approximately 14,000 compared to 2019. Low pay, limited professional development opportunities, and poor career prospects contribute to a shortage of skilled personnel and challenges in staff retention.

To address these challenges, lifelong learning programmes have been developed for social workers and carers, through both university education and alternative pathways such as technician and home care worker training. These programmes focus on essential competencies such as professional ethics, case management, digital skills, stress management, and burnout prevention. In parallel, good practices are being promoted in areas such as emotional intelligence, mental health, and the resilience of social care workers.

Developing a coherent, long-term strategy for training and retaining personnel, alongside diversifying services and supporting informal carers, is essential for strengthening Romania's social care system and responding to the increasingly complex needs of vulnerable populations.

Cares Project

CARES - Caregivers Advancing Regulatory Environment and Skills proposes to enhance the well-being of employees working in the care sector by creating a supportive environment that values diversity and inclusion.

The project aims to promote the well-being and mental health of care sector workers, despite the challenges they face, such as shift work, physical fatigue, and job insecurity, especially prevalent in the informal care sector. The project focuses on addressing **two main challenges**:

- Integrating digital tools and sustainable practices to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the workplace.
- Prioritizing the well-being and mental health of care workers.

The specific objectives of the project are:

1. Empowering Caregivers: to empower both formal and informal caregivers by enhancing their skills, knowledge, and competencies.
2. Addressing Workforce Shortages and Burnout: to address the workforce shortages and burnout prevalent in the care sector.
3. Promoting Innovation: to promote innovation within the care sector by providing digital and green skills training as outlined in the European Care Strategy (2022-24).

CARES main results:

- increasing the skills and competencies of caregivers through micro-learning modules and assessments.
- share tips to reduce burnout by implementing strategies to support their well-being.
- integrate digital tools into the care sector to improve efficiency and communication.
- promote sustainable practices by implementing eco-friendly policies and practices in care facilities.

CARES project is divided in 4 work packages:

- WP1: Project Management (Coordinated by CLNR)
- WP2: Developing & Designing the Capacity Building Program & Online Platform (Coordinated by CLNR)
- WP3: Pilot Training, Mentoring, and Self-Learning Program (Coordinated by WSI)
- WP4: Dissemination Activities: From Action to Policy (Coordinated by HÉTFA)

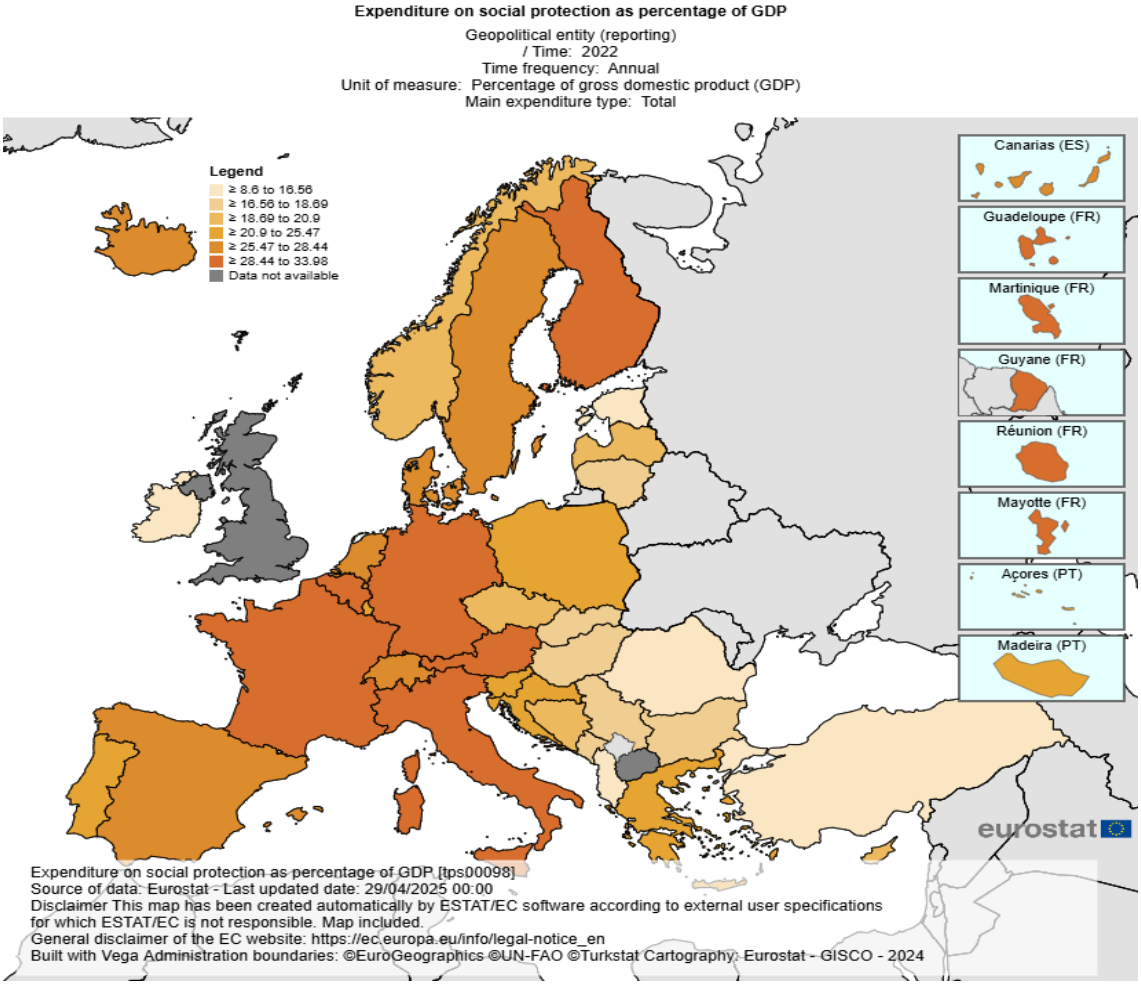
National Context

The increased risk of poverty and social exclusion, the ageing of the population, the insufficient development of active social inclusion policies and measures, and the limited and uneven development of care services (social and medical) mean that the Romanian social protection system faces significant challenges. Romania faces a number of challenges in the provision of care services to vulnerable groups, due to the underfunding of the social protection system, lack of specialised staff, bureaucratic procedures and unequal access between rural and urban areas, and between large and small towns (European Social Network, 2023; Petrescu & Lambru, 2020). These challenges frequently impede the provision of care services to vulnerable groups, including the elderly, people with disabilities, and children. Despite the fact that social assistance policy is oriented towards deinstitutionalisation, this is contingent upon the development of community services and the availability of personnel who have received training and experience in the domain of social assistance or care.

The high number of vulnerable people and those in need of social services requires the existence of well-developed social services, both in terms of infrastructure and human resources. At present, most of the investment in this area has been in creating infrastructure, developing new social services, and less in developing the necessary human resources. This puts additional pressure on the human resources of care services, but also on the families of the people who need care services.

Social protection spending as percent of GDP in Romania is one of the lowest (16.5% in 2022) in the EU, considering its highest relative poverty rate (27.9% in 2024) (Map 1).

