

Work Package 2 – Deliverable 2

REPORT ON HOME CARE SERVICES' EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AT COUNTRY LEVEL BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID-19 CRISIS

DENMARK

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The Danish care workforce and key features regulating wage and working conditions in the elder care sector

1. Introduction

This report is the second deliverable by the Danish team to the ORIGAMI project, funded by the DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. The report examines the wage and working conditions of the Danish care workforce within the elder care sector and outlines the key features of the regulation of wage and working conditions in the sector. We find that the characteristics of the Danish care workforce are changing. The unskilled care workforce has rapidly increased in the last decade and evidence indicates that atypical employment, notably part-time work, continues to be widespread although there are also increases in other forms of non-standard work such as temporary agency work (TAW), fixed-term contracts and on-call temps. Platform work remains a marginal phenomenon in the Danish care sector, as in all sectors across the Danish labour market. Wages in the care sector are comparatively low and recent studies point to downward pressures on working conditions, notably work intensification, health and safety hazards and comparatively high numbers of workers on sick leave vis a vis other sectors in the Danish labour market. Labour shortages are also increasing pressure in the sector, although shifting Danish governments, trade unions and employers' organisations have attempted to address this in a variety of ways. Recent regulatory changes include, amongst others, the relaxation of Danish migration laws, the negotiation of incentives to convert part-time jobs into full-time positions and significant investment in further training. Technological advancements have been introduced to ease workloads and heavy physical work, often with mixed results. The regulation of wage and working conditions is also changing slightly due to increased outsourcing and public procurement of private, but heavily publicly subsidised, care services. New private actors are gaining a foothold in the elder care sector, leading to an increasingly fragmented and complex web of regulation of wage and working conditions in the Danish labour market.

The report is structured along the joint template developed by the ORIGAMI project coordinators of Work Package II. We draw on desk research of relevant policy documents, recent policy reforms, statutory laws and local government care policies and collective agreements. Academic and grey literature as well as secondary statistical surveys and relevant online databases also form the basis of this report. The online databases include publicly available data from Danish register data on recent

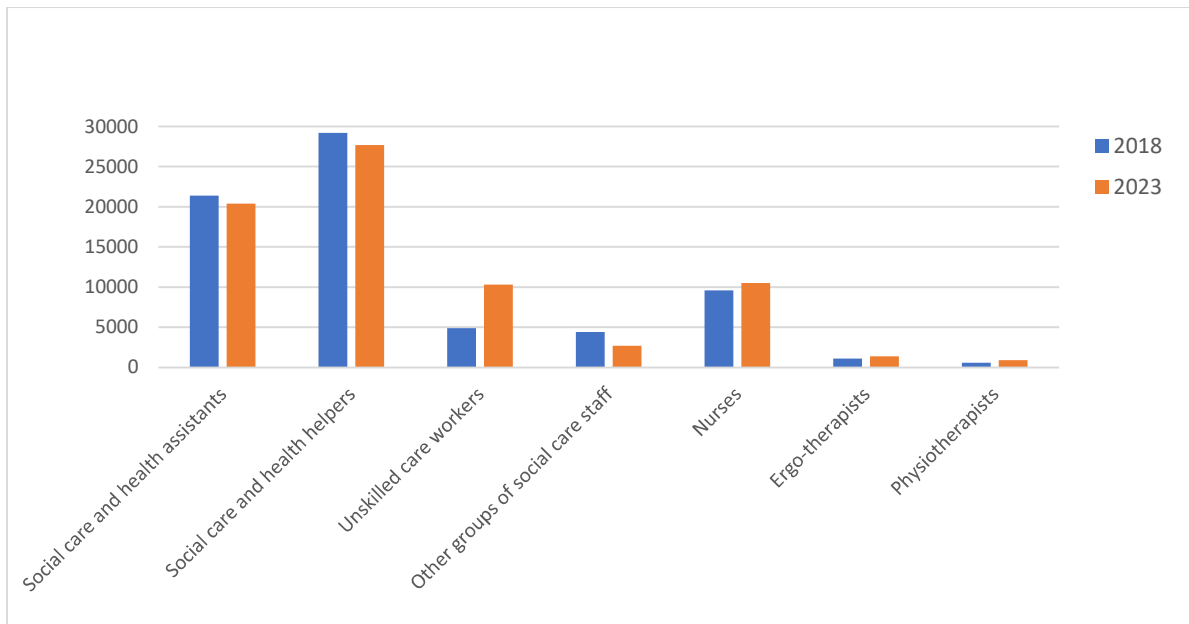
employment, wages and labour market trends, the Danish company survey and the Danish and European labour force surveys.

