

Thematic Panel 7 – Making the informal formal. Incentivizing the role of family care givers and migrant care workers in the provision of long term care within the home

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Making the informal formal. Incentivizing the role of family care givers and migrant care workers in the provision of long term care within the home

Conveners:

Lorraine Frisina Doetter, and Anna Safuta, University of Bremen, Germany

Discussants:

Karin Gottschall, Professor and Heinz Rothgang, Professor of University of Bremen, Germany

The proposed panel aims to analyse the effects of policies incentivizing informal long term care provision across the globe. Such incentives might take the form of cash-for-care schemes, tax free household transfers/cash benefits, tax deductions where care is purchased out-of-pocket, as well as leave schemes dedicated to caring. Given the historical reliance on family (especially wives and daughters) for care giving, as well as the high costs associated with institutionalization, measures to reinforce or stimulate informal care and thereby allow people to age in place for as long as possible may be seen as both a culturally acceptable and cost-effective alternative to stationary care on the part of policy makers and families alike. However, the policy prioritisation of informal care over other modalities of care provision isn't always based on evidence, but more often results from a combination of unexamined cultural assumptions about what constitutes appropriate care, financial concerns and/or existing power relations between interest groups.

There is thus a paucity of evidence as to the actual consequences – economic or otherwise – of incentivizing non-professional care. In

particular, concerns arise regarding the quality of the care provided, the societal costs and trade-offs associated with shouldering the care burden (or burn-out) to (mainly female) family care givers, their reduced labour force participation, as well as the micro, meso and macro consequences of stimulating informal care provision by migrant workers. In the case of migrant care workers, also typically female, concerns related to exploitation and lack of social protection of the care giver come to the fore, alongside the challenges faced by sending countries grappling with the loss of (potential) care personnel (i.e. care drain and care chains).

The proposed panel calls for papers that take stock of policies incentivizing informal care provision, explaining the policy rationale behind such measures, and/or analysing the various pros and cons of informal care arrangements for the care recipient and their families, the care givers, and the long term care system as a whole. The panel especially welcomes contributions that take a comparative perspective and which draw on evidence from Central and Eastern Europe and the global South.