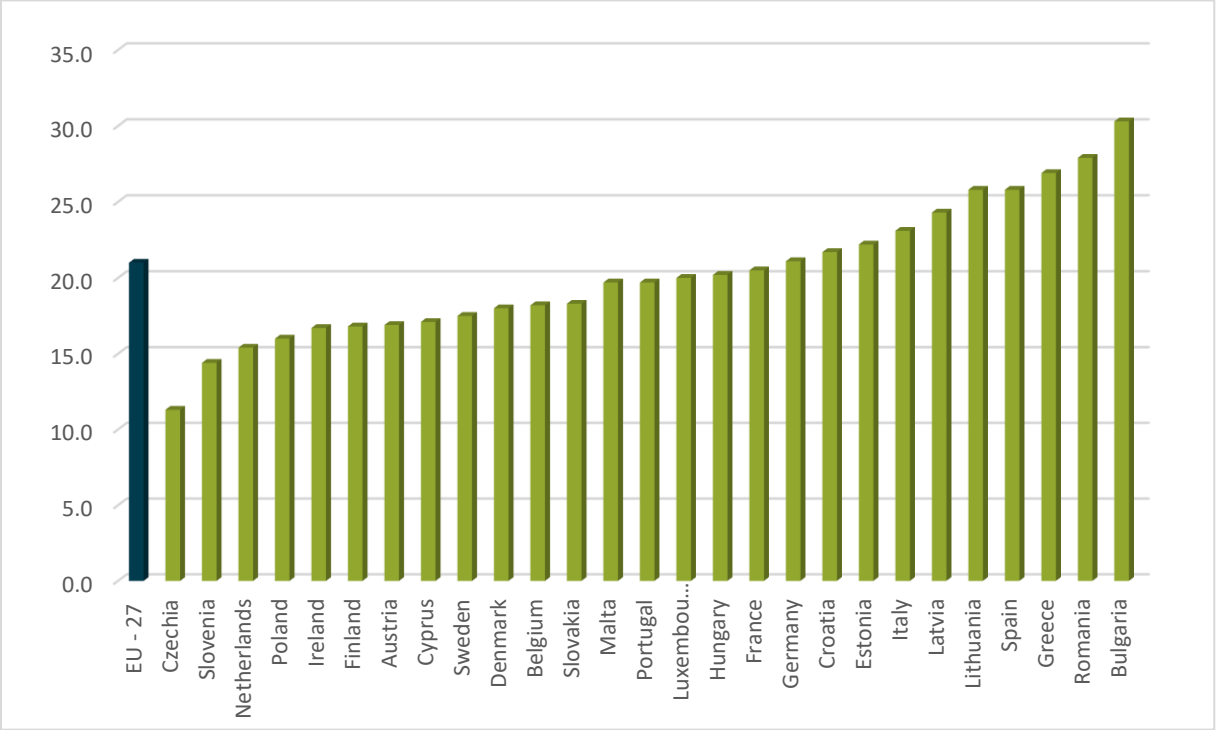
MAP 1. EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AS PERCENTAGE OF GDP



Source: EUROSTAT, Expenditure on social protection by type of expenditure, https://doi.org/10.2908/SPR_EXP_TYPE

In Romania, the percentage of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion decreased in the last ten years from 44.5% in 2015 to 27.9% in 2024 (Figure 1). Although this decrease occurred, it is still one of the highest relative poverty rates in the EU. This decrease was determined by economic development and EU funds allocated for social inclusion, but also by various policy measures that stimulate the active social inclusion of vulnerable people (such as quality standards for social services, subsidies for NGOs that provide social services, national programs for the development of long-term care social services, and a focus on integrated community services).

FIGURE 1. THE RELATIVE POVERTY RATE



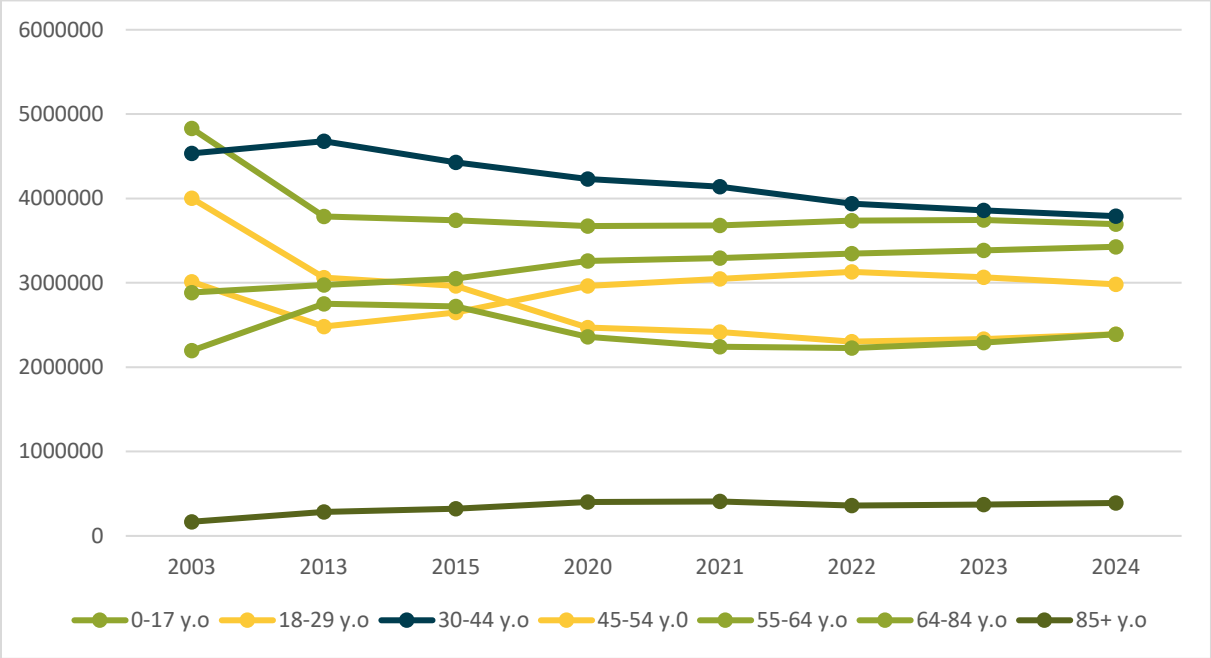
Source: EUROSTAT, Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex, https://doi.org/10.2908/ILC_PEPS01N

Demographic Trends

Romania's population has declined significantly over the last two decades, falling from 21.6 million in 2003 to 19.06 million in 2024, primarily due to low birth rates and increased external migration.

As is the case in the majority of EU countries, Romania is experiencing an ageing population, with more than 20% of its population aged 65 years or older. In 2024, the percentage of the population aged 65-79 was 15.63%, and that aged 80 and over was 4.38%. Between 2003 and 2024, the proportion of the population aged over 65 years old increased by 25%. The increase is approximately 19% for the population aged between 65 and 84 years, whereas for the population over 85 years of age, the increase is more than double (Figure 2). During the period mentioned, a 23% fall was seen in the number of children (aged 0-17) and a 40% fall was seen in the number of young people (aged 18-29), resulting in a rapidly ageing population and an increased demand for social services for the elderly.

FIGURE 2. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS BETWEEN 2003 – 2024 IN ROMANIA



Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2025, POP105A

The population projections developed by EUROSTAT (Table 1) show that at the EU level the share of the population aged 65+ will increase from 21.1% in 2022 to 29% in 2050 and to 32.5% in 2100. The share of the population aged 80+ (fourth age) will increase from 6.1% in 2022 to 10.9% in 2050 and to 15.3% in 2100. The median age will increase from 44.4 in 2022 to 48 in 2050 and to 50.2 in 2100, and the old age dependency ratio will increase from 33 in 2022 to 50.4 in 2050 and to 59.7 in 2100. Romania follows the EU trends in the population projections: the share of the population aged 65+ will increase from 19.5% in 2022 to 28.5% in 2050 and to 31.6% in 2100; the share of the population aged 80+ (fourth age) will increase from 4.4% in 2022 to 9.2% in 2050 and to 14.6% in 2100; the median age will increase from 43.5 in 2022 to 47.2 in 2050 and to 49.8 in 2100; and the old age dependency ratio will increase from 30.3 in 2022 to 50.2 in 2050 and to 57.5 in 2100.