This report consists of five main sections besides the introduction. In the next section, we map the recent developments of the Danish care workforce including their wage and working conditions, covering the period between 2017–2024. In section three, we analyse the different forms of employment, wage levels and working hours in the Danish elder care sector, before we in section four conduct a literature review of Danish research on the employment conditions characterising the elder care and home help sector. In section five, industrial relations in the elder care sector is analysed, where we present the key social partners, the structure of public and private collective bargaining systems along with the main changes to collective agreements since 2017. We also examine the Danish government, trade unions and employers organisations' vision and actions for the future of Danish elder care and home help sector. Section six sums up the main findings.

2. Introducing the Danish care workforce and their working conditions– secondary data analyses

The Danish care workforce engaged in elder care and home help provision primarily work within the Danish local government sector, which is responsible for providing, administrating and partly funding such care services. Recent figures suggest that in 2023, around 2.5 per cent of the Danish workforce worked within the local government's elder care sector compared to 2.6 per cent in 2018 (authors' own calculations based on figures from Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Elder Care, 2024 and the European Labour force Survey, 2024). The workforce composition is characterised by an overrepresentation of women (88% in 2022) whilst no recent figures are available regarding the proportion of migrant workers and the age groups of care workers (Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Elder Care, 2024). The Danish care workforce comprises distinct occupational groups such as social and health care assistants with 3.9 years of formal educational training; social and health care helpers with 2.2 years of formal educational training; nurses with 3.5 years of educational training; unskilled care workers, and other groups (physiotherapists, ergo-therapists etc). Most care workers are skilled across occupational groups, but recent figures point to a rapid increase in the proportion of unskilled care workers between 2018–2023 (figure 1).

Figure 1: Care workers by occupational group employed within Danish local government elder care sector between 2017– 2023 (actual numbers).



Source: Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Elder Care (2024).

The proportion of unskilled care workers has more than doubled between 2018 and 2023 (Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Elder Care, 2024). In 2018, unskilled care workers accounted for 8% of the care workforce compared to 17% in 2023 (Figure 1). In contrast, all other occupational care groups have either declined in numbers (Social & Health Care Assistants and Social & Health Care Helpers) or remained relatively stable (nurses, physiotherapists and ergo therapists) during the same period (Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Elder Care, 2024: Table 1). No specific studies have estimated the level of undeclared work within the Danish elder care sector. However, other studies exploring more generally the level of undeclared work estimate that between 4–10% of Danes have purchased cleaning and window cleaning services that can be classified as undeclared work, which is typically delivered by friends or female relatives and not by private companies (Bendtsen et al. 2018). The family appears to have gained a more prominent role in the care provision for older people during the last decade. A recent study by Hansen & Veliovites (2024) indicates that relatives are increasingly involved in the care of their older and dependent family members (92% in 2023 compared to 83% in 2015) and they also provide an increasing number of hours, often as a response to the recent cutbacks in the public funded care provision.

3. Employment forms, wage and working hours in the Danish elder care sector

The Danish elder care sector is characterised by labour intensive and low wage work combined with high proportions of non-standard work. Part-time work is particularly

widespread and according to recent figures by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing & Elder care (2024:22) more than 74% of care workers worked part-time and only 19% worked full-time in 2023. The same study also points to a third group of care workers working as on-call temps and they account for around 7% of the care workforce within local government (Danish Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing & Elder care, 2024: 22). Other studies indicate that marginal part-time work, zero-hour contracts, temporary agency work (TAW) and fixed-term contracts are also widespread within the elder care sector (Larsen et al. 2023; Rasmussen et al. 2021; Holt et al. 2018; Larsen, 2008). For example, a study by Larsen et al (2023) finds that 10 percent of care workers work less than 15 hours per week and a qualitative study by Rasmussen and Hedenus (2021) finds that in some workplaces nearly one in two of the care workers hold zero-hour contracts. Figures from the European labour force survey, although covering a broader category of care work (human health and social work activities NACE-code Q), suggest that around 14 per cent of all those employed in the sector held fixed-term contracts in 2023 and 2017 respectively (Eurostat, 2024b). Self-employment is also frequently used and has marginally increased from 2.3 per cent to 2.5 per cent of care workers according to the broader definition by the European labour force survey (authors' own calculations based on LFS data, Eurostat 2024d).

Whilst the figures from the LFS survey suggest that TAW is fairly low (less than 0.6 per cent of the work force, Eurostat, 2024a) other Danish surveys, such as the large scale and cross-sectional Danish company survey, indicate that TAW has increased between 2017 and 2023 when measured as hours of care work sold by temporary work agencies (Statistics Denmark, 2024h). Between 2017 and 2023, the largest increase of TAW when measured in the hours sold by temporary work agencies is amongst nurses (98%), followed by an 81% increase in the hours sold for social and health care helpers and a 61% increase in hours sold for social and health care assistants (authors' own calculations based on the company statistics by Statistic Denmark, 2024h). Subcontracted work is also increasingly widespread in the Danish elder care sector whilst platform work remains a marginal phenomenon with only two platform-based cleaning platforms, one care platform and a handful of food delivery platforms and e-commerce companies (such as nemlig.com providing groceries and meals on wheels to older people living in their own homes).

