Key strategies and contents on digital skills for hybridization of jobs in the Social Care Sector

CONTEXT

This policy paper presents the conclusions of the workshops held in the framework of the ACSOL Erasmus+ project by the social care triple helix stakeholder working group in the region of the Basque Country, Spain.

This is a regional proposal at sectoral level with recommendations and strategies to better approach workers to train them on digital skills that the technological changes and the COVID-19 crisis effects on jobs and labour market conditions has revealed as critical for maintaining jobs on this sector.

The paper includes the identification of opportunities, needs and risks of digital transformation as well as key digital skills and proposals for promoting training within our target group.

KEY MESSAGES:

Basque society is one of the most ageing societies. In less than a decade, in the year 2,031, 615,000 people, 28.2% of the Basque population will be aged 65 or over.

These figures, together with the desire of the majority of elderly people to be cared for at home, will mean a change in the current system of social services and care.

New technologies will help in this process of change. In particular, the home care assistant will need to acquire digital competences in a process of continuous training.

Thus, in the face of crucial demographic changes and important technological advances, 3 pillars of intervention are necessary:

- Working for the PROFESSIONALISATION of the sector. Offering quality employment to carers, with accredited training in which the necessary digital skills are worked on.

- Develop NEW PROFESSIONAL PROFILES linked directly to the provision of care or indirectly to activities and services focused on a new model of care where the person and their needs are crucial.

- To develop a COMPETENCY SYSTEM for each professional profile involved in the new care model where the digital aspect will be key and continuous training in line with the continuous advances in digital technology will be essential.

DIGITAL SKILLS IN THE SECTOR

Digital skills valued in home help assistants

- Using e-mail

- Making video-calls / using chat

- Searching for information on the Internet (losing the fear of going on the Internet and downloading applications)

- Entering data into tablets, phones, computers

- Use applications for health monitoring with careful attention to the aspect of personal data protection.

- Use applications for communication with the supervising person (if available).

- Use applications to entertain the user.

- Making on-line purchases

- Carrying out on-line banking procedures

- Carrying out procedures with Public Administrations on-line

- Knowing the Health Folder

- Netiquette: General rules of behaviour on the Internet

Digital skills derived from the progressive digitalisation of the sector:

- Knowing how to use tools related to user safety (falls, taking medication, ...).

- Knowing how to use communication and management tools (both for the organisation of business activities and for providing information to users).

- Know how to use "Smart Homes" tools: safety aspects, comfort and convenience, temperature control, etc.

- Knowing how to make online purchases, make online appointments, etc.

- Computer literacy at user level: know how to make registers, know computer systems (files, folders, etc.).

- Know how the "BetiON" service works.

CHALLENGES

It is necessary to emphasise certain characteristics of Basque demography and society that are expected for the year 2030:

- Over-ageing: In the year 2,031, 615,000 people, 28.2% of the population will be aged 65 or over. There will be a 15% growth in the population aged 75 to 84, and 39% growth in the population aged 85 to 94. Those aged 95 and over will triple in number.

- Rising average income but widening gap between rich and poor. Increasing poverty in single-person households of older people. Increasing income gap between "poor" households versus "rich" households with high purchasing power.

-Increasing educational attainment and digital skills. 90% of 55-64 year olds will use the internet.

-Increase in the number of older people living alone and increase in their social influence. Challenge of caring for people without a community family network.

- Advancement of active ageing; changes in consumption patterns and full life. Increased consumption of goods and services by this group.

- Development of friendly urban planning and equipment for a society with "more elderly". Accessible and innovative housing and accommodation.

- Increased demand for health, wellness and healthy ageing. Transformation of the health and wellness offer. Changes in professional-patient interactions, increase in non-face-to-face care, preventive medicine, telemedicine, smartphones and biosensors for diagnosis and monitoring.

- Increase in life expectancy, quality of life but also in the number of dependents.

All of the above aspects will inevitably lead to an increase in the demand for qualified care assistants due to both generational replacement (around 60% of current employment) and the ageing of the population itself, which will exponentially increase the demand for care services for the elderly.

Against this scenario, it is imperative and necessary to regularise informal employment and professionalise the sector.

We must also pay attention to the change in the professional role of the care assistant and provide them with the necessary tools to acquire new skills, especially those derived from the digitalisation of care services. **Digital technology is seen as an element of prevention, maintenance, support and rehabilitation. In short, the new professional role of the care assistant will require the acquisition of new professional competences required in the new context towards the year 2030.**

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REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Professionalisation of the sector

In elderly care work, soft skills and confidence building, two elements inherent to people working in this sector, are essential.

At the same time, the acquisition of hard skills, i.e. the acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge, is necessary in order to provide a quality and guaranteed care service.

For the above reasons, policies are needed to professionalise the sector and to inform citizens so that they value the academic-professional training of people working in this sector.

In the academic-professional training, digital competences are of crucial importance, which is why it is necessary to include the acquisition of these competences in the curriculum of the training that accredits people to carry out care tasks.

The professionalisation of the sector together with policies to regularise informal employment will generate decent and quality employment opportunities.

Construction of an employment and entrepreneurship strategy for care.

Basque society is one of the most ageing societies, and in the last five years the households that have grown the most are single-person households. There are currently more than 250,000 people living alone, mostly elderly people. In addition, there are some 18,000 people in residential homes, although in the Basque Country there are more than half a million people over the age of 65. These figures and the short-term care forecast will force us to change our social services system to facilitate personal autonomy, because it is a question of offering resources so that people, especially the elderly, can lead an independent life from home with full guarantees, always with the care they need.

This commitment requires public intervention to provide resources for those who live at home, but also to offer quality employment to the people who care for them, with full training to meet the challenge of the digital transformation that our society is undergoing at all levels.

Ageing is an indicator of an advanced society, and represents an opportunity for employment, a workforce that cannot be delocalised and has the capacity to employ many people who cannot find work or who have lost their jobs in other sectors.

It is therefore necessary to work towards:

- - Clearly identify which activities are going to be in demand and sustainable.
- - Find out what professional profiles and qualifications are required to carry them out.
- - Analyse how to train and qualify, or if necessary recycle, the workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING IN THE SECTOR

The economy and society are currently facing the challenge of digital transformation that affects each and every sector of economic activity; the health sector and the elderly care sector as well.

In particular, when it comes to training home care assistants in the digital skills needed to do their job better, we must not forget that many of them have low qualifications, are migrants and are mostly women.

If this group, due to their workload or family responsibilities, often have particular difficulty in accessing the formal training necessary to obtain the qualification that allows them to work as carers, the same will be true for any complementary training action that focuses on digital skills. It is therefore necessary to acquire digital skills in the care sector:

- To review in a general and exhaustive way the current training offer in digital competences offered to the group of care assistants, improving and updating contents.

- Create training itineraries that address particular situations in the form of "Singular Projects", ad-hoc projects with flexible timetables and a methodology that differs from the standard one.

- Promote this complementary training in digital competences by strongly recommending the completion of these courses.

- Raise awareness among users and their relatives to allow the care assistant to attend the training courses.

- Create a working group involving authorities, training bodies and companies to constantly review the evolution of the digital world in the care sector in order to keep the e-skills courses up to date.

About the Acsol project

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