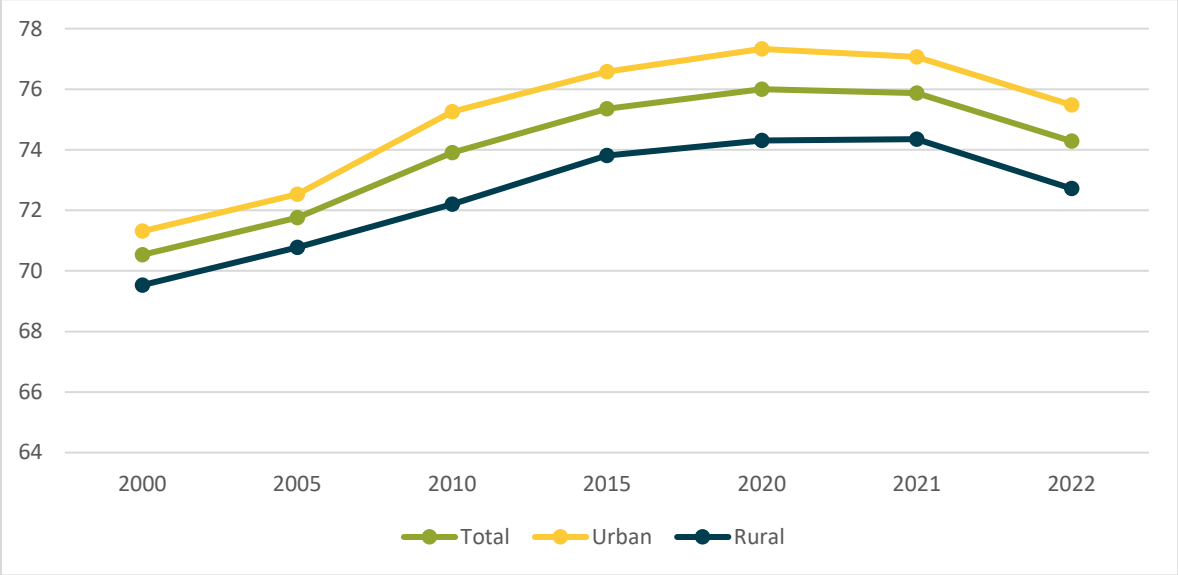
TABLE 1. POPULATION PROJECTIONS 2022-2100

		2022	2023	2040	2050	2075	2100
EU - 27	Share of population aged 65+	21.1	21.2	27.0	29.0	31.0	32.5
	Share of population aged 80+	6.1	6.0	8.8	10.9	13.3	15.3
	Median age	44.4	44.4	47.4	48.0	49.4	50.2
	Old-age dependency ratio	33.0	33.3	45.4	50.4	55.5	59.7
Romania	Share of population aged 65+	19.5	19.8	25.3	28.5	29.5	31.6
	Share of population aged 80+	4.4	4.5	7.6	9.2	12.7	14.6
	Median age	43.5	43.7	47.7	47.2	48.6	49.8
	Old-age dependency ratio	30.3	30.9	42.0	50.2	52.2	57.5

Source: EUROSTAT, 2025, Demographic balances and indicators by type of projection [proj_23ndbi]

The ageing population process in Romania is mainly caused by low birth rates, increased outmigration and rising life expectancy. Life expectancy in Romania increased from 70.53 years in 2000 to 74.28 years in 2022. There is a gap between rural and urban areas in life expectancy rates – 75.48 years in urban areas and 72.78 in rural ones (Figure 3). This gap is also related to access to public services (health and social services) and to utilities and public infrastructure. The projection is that life expectancy will increase for males from 70.9 years in 2022 to 79 in 2050 and 88.4 in 2100 and for women from 78.9 years in 2022 to 85 in 2050 and to 92.5 in 2100.

FIGURE 3. LIFE EXPECTANCY IN ROMANIA



Source: INS, Tempo database, POP217A

IN TERMS OF HEALTHY LIFE YEARS AT AGE 65, ROMANIA HAS SEEN A DECLINE FROM 6 IN 2015 TO 3.9 IN 2022, WHICH IS LESS THAN HALF THE EU AVERAGE (TABLE 2ERROR! REFERENCE SOURCE NOT FOUND.). THIS COULD BE A CONSEQUENCE OF LIMITED ACCESS TO CARE AND HEALTH SERVICES.

TABLE 2. HEALTHY LIFE YEARS AT AGE 65

	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
EU-27	8.4	9.3	9.8	9.7	9.1
Italy	:	7.7	10.5	10.7	10.1
Lithuania	6.5	5.3	5.9	6	7.1
Hungary	5.7	5.9	7.6	7.5	7.1
Romania	5.5	6.0	5.9	4	3.9

Source: EUROSTAT, 2025, Healthy life years at age 65 by sex [tepsr_sp320]

People with Disabilities

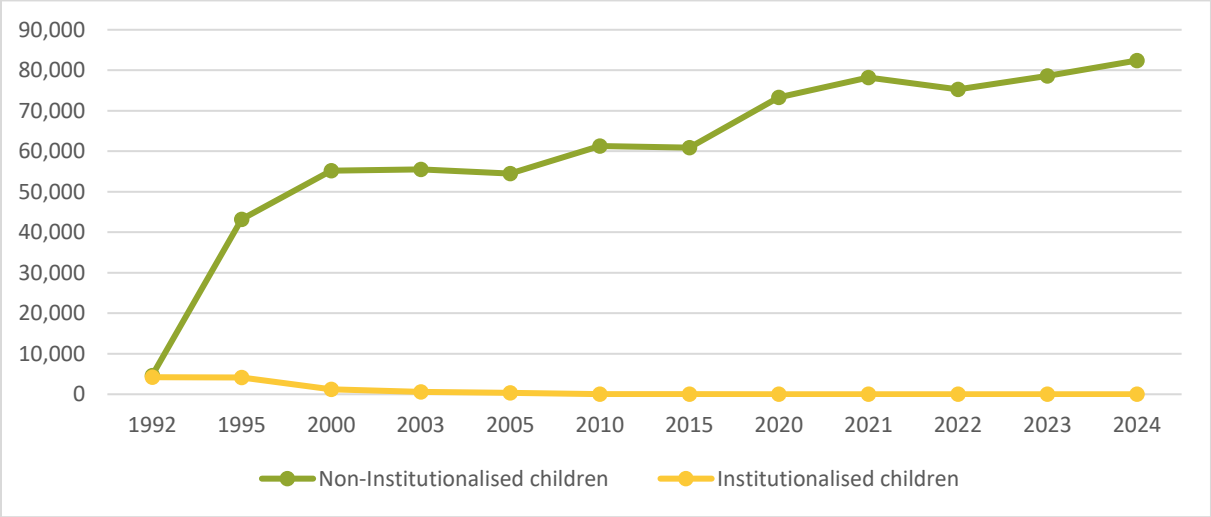
People with disabilities are among the groups that require social and medical care services. The Romanian reform of disability services has two key elements: deinstitutionalisation and improving the quality of care provided. Initially, deinstitutionalisation focused on children, and

the number of children in institutions fell from 4,204 in 1992 to 97 in 2007. The EU accession process put pressure on the reform of the child protection system and the acceleration of the deinstitutionalisation process. In the case of adults with disabilities, the deinstitutionalisation process has intensified in recent years, but progress remains limited. To achieve the deinstitutionalisation of people with disabilities, it was necessary to diversify the services offered to them, particularly at the community level. Thus, a comprehensive reform to diversify and improve the quality of social services was implemented, initially in child protection and subsequently in adult protection. At the same time, improvements were made to disability assessment standards, leading to a rise in the diagnoses of disability. Another reform aimed to establish quality and cost standards for social services provided to disabled people, with the intention of improving their quality of life.

