



## Eldicare Project

# Matching Skills in a Growing European Silver Economy

Eldicare is a SSA (“Sector Skills Alliances”) project funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme. It brings together twelve partners from five European countries. Its principal aim is to offer a way out of the grey market of atypical/undeclared elderly caregivers, through education and training in ICT and health issues, modernizing the way elderly care is provided by designing two fresh market-driven curricula.

The project is an answer to the latest statistical findings that show how rapidly European society is ageing; during the last decade the share of the population aged 65 years or over has substantially increased in the EU, reaching almost 18% of its total population. According to Eurostat the share of this group will comprise almost one third of the population by 2080. Such demographic transition will naturally have serious social impact. What will certainly massively grow is the demand for formal carers and skilled workers focused on needs which were previously informally met by families, labourers with no qualification etc.

Eldicare aims to design and set up a common/standardized European curriculum in the elderly care sector. The Eldicare educational programme in elderly care will revolve around a learner-centred and result-oriented approach embedding a strong component of work-based learning associated with mobility. It will include quality assurance mechanisms, and address the need of caregivers for formal recognition of their skills and professionalism. The project seeks an overall improvement of the key competencies and skill level of caregivers especially concerning the quality of the service provider specifically designed to the elderly care sector. It should bridge the gap between education and training through the creation of new and better jobs and the maximisation of employment opportunities within the sector. The project partners are developing and pilot-testing a standardised European vocational education and training (VET) programme specifically tailored to caregivers of the elderly and leading to certification. The project will thus contribute to a reduction of undeclared work in the sector and to facilitation of social inclusion providing better jobs for the employees and a better quality of life for the elderly. It strives to change the perspective, stereotype and understanding of the public for a career in the elderly care sector, emphasizing its potential, future prospects and capacity for growth and self-fulfilment using innovative methodologies and technologies.

Two VET curricula are being designed and developed within the project: a long term course for atypical workers and a short term ICT focused training for the sectoral providers. They will be accompanied by respective training guides for the trainers and handbooks for the learners, both described in terms of learning outcomes. The curricula are in line with the aim of the project to include atypical workers in the wider spectrum of elderly care providers, with the goal to empower and support them in their professional development; and to treat elderly care workers as medical professionals and not as unskilled labour. The project strives to ensure that the new curricula, teaching, learning and all supportive materials designed are innovative, responding to industry needs, relevant and sector informed, transferable and comparable, meeting the EU requirements and also the requirements of national accreditation principles to facilitate recognition. The curricula will be accompanied by a self-assessment test that will help elderly caregivers identify their key strengths and weaknesses and make the training more specific.



The curricula will be designed taking a modular approach. They will consist of different modules designed by the expert project partners according to their expertise. Modules that have been identified as relevant for the curricula include: nutrition and first aid; basic knowledge of conditions and understanding the biography of cared-for; legal rights of elderly people; GDPR in the elderly care sector; computer and digital skills; information handling – basic data analysis, information and data literacy; technological expertise and digital resources; communication and social skills; compassion, empathy and supporting well-being; interaction and interpersonal skills, the client-centred approach; organisation and time management; flexibility, initiative and stamina; problem solving; critical situations – safeguarding; consultations – dealing with grief; engaging welfare.

Once the VET curricula and supportive materials have been designed and developed, the next step is to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose and relevant to industry needs. This aim will be achieved through the organization and implementation of a piloting programme. This stage will allow testing and refinement of the curricula to ensure that the learning modules are relevant and useful in upgrading the identified skills and in improving the knowledge and competencies related to needs of the professionals working in the elderly care sector. A next phase will be the adaptation of the curricula to the country specific context to make sure it meets specific requirements of a particular country. Adaptation activities will be undertaken by the national VET partners. Following a positive evaluation and proposal for accreditation, the VET provider will be awarded its accreditation and the curricula will receive a quality certificate.

Further outputs of the Eldicare project will be the creation of Code of Conduct and of a psychometric tool. The Code of Conduct for Elderly Workers will provide the necessary advices and directions on how to approach the work of elderly care workers, combining both ethical and practical guidance for challenges they may face in their professional environment. It will offer consulting on when and how to use e-tools and applications, according to the needs of the cared-for and it will be also integrated to the training schedule. It will upgrade the quality of the services offered and drive positive behaviours towards the elderly. – The psychometric tool, which should test the mental capacity of elderly care workers, aims to ensure the appropriateness and mental health of elderly caregivers. It will also minimize phenomena of misconduct and malpractice of the care workers at the expenses of the elderly.

The project partners consist of experienced education and training providers such as AKMI S.A. (Greece – the project coordinator), University of Malaga (Spain), Staffordshire University (UK) or BQS (Germany); and of organizations with expertise in the field of ageing services in their country, such as the Asisttel (Spain), KMOP (Greece) etc. The Association of Social Care Providers of the Czech Republic (APSS) will be responsible for the project dissemination, which is an important part of the project. Dissemination will maximise the project's reach and impact through an online platform, a set of promotional materials, publications presented at public events, through info days, international conference, social media etc.

For more information please see the project website: <http://eldicare.eu/>.