



The contribution of state-run civilian and volunteer services to address long-term care shortages: The case of Swiss civilian service

Oral Presentation (Practice-related)

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Forthcoming demographic changes, where people will live longer and the population over 80 years will increase, will bring about staff shortages in long-term care. Against this imminent shortage, policymakers in Switzerland have proposed measures in four main areas: staff recruitment, education, staff retention and staff deployment. Yet, policymakers will need to consider all possible effective means to tackle this challenge. In certain European countries, such means include state-run civilian or volunteer services, which can ease the pressure on health care staff and thus increase the quality of nursing and long-term care. The presentation outlines the contribution of state-run civilian service as an additional policy option to mitigate staff shortage in long-term care. It does so, first, by outlining the basic function and current contribution of the civilian service in Switzerland to the care sector. It also provides a short overview on state-run volunteer services in other countries (such as Germany, France, Italy and UK). Secondly, it outlines the mentioned policy solutions for Switzerland (as proposed by the Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Ministers of Public Health, GDK, and the National Organisation of Swiss Health Professions, OdASante) to provide enough trained staff in nursing and care. It then indicates how the state-run civilian services are able to support the solutions proposed in Switzerland. The main findings here are: civilian service members and volunteers can support institutions in the care sector to deploy their professional staff more effectively (according to the staff's core competences). They also help to unburden professional staff, and thus increase the quality of nursing and long-term care. Additionally, volunteers or civilian service members might consider taking up a job in nursing and care after their experience in the service. In a last step, some critical aspects and important points about the nature and contribution of state-run civilian and volunteer services are noted, for instance that the services need to be organized in such a way that they do not endanger jobs or put pressure on wages in the care sector.