In Romania, the number of children with disabilities increased from 8,845 in 1992 to 82,402 in 2024. This was particularly evident among children with disabilities who were not institutionalised, with their numbers rising from 4,641 in 1992 to 82,404 in 2024 (Figure 4). Since 2017, official administrative statistics no longer separately report the number of children with disabilities living in institutional care. By comparing two data sources - the number of children with disabilities *not* in institutions (reported by the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and the total number of children with disabilities (reported by the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Children and Adoption), there were approximately 3,808 institutionalised children with disabilities in 2024.

According to data from the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among children with disabilities living outside institutions, 24,931 (representing 30%) were supported by a personal assistant, and 34,561 (42%) benefited from state allowances granted to parents or legal guardians. These forms of support are typically allocated to children classified as having severe disabilities. The remaining children—whether they have severe, moderate, or mild disabilities—do not receive these specific benefits. In such cases, the responsibility for their care and support falls entirely on their families or extended network, highlighting significant gaps in the social protection system for children with disabilities.

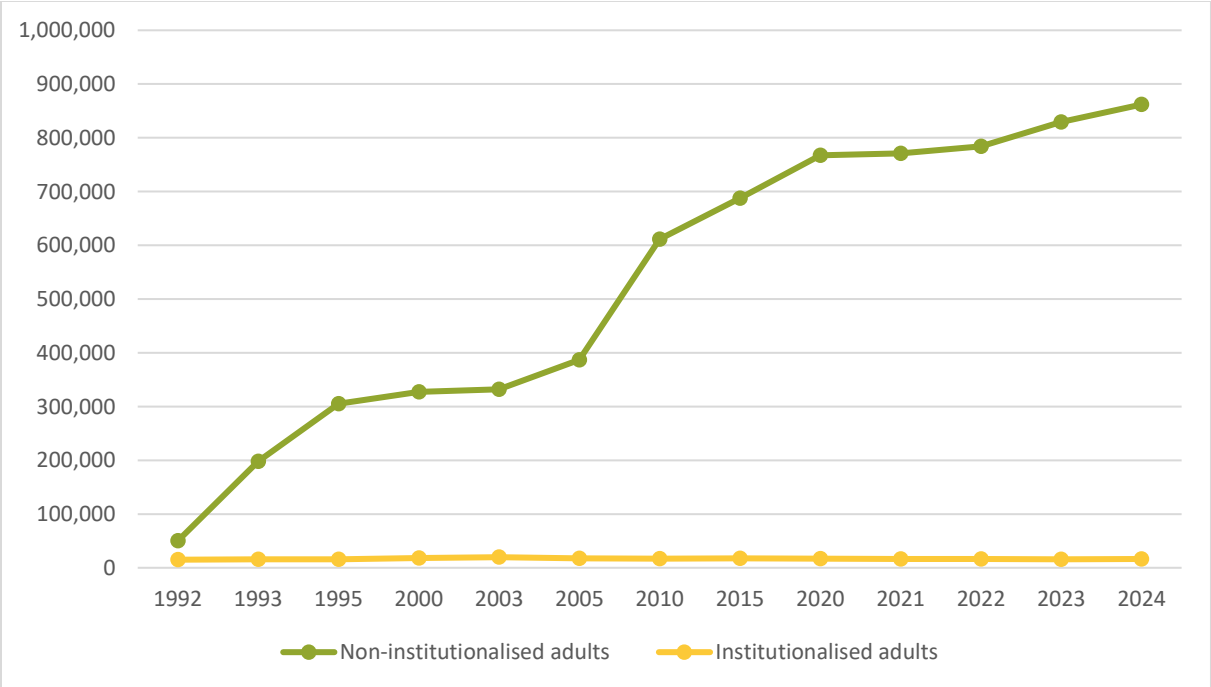
FIGURE 4. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, EVOLUTION BETWEEN 1992 - 2024



Source: National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2024

The number of adults with disabilities also increased after 1992, rising from 65,208 to 878,026 by 2024. In this case, the increase was in the number of adults with disabilities living outside institutions, rising from 50,164 in 1992 to 861,878 in 2024. Meanwhile, the number of adults in institutions increased slowly from 15,044 in 1992 to 16,148 in 2024 (Figure 5). Of the adults with disabilities not in institutions, 71,787 (8.3%) had a personal assistant in 2024, while 210,557 (24.4%) benefited from state allowances granted to parents or legal guardians. As with children with disabilities, these benefits are intended for adults with severe disabilities.

FIGURE 5. ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES, EVOLUTION BETWEEN 1992 - 2024



Source: National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2024

Legal Framework on Social Care

The legislative framework governing care services includes a series of strategies, as well as general public policies for the social assistance sector and specific policies for certain beneficiary groups (e.g. children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities). The most relevant strategies for the social care sector are:

- National Strategy on Long-Term Care and Active Ageing for the period 2023-2030 (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2022a)
- National Strategy on Preventing the Institutionalization of Adults with Disabilities and Speeding Up the Deinstitutionalization Process for the period 2022–2030 (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2022b)
- National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 'A Fair Romania', for the period 2022–2027 (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2022c)
- National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for the period 2022-2027 (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2021a)
- National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights 'Protected Children, Safe Romania', 2023-2027 (National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption, 2023a)
- National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee in Romania (National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption, 2023b)

The National Strategy on Long-Term Care and Active Ageing for the period 2023-2030 (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2022a) aims to develop the long-term care services for the elderly in Romania and sets out six specific objectives. Given that one of the major challenges in the development of long-term care services is the shortage of social care workers (both formal and informal), and the quality of their professional training to provide such services, the strategy sets out, in Objective 5, measures to increase their capacity and attract them to the sector.

Specific objective 5: Strengthening and protecting the formal and informal workforce for LTC for older people proposes:

- Action line 5.1. Increasing the attractiveness of jobs in the care sector
- Action line 5.2. Developing human resources in the LTC sector for the period 2023-2030
- Action line 5.3. Developing the informal care sector for older people
- Action line 5.4. Raising awareness among the general population and strengthening the capacity of local authorities to organise LTC for older people in the community

The general policy framework includes legislation (laws, Government decisions, ministerial orders) that regulate the social services sector (types of services provided, providers,

procedures for accreditation and social services licensing, standards for social services quality etc.). The main general policies are:

- Law No. 292/2011 on Social Assistance (Government of Romania, 2011)
- Law No. 197/2012 on Quality Assurance in Social Services (Government of Romania, 2012)
- Government Decision No. 867/ 2015 approving the Nomenclature of social services and the framework regulations for the organisation and operation of social services (Government of Romania, 2015)
- Government Decision No. 426/ 2020 on the approval of cost standards for social services (Government of Romania, 2020)
- Ministry of Labour and Social Justice orders from 2019 (Orders no. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 81, 82), 2020 (Order no. 1335), and 2023 (Order no. 2489) on the quality standards for various types of social services

Laws 292/2011 and 197/2012 both address the training of care service personnel and their access to professional supervision, ensuring quality of care. Law 197/2012 stipulates that vocational training programmes for qualifications, specialisations, and training courses in care and social assistance occupations must include practical training modules on fundamental human rights and the risks of abuse, neglect, discrimination and degrading or inhuman treatment.