According to recent research studies, other forms of care work such as volunteered work has increased within the Danish care sector. For example, the NGO Ældresagen (also the interest organisation for older people) is now the second largest volunteering organisation in Denmark and has more than 20,000 volunteers in 2024 – nearly twice as many as in 2018 (Ældresagen, 2024; Mailand & Thor Larsen, 2018). These volunteers call older people each morning, offer companionship to lonely older people and provide other forms of assistance such as IT support, organisation of social

events, etc. (Ældresagen, 2024; Mailand & Thor Larsen, 2017). The family also plays a more prominent role in care provision than just a few decades ago (Larsen, 2007; Hansen & Veliovites 2024).

Wages: minimum wage floors and average hourly wages

When looking at wages, the collectively agreed minimum wage floors for selected occupational groups of care staff have increased everywhere since 2017 (Table 1). Between 2017–2024, the collectively agreed minimum wages increased by 18 per cent or more, depending on the occupational care group under consideration (table 1). This increase in collectively agreed minimum wage appears closely linked to recent inflation rates and subsequent union demands during successive sector-level bargaining rounds (Mailand & Hansen 2024; FOA, 2017; 2024).

Table 1: Examples of collectively agreed minimum hourly wages for selected occupational groups of Danish care workers in 2017 and 2024

	Collective agreed minimum hourly wage – 2017	Collective agreed minimum hourly wage – 2024	Change between 2017–2024 in per cent
Social and health care assistant	€19.07 (142,31 DKK)	€23.37 (174,4 DKK)	+23%
Social and health care helper	€ 18.26 (136,24 DKK)	€ 21.79 (162,58 DKK)	+19%
Unskilled care staff	€16.24 (121,15 DKK)	€ 19.13 (142, 76 DKK)	+18%

Source: FOA (2017: 2024)

The wage increase in the collectively agreed minimum wage floor has also had a positive knock-on effect on the average hourly wages within the sector. The average hourly wages tend to be somewhat higher than the collectively agreed minimum wage floors (tables 1 & 2). Recent figures point to wage increases of 11 per cent or more between 2017 and 2022, depending on the employee group (Table 2).

Table 2: Average hourly wages for Danish care workers without managerial positions within the home care sector in 2017 and 2024 according to employment contract

	Average hourly wages – 2017	Average hourly wages – 2024	Change between 2017–2024 in per cent

Care workers without managerial positions – open-ended contract	€ 33,75 (251,83) DKK	€38,21 (285, 18) DKK)	+13%
On-call temps	€27,72 (206,86) DKK)	€31,02 (231,47) DKK)	+11%

Source: Author's own calculations based on Danish register data, 2024b

The average hourly wage of care workers working as on-call temps is slightly lower than their peers in permanent open-ended contracts, indicating that atypical work is associated with a wage penalty (Table 2). Other research supports this and further suggests that it is particularly marginal part-time workers and on-call temps that experience lower wages not only compared to their full-time colleagues but also to other groups of atypical workers in both the cleaning and care sector (Larsen et al. 2023; Ilsø et al. 2017).

Working time

The European Labour force survey offers indications of the usual average weekly working hours within the Danish elder care sector, although covering a broader category of care work (human health and social work activities, NACE-code Q). These figures suggest that the average usual weekly working hours of care workers were 32.8 hours per week in 2023 compared to 32.6 hours per in week in 2017 (Eurostat, 2024c). When narrowing the focus to part-time workers the number of usual average weekly working hours is 24.7 hours per week in 2023 compared to 24.4 in 2017 (Eurostat, 2024c).

4. Literature review of employment conditions within the elder care and home help sector

Ample research has analysed different aspects of the employment conditions within the Danish elder care and home care sector. These studies point to different challenges linked to care work, more recently, the rising labour shortages and challenges with recruiting qualified care staff; this has triggered political debate and led to the Danish government relaxing its migration laws for work permits in the social care work sector to attract overseas skilled health and social care assistants and helpers (see also the Danish national report on mapping the Danish care sector). Other characteristics of the employment conditions within elder care sector can be themed

around: new forms of work organisation; atypical work; work autonomy and delegated managerial responsibilities; increased digitalisation; outsourcing and public tendering; health and safety issues including work intensification, heavy workloads and harassment. Different Danish research communities, the Danish government and social partners (notably, the trade union FOA and the employers' association Local government Denmark representing public care providers) have explored these themes in various commissioned research projects, but often from different perspectives. Below, we briefly review the most recent studies by different research communities that focus on employment conditions within the elder care and home help sector.

