



To President of the European Council
Charles Michel
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President of the European Commission
Ursula Von der Leyen
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Ref.: JWG/cb
Brussels, 17 June 2020

Dear President of the European Council, dear Mr. Michel,

Dear President of the European Commission dear Mrs Von der Leyen,

Thursday the European Council will discuss the Recovery Plan for Europe. As European Federations of the ETUC, EPSU for the workers in care and public services and FERPA for retired workers and elderly people, we support the demand of the ETUC for an ambitious plan for the economy and to guarantee jobs as unemployment increases. We do want to express our profound deception that the Commission in its Recovery Plan, and the Council in its discussions, have paid little attention to how the pandemic has effected the elderly and the workers that take care. We ask you to address this and start investigations of what went wrong in the health systems and in particular in elderly care, so the necessary steps can be taken and not to repeat mistakes. This needs to be done in consultation with the organisations concerned.

The Recovery Plan for Europe has just one line devoted to long term care. There is no recognition that long term care facilities have been underfunded, in many countries because of policies of austerity. Nor is there acknowledgement that the workers in both elderly, residential and home care, mostly women, have been seriously effected by the pandemic and that their work has been undervalued and underpaid. They lack resources and staff. And the Recovery Plan has no additional funding to assist long term, residential and home care. This is combined with a lack of attention of the authorities for the elderly which are the most vulnerable people and the workers so dramatically symbolised by the lack of personal protective equipment and the high mortality among the elderly and among elderly care workers.

Dunja Mijatović, the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe suspects that human rights violations occurred and which could have been prevented, in her statement of 20 May. (...) "In many countries and individual institutions, management of the crisis appears to have been fragmented and chaotic, with care personnel often being left to their own devices. Some have made heroic efforts to save residents, sometimes confining themselves in the facilities and avoiding contact with their own families; some countries, like Romania, even made it mandatory for staff to isolate themselves in long-term care facilities or specially designated places. In other

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cases, residents were left in absolute neglect or abandoned despite having been infected, as it was reported in Spain, for example. (...)

She went on “There is understandable outrage and frustration among family members who lost their loved ones under very opaque circumstances. Many have made criminal complaints about the management in care homes, for example in France. In Spain, prosecutors opened criminal investigations for a number of facilities for older persons, and similar investigations are also ongoing in Italy. In accordance with their obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights regarding the right to life, member states must shed light on all the deaths occurring in these institutions, without exception.” We want the Council to order these investigations.


The Human Rights Commissioner points out how Member States have probably violated various conventions and not guaranteed the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable groups of people their right to health and right to care, and including the Right to long term care as enshrined in the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights (principles 16 and 18). Human rights violations have occurred that need to be explored and addressed so they are not repeated in possible second wave of this pandemic that has effected Europe so profoundly. The investigation will assist in taking the appropriate measures and prevent that in a second wave.

The European Commission should include funding for long term- , residential and home care (like it did for health care with the EU4Health programme) in its financial proposals. This is an urgent need. We ask you to support this.

Dear Presidents, for workers and the people in the European Union action is needed now.

We remain available for further discussion on how best to prevent that the elderly and others in care are not gain the victims of ill policies.

Yours sincerely,



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FERPA is the European Federation of retirees and elderly people, part of ETUC

EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Trade unions representing 8 million workers including in all professions and all forms of health and care. EPSU is a part of the ETUC

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