The specific policies for various target groups that include measures dedicated to social care services are:

- Law. No. 17/2000 on Social Assistance for Elderly People (Government of Romania, 2000)
- Law No. 272/2004 on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights (Government of Romania, 2004)
- Law No. 448/2006 on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Government of Romania, 2006)
- Law No. 7/2023 on Supporting the Process of Deinstitutionalisation of Adults with Disabilities (Government of Romania, 2023)

The laws dedicated to persons with disabilities also define the personal and professional assistant (Law 448/2006) and informal carer (Law 7/2023):

- Personal assistant for persons with severe disabilities - a person who supervises, assists, and cares for a child or adult with severe disabilities

- Professional personal assistant - a certified individual who provides care and protection at their home for adults with severe or profound disabilities, under the conditions specified by law
- Informal carer for adults with disabilities - an unqualified person, family member, relative, friend, neighbour, or any other person who provides personal care or assistance with daily activities to a person with a severe or profound disability

The activity of the social worker in Romania is defined by Law No. 466/ 2004 on the Status of Social Workers (Government of Romania, 2004). The law establishes who can receive the title of social worker, their duties and rights, the conditions for practising the profession, and the initial education of social workers (provided only by universities). It also provides for the establishment of the National College of Social Workers as the body responsible for certifying social workers.

Social Care Sector

The social care sector in Romania is regulated by Law no. 292/2011 on Social Assistance (Government of Romania, 2011). It includes various types of services classified by different criteria: the purpose of the service; the categories of beneficiaries to whom it is addressed; the type of assistance, i.e. residential or non-residential; the place of provision; the legal status of the social service provider; and the type of provision.

Social Services

Depending on the level of assistance provided, social services are classified as follows (Government of Romania, 2011**)**:

a) Services with accommodation, for a fixed or indefinite period: residential centres, sheltered housing, night shelters or other types of accommodation centres;
b) Services without accommodation: day centres, home care centres and/or units, soup kitchens, mobile food services, social ambulances, etc.

Considering the place of provision, social services are provided (Government of Romania, 2011**)**:

a) in the beneficiary's home or place of residence.
b) in day centres.
c) in residential centres.
d) at the home of the person providing the service.
e) in the community.

According to the social services directory (Government of Romania, 2015) there are more than 80 social services grouped into two main categories: with accommodation and without accommodation (non-residential). In each category, there are also socio-medical services (e.g.

medical and social care for the elderly, palliative care, rehabilitation and detoxification for people with addictions, physical recovery services, etc.), because they include a medical component as well.

A. Social services with accommodation

- Residential centres for medical and social care for elderly people and chronically ill people in the terminal phase
- Residential centres for social recovery/rehabilitation and detoxification for people with various addictions: drugs, alcohol, other toxic substances
- Residential centres for care and assistance for elderly people
- Residential centres for adults with disabilities
- Residential centres for children in special protection
- Residential care and assistance centres for mothers and children
- Residential centres for young people in difficulty
- Residential care and assistance centres for victims of domestic violence
- Residential care and assistance centres for homeless persons
- Residential care and assistance centres for victims of human trafficking
- Residential care and assistance centres for other categories of persons in situations of dependency

B. Social services without accommodation

- Day centres for elderly persons
- Home care services for elderly persons, persons with disabilities, persons in situations of dependency
- Day centres for adults with disabilities
- Day centres for children: children in families, children separated from or at risk of separation from their parents
- Day centres for families with children
- Day centres for victims of domestic violence and perpetrators
- Day centres for people with substance abuse problems: people with various addictions (drugs, alcohol, other toxic substances, etc.)
- Day centres for victims of human trafficking
- Day centres for homeless people
- Day centres for assistance and support for other categories of vulnerable people
- Street intervention services for homeless people, people with various addictions, victims of domestic violence, victims of disasters
- Food preparation and distribution centres for people at risk of poverty

- Community services for adults with disabilities
- Regional centres for the processing and accommodation of asylum seekers and those who have been granted a form of protection in Romania

These services are provided by public institutions or private entities (NGOs, limited liability companies or religious organisations). Social service providers must be accredited by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity, and their services must be licensed.

Between 2017 and 2023, the number of licensed social services provided in Romania increased from 3,533 to 5,434 (a 65% increase) (Table 3). A total of 2,968 (55%) of the services are provided by accredited public institutions (public social assistance services; inter-community development associations established by several administrative-territorial units/subdivisions with a view to jointly providing public social assistance services and/or social services; specialised structures of the central public administration), and 2,466 (45%) by private entities (NGOs, limited liability companies or religious organisations).

57% of licensed social services are residential, and 43% are non-residential. As mentioned above, although there has been a push to diversify the services offered, particularly those provided on a non-residential basis, the focus remains largely on children rather than adults. In the case of the non-residential social services, more private entities provided them (1,267).

TABLE 3. SOCIAL SERVICES LICENSES BY PROVIDER TYPE

Social services type	Provider type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	Total	3533	3791	4175	4792	5209	4973	5434
	Public provider	1993	2204	2334	2656	2875	2685	2968
	Private provider	1540	1587	1841	2136	2334	2288	2466
Social services with accommodation	Total	2103	2245	2486	2855	3049	2804	3027
	Public provider	1400	1529	1598	1775	1900	1676	1828
	Private provider	703	716	888	1080	1149	1128	1199
Social services without accommodation	Total	1430	1546	1689	1937	2160	2169	2407
	Public provider	593	675	736	881	975	1009	1140
	Private provider	837	871	953	1056	1185	1160	1267

Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2025, Total number of licensed social services operating at the end of the year (ASS113F)

Care services are also delivered within the healthcare system—such as services for chronically ill patients, home-based medical care (for a maximum of 90 days only), and palliative care—primarily by medical professionals. However, this report focuses specifically on social care services (social services with or without accommodation), and not on medical care.

Employment in the Social Work Sector

Romania has one of the lowest numbers of social workers per capita in the EU, despite having a high proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In 2024, 75,100 people were

employed in social work activities, of whom 29,000 worked in residential care and 46,100 in non-residential social work. Employment in social work increased prior to the period of the pandemic, with 89.1 thousand people employed in 2019, of whom 41.6 thousand were employed in residential care activities and 47.5 thousand in non-residential activities (Table 4Error! Reference source not found.). Following the pandemic, the number of employees in the social work sector decreased by 14,000 in Romania.

Table 4. Employment in social work activities

	Employment in social work activities	2010	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
EU-27	Total	7,319.3	8,284.6	8,942.0	8,766.5	9,086.3	9,247.3	9,416.6	9,606.5
	Residential care activities	234.7	297.1	309.2	298.5	287.1	307.4	296.8	300.3
	Social work activities without accommodation	3,793.1	4,256.6	4,565.1	4,826.4	5,099.9	5,123.6	5,245.5	5,397.2
RO	Total	75.2	73.3	89.1	85.3	84.0	75.2	68.4	75.1
	Residential care activities	35.	34.3	41.6	36.2	34.9	25.1	28.	29.
	Social work activities without accommodation	40.2	39.	47.5	49.1	49.1	50.1	40.4	46.1

Source: EUROSTAT, 2025, Employment by sex, age and detailed economic activity (from 2008 onwards, NACE Rev. 2 two-digit level) - 1 000, https://doi.org/10.2908/LFSA_EGAN22D

More than two-thirds of the people employed are women – 50.4 thousand, of whom 24.4 thousand work in residential care and 26 thousand in social work activities without accommodation. In residential care services, 84% of the employees are women.

According to the Romanian Social Service Workforce Census (Lazar et al., 2023), the social work workforce includes professionals (with bachelor's degrees in their specific fields), specialists with other related qualifications (with bachelor's degrees in other fields such as psychology, education, etc.), qualified staff (technical staff), and workers (high school graduates). In addition to these, there are also professional foster carers, personal carers, and professional personal carers. Furthermore, given the large number of people who need care services, there is also a relatively high number of informal carers (either family members or people employed without a contract) (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2022a, 2022b).

The Romanian Social Service Workforce Census (Lazar et al., 2023) highlights several key trends and structural characteristics of the social services workforce in Romania:

- **Low coverage in rural areas.** Despite nearly half of Romania's population residing in rural communities, there is a marked underrepresentation of social service professionals in these areas (only 28%, according to the census, compared to 65% in urban areas). This rural-urban disparity suggests limited access to essential social services for rural populations and highlights the need for targeted interventions to address rural-urban disparities in service provision.
- **Ageing of the social services workforce.** The profession is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with 56% of survey respondents aged over 46 and only 13% aged under 36. This trend points to a growing risk of workforce depletion in the coming years if effective succession planning and recruitment strategies are not implemented to attract and retain younger professionals.
- **Feminisation of the workforce.** The data reveals a strong gender imbalance, with women making up 87% of social service employees. While this reflects global trends in care-related professions, it also raises questions about gender norms, career pathways for men in social services, and the broader implications for sectoral resilience and diversity.
- **Declining pursuit of further education with age.** The study notes a decrease in the number of professionals seeking to advance their education as they grow older. This trend could be indicative of long-term demotivation, stagnation in career development, or a lack of accessible lifelong learning opportunities for mid- and late-career professionals.
- **Unequal distribution of service provision responsibilities.** The public sector remains the main provider of social services, and there is an imbalanced distribution of responsibilities among the public, private, and non-profit sectors. This predominance of public institutions could hinder the system's adaptability and calls for a more diversified ecosystem of care providers, including greater involvement from community-based and non-governmental actors.
- **Limited flexibility of the public sector in developing non-residential, community-based services.** The public sector remains the dominant provider of social services in Romania, particularly in the area of residential care. However, this dominance is accompanied by structural and operational limitations that hinder the development and expansion of non-residential, community-based services—despite their greater cost-efficiency and alignment with modern care standards. Residential services, while essential in certain cases, are significantly more expensive to operate and often less responsive to the specific needs of individuals, especially when compared to person-centred, community-based alternatives such as day centres, outreach teams, assisted living arrangements, and in-home support. Yet institutional inertia, rigid funding

mechanisms, and regulatory constraints limit the public sector's ability to reallocate resources or pilot innovative approaches.

- **Chronic overwork and occupational burnout**. Chronic overwork is a persistent and increasingly visible issue in the social services sector, with direct consequences for employee well-being, service quality, and workforce sustainability. The cumulative effect of high workloads, emotional strain, administrative burdens, and insufficient staffing leads to occupational burnout—a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that erodes professional motivation, increases absenteeism, and fuels staff turnover.

Training Programmes Dedicated to the Social Care Sector

Social Care Workforce Training Needs

Considering the size of the vulnerable population in Romania, there is a shortage of skilled workers in the care sector, exacerbated by factors such as low wages, challenging working conditions, and limited opportunities for career advancement. This shortage results in increased workloads for existing staff and may compromise the quality of care provided as well as mental and emotional health.

The demand for skilled workers in the social services sector is determined by demographic, economic, and institutional factors. Population ageing, migration, riding care needs, and changes in those needs are factors that influence the demand for skilled social workers. There is growing concern over the ability of the Romanian social care system to recruit and retain a sufficient number of qualified professionals to meet the evolving social needs. Contributing factors include unattractive working conditions, limited career pathways, and inadequate professional recognition, all of which reduce the appeal of social service roles, particularly among younger generations (Lazar et al., 2023). Addressing this challenge requires the development and implementation of a coherent and long-term workforce strategy that includes improvements in remuneration and employment conditions, support for career progression frameworks, investment in professional development through accessible training opportunities, mentoring systems, and skills recognition mechanisms that encourage lifelong learning. In parallel, efforts must be made to ensure that workloads are manageable and that staffing levels are adequate to prevent burnout and maintain service quality.

The report *Improving Working Conditions in Social Services* (Federation of European Social Employers, 2024) recommends improving physical and mental health at work, better management of change, increased work-life balance, and improved skills leading to better jobs. For all these recommendations, the proposed actions include:

- Training and awareness (to provide training on recognising, managing, and preventing psychosocial risks, including conflict resolution and stress management, change

management, use of digital tools, time management, and the green and digital transition).

- Promotion of a well-being culture (to promote mental health and well-being through employee assistance programs, wellness activities, and recognition of achievements).
- Use of technology (digital tools for stress management, counselling, and selfcare for social care workers).
- Building a support system.

The care sector needs comprehensive training programs to equip workers with necessary skills and competencies, especially in areas like alternative therapies, geriatric and palliative care, specialized medical procedures, and assistive technologies. Considering the increased workload and stress, there is a need for personal development training that can help social workers maintain their mental health and well-being. The new developments in society and the social service sector also require the development of digital competences, as well as green skills.

Training Programmes for the Social Care Sector

As the studies (Lazar et al. 2023; Federation of European Social Employers, 2024; ESN, 2024) have shown, there is a need for continuous professional development in various areas, especially for less qualified social care workers and for those in mid-to-late career, to maintain motivation and adaptability.

A key pillar of a sustainable and effective social services workforce is the alignment between educational and training programmes and the actual needs of the labour market. In Romania, as in many European countries, mismatches persist between the qualifications provided by educational institutions and the skills required by social service employers at local, regional, and national levels. This disconnect undermines both employability and service quality, particularly in underserved regions.

To ensure that the existing social services workforce remains skilled, motivated, and adaptable, it is equally important to invest in **lifelong learning and upskilling opportunities**, particularly for professionals who graduated many years ago and may not have had access to modern competencies during their initial training.

In Romania, professional social workers are primarily trained through higher education programmes (at bachelor's and master's level) offered by accredited universities, within faculties or departments of social work. These programmes typically provide a comprehensive academic foundation in social sciences, ethics, case management, policy analysis, and practical fieldwork, and lead to a bachelor's degree in social work—a prerequisite for professional recognition and employment in statutory or specialised roles.

In parallel, to address acute workforce shortages and to diversify entry routes into the profession, an alternative qualification pathway was introduced in 2020 through the formal approval of the occupational standard for social work technicians. These technician-level qualifications target individuals who have completed secondary education and offer a more practice-oriented curriculum, focused on essential competencies needed for support roles in social service delivery, particularly in community-based and frontline settings.

The introduction of technician training courses marks an important step toward expanding the social services workforce, especially in rural or underserved areas where access to degree-holding professionals is limited. These training programmes are provided by private training companies or NGOs that deliver training for the social sector. These programmes—typically offered by vocational training centres or adult education providers—enable the rapid upskilling of personnel and create employment opportunities for individuals who may not have access to university education. While university education remains the cornerstone of professional social work, the technician qualification route represents a strategic innovation that can strengthen the social care workforce, provided it is integrated thoughtfully within a broader framework of workforce planning, service quality, and professional ethics.

The training programmes are aimed at entry-level professionals or those undergoing qualification (e.g., social work technicians, home care workers, etc.) and include topics such as:

- Legal and policy frameworks
- Ethics and professional values (e.g. human rights and dignity, non-discrimination and inclusion, confidentiality and informed consent)
- Case management (e.g. needs assessment tools, individualised care planning, intersectoral referrals and coordination)
- Communication and relationship-building skills
- Co-ordination and integrated services (e.g. collaboration with health, education, and employment sectors, community resources mapping and networking)
- Crisis intervention and conflict resolution
- Specific topics like child and family social work, geriatric and palliative social care, disability inclusion and independent living

Investing in capacity building and change management for social service managers and workers supports the transition from institutional care to community-based systems aligned with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

By shifting toward more flexible, needs-driven, and locally adapted care solutions, the public sector can significantly improve the accessibility, affordability, and quality of social services for vulnerable populations.

In recent years, especially after the COVID-19 period and the Ukrainian refugee crises, training programmes have been developed in Romania to address burnout, well-being, mental health, digital skills, sustainable skills, and soft skills. Within its programmes, UNICEF developed training courses for social care workers' well-being and mental health. Similarly, CONCORDIA Academy introduced topics related to social care workers' well-being, mental health and burn-out in its training programmes. Digital and soft skills are also addressed by various training programmes developed within different projects, as well as in general training programmes (e.g. communication, databases for case management, etc).

Training Programmes for Caregivers

In Romania, the caregiving workforce plays a crucial role in delivering non-residential social care services, particularly for vulnerable populations such as older persons, chronically ill individuals, and persons with disabilities. These professionals provide essential services, including personal assistance, home-based care, and psychosocial support.

Training programmes are available for several key occupations within the social care system:

- Home Care Workers (Îngrijitori la domiciliu). They assist individuals with daily living activities, such as hygiene, nutrition, and mobility. They often support older people, persons recovering after hospitalisation, or those with chronic conditions.
- Professional Personal Assistants (Asistenți personali profesioniști). These are trained caregivers who provide care to persons with disabilities under the legal framework of personal assistance. They work under contract with local public authorities or, in some cases, as private service providers.
- Elderly Caregivers (Îngrijitori pentru persoane vârstnice). These caregivers specialise in the physical and emotional support of older adults, including those with dementia or limited mobility, often in their own homes.
- Home Care for the Sick (Îngrijire la domiciliu pentru persoane bolnave). This includes support for people living with chronic illnesses, post-surgery recovery, or end-of-life care (in partnership with palliative care services where applicable).

Training programmes typically fall under **Level 2 to Level 4** of the Romanian Qualifications Framework (CNC), depending on the complexity of the role. Courses are delivered by **accredited training providers**, which may include:

- Private vocational training companies
- NGOs active in the social sector
- Social services departments or consortia under EU-funded projects (e.g., POCU, CERV, Erasmus+)

Some of the best practices related to training programmes addressing burnout, well-being, mental health, digital skills, sustainable skills, soft skills are presented below.

Best Practices

In the best practices presented, the main topics included are:

- Burn-out: definition of burnout and its main characteristics, ways of recognising burnout, impact of stress in social care workers professional and personal lives; stress and distress, main stressors, ways to manage stress in both professional and personal life, burnout syndrome – an extreme manifestation of occupational stress; protective and risk factors; personal vulnerability profiling; stress management strategies and prevention of burnout syndrome, stress management techniques; managing emotions; making communication more effective; problem-solving strategies; relaxation techniques; interventions for restoring and supporting recovery in social workers affected by burnout.
- Conflict management: causes and opportunities for conflict; empathetic listening; conflict management styles; identifying and addressing difficult clients or colleagues; reactive vs. proactive behaviours; and steps for resolving conflicts.
- Emotional intelligence: concept of emotional intelligence; importance of emotional intelligence in personal and professional life; components of emotional intelligence; self-awareness development; managing emotions; motivation and performance improvement; empathy and social skills development.
- Well-being and mental health: crisis intervention; teamwork – group dynamics, group models and types; mental disorders (mental illness); peer support in case analysis and intervention.

Name of the training	**Burnout prevention for staff in social care and local authorities**
Name of the training provider	Social Alert
Website	https://socialalert.ro/oferta-cursuri/
Country	Romania
Region	N/A
Start Date	N/A
Sector of activity concerned	Social care
Description	For staff from: Public social services UATs County Councils

	Other institutions
Course structure	Practical modules; Duration: 3 days/24 hours; 650 RON/ 130 EUR Format: in-person
Curricula	- The impact of stress in our lives; eustress and distress, - Stressors, - Ways to manage stress in both professional and personal life, - What burnout is (and is not), causes of burnout, consequences, - How to recognize the syndrome? How to say *stop*? How to approach recovery? How to avoid reactivation?
How this Good Practice could be used/ transferred (500 words max)	This course can be integrated into the CARES project to support its objectives, such as creating a healthier working environment and preventing burnout among social sector workers. The practical modules offer transferable solutions to other social organizations across Europe and are relevant for project partners in Romania, Italy, Hungary, and Lithuania.

Name of the training	**Intervention and prevention of work-related stress and burnout**
Name of the training provider	Social Alert
Website	https://socialalert.ro/oferta-cursuri/
Country	Romania
Region	N/A
Start Date	N/A
Sector of activity concerned	Social care
Description	A programme that offers practical solutions for identifying stress, managing it, and preventing burnout among staff in social welfare directorates and other institutions.
Course structure	Practical modules; Duration: 3 days/24 hours; 650 RON/ 130 EUR/ Format: in-person
Curricula	The impact of stress in our lives; stress-inducing factors; ways to manage stress in professional and personal life; protective and risk factors; work-life balance; what burnout is and is not; preventing, recognizing and managing recovery; avoiding burnout reactivation.
How this Good Practice could be used/ transferred (500 words max)	This course can be integrated into the CARES project to support social workers in Romania, Italy, Hungary, and Lithuania, offering transferable modules on preventing burnout and creating a healthier working environment. The information can be included in further training to reduce stress and improve well-being at work.

Name of the training	**Intervention and burnout prevention for managers**
Name of the training provider	Social Alert

Website	https://socialalert.ro/oferta-cursuri/
Country	Romania
Region	N/A
Start Date	N/A
Sector of activity concerned	Social care
Description	A programme dedicated to managers to identify and manage work-related stress, support work-life balance, and prevent burnout at individual, team, and managerial levels.
Course structure	Practical modules; Duration: 3 days/24 hours; 650 RON/ 130 EUR Format: in-person
Curricula	The impact of stress in our lives; stress-inducing factors; stress management methods; protective and risk factors; work-life balance; identifying and assessing signs of burnout at individual, team and managerial levels; supervision, coaching, team building; relaxation methods for team effectiveness.
How this Good Practice could be used/ transferred (500 words max)	This course can be used in the CARES project to develop managerial skills for preventing burnout among social sector teams. The supervision and coaching techniques included can improve the performance and well-being of teams and are transferable to organizations in all project partner countries.

Name of the training	**Managing stress and burnout**
Name of the training provider	Social Alert
Website	https://socialalert.ro/oferta-cursuri/
Country	Romania
Region	N/A
Start Date	N/A
Sector of activity concerned	Social care
Description	A programme that addresses the identification of the manifestations of occupational stress, its impact on personal and professional life, and the strategies needed to manage and prevent the effects of burnout.
Course structure	Practical modules; Duration: 3 days/24 hours; 650 RON/ 130 EUR Format: in-person
Curricula	Manifestations of occupational stress; the impact of occupational stress on personal and professional life; burnout syndrome – an extreme manifestation of occupational stress; protective and risk factors; personal vulnerability profiling; stress management strategies and prevention of burnout syndrome.
How this Good Practice could be	This course can be integrated into the CARES project to provide practical support to social workers, psychologists and other professionals involved in the social sector. The proposed strategies are

used/ transferred (500 words max)	transferable to other areas of work, helping to reduce stress and improve well-being.

Name of the training	**Burn-out among social workers**
Name of the training provider	Foundation for the Development of Social Services
Website	https://www.fdss.ro/fenomenul-de-burn-out-in-randul-asistentilor-sociali
Country	Romania
Region	Bucharest
Start Date	N.A.
Sector of activity concerned	Social care
Description	A workshop dedicated to understanding the phenomenon of burnout among social workers, raising awareness of its psycho-emotional effects, and developing techniques for managing stress and emotions.
Course structure	Workshop; Duration: 1 day; Format: in-person
Curricula	Stress management techniques; managing emotions; making communication more effective; problem-solving strategies; relaxation techniques; interventions for restoring and supporting recovery in social workers affected by burnout.
How this Good Practice could be used/ transferred (500 words max)	This workshop can be integrated into the CARES project to support the development of networking among social care professionals. Through the proposed techniques and strategies, it can help to reduce burnout and improve team performance.

Name of the training	**Conflict Management**
Name of the training provider	TÜV Austria Romania
Website	https://www.tuv-austria.ro/academia/cursuri-dezvoltare-personala/curs-gestionarea-conflictelor/
Country	Romania
Region	Oradea
Start Date	26.05-27.05.2025
Sector of activity concerned	Personal and professional development
Description	The course helps participants analyse their own conflict management style, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop practical tools to address conflicts in their workplace. It is targeted at managers and employees in private and public organizations who aim to improve collaboration and communication.
Course structure	A 2-day in-person training course, focusing on case studies and interactive activities.

Curricula	Covers conflict causes and opportunities, empathetic listening, conflict management styles, identifying and addressing difficult clients or colleagues, reactive vs. proactive behaviours, and steps for resolving conflicts.
How this Good Practice could be used/ transferred (500 words max)	It offers tools and strategies that can be adapted for diverse industries to address interpersonal challenges and build constructive environments.

Name of the training	**Conflict Management Course**
Name of the training provider	Impact Training
Website	https://impacttraining.ro/curs-managementul-conflictelor/
Country	Romania
Region	Not specified
Start Date	Not specified
Sector of activity concerned	Personal and professional development
Description	The course aims to equip participants with the skills to manage conflicts constructively, understand the root causes of conflicts, and implement strategies for resolution. It is targeted at professionals who want to improve collaboration in their teams or organisations.
Course structure	Includes theoretical sessions, case studies, and interactive activities, delivered over a duration of 1-2 days, either in-person or online.
Curricula	Module 1. Introduction • Defining conflict and different types of conflict. Understanding Conflict • Identifying the causes and underlying factors of conflict • Exploring the different stages of a conflict and the reactions involved. Module 3. Conflict Management Styles • Introducing different approaches and styles of conflict management such as avoidance, competition, compromise, collaboration and accommodation • Analysing the advantages and disadvantages of each style and identifying when each style is appropriate. Module 4. Techniques and Strategies for Conflict Management • Effective communication and active listening in conflict management • Negotiating and resolving conflicts by identifying common interests and win-win solutions • The ability to mediate and facilitate dialogue between parties in conflict. Module 5. Conflict Management in the Organisational Environment • Identifying and preventing conflict in the workplace

	• The role of leadership in managing conflict and promoting a culture of dialogue and cooperation Managing Interpersonal Conflicts • Conflict management techniques in interpersonal relationships, including communication and empathy skills • Strategies for overcoming conflict and building relationships of trust and respect. Course Closure and Recap • Feedback and conclusions • Creating a personalised action plan for applying and improving conflict management skills in personal and professional environments. The practical part includes: - Role-playing and simulated conflict situations to practice conflict management skills - Case analysis for applied understanding of concepts and practical skills development.
How this Good Practice could be used/ transferred (500 words max)	Its content and strategies can be easily adapted to different organisational settings to enhance team productivity and foster a positive work environment.

Name of the training	**Emotional Intelligence Course**
Name of the training provider	Impact Training
Website	Curs Inteligență Emoțională - Impact Training
Country	Romania
Region	Not specified
Start Date	Not specified
Sector of activity concerned	Personal and professional development
Description	The training focuses on understanding emotional intelligence, managing emotions effectively, building meaningful relationships, and improving communication skills. It is designed for individuals looking to enhance their personal and professional success.
Course structure	A 2-day programme, delivered in person or online, with interactive activities and practical exercises.
Curriculum	Session 1: Introduction to Emotional Intelligence • Defining the concept of emotional intelligence • The importance of emotional intelligence in personal and professional life. Session 2: Components of Emotional Intelligence • Self-awareness: understanding and recognizing your own emotions • Self-regulation: managing and controlling emotions

	• Motivation: setting and maintaining personal goals and objectives • Empathy: the ability to understand and feel the emotions of others • Social skills: effective and constructive interaction with others. Session 3: Developing Self-Awareness • Techniques for self-observation and reflection on your own emotions • Identifying and understanding factors that influence your emotional state • Practical exercises to increase emotional awareness. Session 4: Managing Emotions • Techniques and strategies for managing and regulating negative emotions • Building emotional resilience and adaptability to stress • Relaxation and mindfulness exercises to manage stress and anxiety Session 5: Motivation and Performance Improvement • Understanding motivational factors and how to maintain personal motivation • Setting and achieving personal and professional goals • How to manage failure and maintain focus and determination. Session 6: Developing Empathy and Social Skills • The importance of empathy in interpersonal and workplace relationships • Understanding and responding to the emotions of others • Developing effective communication and conflict resolution skills. Session 7: Applying Emotional Intelligence in Professional Life • How to use emotional intelligence to become an effective and respected leader • Applying emotional intelligence in negotiation and decision-making in the workplace • How to manage and motivate your team using the principles of emotional intelligence. Session 8: Consolidation and Planning • Review of the main concepts and techniques learned • Creation of a personalized emotional intelligence development plan • Identification of additional resources and next steps for further growth in this area.
How this Good Practice could be used/	This training can be adapted to various professional settings to enhance interpersonal skills and collaboration. It provides a solid

transferred (500 words max)	foundation for improving emotional intelligence, benefiting individuals and teams in achieving organisational goals.

Name of the training	**Trauma psychology in support of social workers (Psihologia traumei în sprijinul asistenților sociali)**
Name of the training provider	CNASR The National College of Social Workers from Romania
Website	https://elearning.cnasr.ro/mod/scorm/view.php?id=90&preventskip=1
Country	Romania
Region	-
Start Date	10.11.2022
Sector of activity concerned	Personal and professional development
Description	The webinar focused on understanding psychological trauma, but also on how the social worker can intervene. It was also discussed about vicarious trauma and how to manage it.
Course structure	Webinar-2 ore, interactive
Curricula	
How this Good Practice could be used/ transferred (500 words max)	The topics addressed are of maximum interest for social workers.

Name of the training	**How we manage occupational stress in social work (Cum gestionăm stresul profesional în asistența socială)**
Name of the training provider	CNASR The National College of Social Workers from Romania
Website	https://elearning.cnasr.ro/mod/scorm/view.php?id=84
Country	Romania
Region	National level
Start Date	01.11.2022
Sector of activity concerned	Personal and professional development
Description	The webinar presented an ongoing study related to the stress of social workers and some methods used in the study to reduce professional stress.
Course structure	Webinar-2 ore, interactive
Curricula	
How this Good Practice could be used/	In the study, social workers tested 2 techniques: neurofeedback and mindfulness and identified resources to reduce professional stress.

transferred (500 words max)	

Name of the training	**Management in Social Services**
Name of the training provider	Concordia Academy
Website	https://online.concordia-academia.ro/courses/management-social
Country	Romania
Region	Not specified
Start Date	Not specified
Sector of activity concerned	Social services
Description	The "Management in Social Services" training program is authorized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity and is designed for individuals aiming to obtain certification as a "Manager in Social Services" (COR code 112039).
Course structure	The course lasts a total of 360 hours, including 120 hours of theory and 240 hours of practice conducted within participating organizations, over 4-5 months. It is delivered in a blended format (in-person and online, synchronous and asynchronous).
Curricula	The program includes: - Management and leadership - Feedback and Feedforward - Delegation techniques - Conflict management - Team development stages - Change management - Strategic planning - Impact assessment
How this Good Practice could be used/transferred (500 words max)	This program can be easily transferred to other organizations and regions due to its modular structure and blended format. It can be adapted for various contexts, supporting both theoretical training and practical experience within organizations. The methodology and topics, such as change management and impact assessment, are relevant for improving managerial capacity in any social sector.

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