Recent research by VIVE – examples

The Danish Center for Social Science Research (VIVE) has a long research record focusing on Danish elder and home care and, notably, various aspects related to service provision. These include outsourcing and increased privatisation of care services, the financing of the care provision, demographic changes and their implications for the future care needs, and inequality and care-based life quality (Foged & Houlberg, 2024a; 2024b, VIVE, 2024). Work organisation, usage of technological tools, involvement of care recipients, care workers, carers, volunteers and private care providers also form part of this research. The most recent publications by VIVE scholars that focus on the working conditions of care workers include their research on migrants and the various challenges and barriers migrants face when working or studying within the care sector. These studies also focus on developing ways to attract more migrant workers to the sector, ensure inclusive training and reduce the comparatively high educational drop-out rate amongst international students (Sparre et al. 2024). Other studies by VIVE scholars investigate ways to reduce labour shortages in the care sector, exploring how public care providers are experimenting with various approaches to promote full-time work in a sector dominated by part-time work (Lauritsen, 2024). Such research identifies that issues such as work-life balance, unsocial hours, heavy workloads, physical and psychological breakdown, combined with feelings of inadequacy are common barriers to care workers choosing to undertake full-time work (Lauritsen (2024). These studies also point to challenges related to work scheduling, demands for worker flexibility and budgetary constraints as further contributory factors to the high proportions of part-time work and low levels of full-time work in the sector – findings echoed by other research studies (Lauritzen, 2024, Kamp, 2013, Mailand & Larsen, 2018).

VIVE scholars have produced extensive research on how local municipalities experiment with self-governing care teams to improve care workers' well-being,

increase working hours and improve individualised care provision for care recipients. Such studies find that these interdisciplinary care teams improve the well-being of care workers and strengthen their relations with care recipients, often leading to greater feeling of autonomy particularly in the case of smaller teams. (Foged & Kjellberg, 2024b; Sandberg Buch et al. 2024). Analysing the ethical use of surveillance technology in dementia care is yet another recent project by VIVE. Care workers were not the main research focus in this study, but the findings suggest that care workers often have limited knowledge of the usage of welfare technology such as surveillance. The study points to the need to systematically integrate such technologies into day-to-day work routines and organisational structures to ensure their implementation as well as raising various ethical concerns related to the use of surveillance technologies (Ballegaard et al. 2024).

Non-standard work has also been subject to some research by VIVE scholars. For example, Holt and colleagues (2019) map the high prevalence of non-standard work within the public elder and home care sector and emphasise that the share of non-standard work has remained fairly stable within the sector during the last 10 years. A more recent study by Topholm et al. (2023) explicitly explores the recent increase in public expenditure on TAW within the elder care sector, and examines the reasons and implications of relying on TAW for local management, care workers and TAW. This study finds that recruitment challenges, high levels of sick leave and labour shortages contributed to the doubling of public expenditure on TAW between 2018–2020 with local government spending on TAW accounting for 10% or more of all labour costs in the Danish home help sector (Topholm et al. 2023). The study also finds that the increased usage of TAW often jeopardises the care quality and well-being of permanent employees. TAWs tend to favour TAW work, which offers higher pay, greater flexibility and work autonomy, but with the embedded trade-off of insecure working conditions (Topholm et al. 2023).

Research by NFA – examples

The Danish Agency on Health and Safety (NFA) has also extensively researched the Danish elder care and home help sector, but typically from a health and safety perspective. They illustrate that care work is often associated with hard physical work; work intensification; work related stress; increased risks of harassment, violence and sexual harassment; work related accidents and high shares of sick leave (Hansen et al. 2004, Larsson et al. 2023; Clausen et al. 2023b; 2022). NFA's more recent work has also focused on harassment, bullying and sexual harassment within the home help sector and the impact of such violations on the risk of care worker resignation and adverse mental well-being to gain a better and nuanced understanding of such interlinkages. NFA's studies indicate that one in two care workers have experienced

bullying, violence and sexual harassment at work whilst one in five face mental well-being challenges and three in ten report of physical hard work challenges (Larsson et al. 2023; Karlsen et al. 2024). Related studies echo these findings and indicate that harassment, violence and sexual harassment negatively affect care workers' mental well-being and increase the risk of resignation (Clausen et al. 2012; 2023a; 2023b). Other studies by NFA researchers have examined the comparatively high levels of sick leave amongst care workers and their reasons for leaving care jobs (Karlsen et al. 2024). One of NFA's ongoing research projects focuses on the interlinkages between take-up rates for sick leave and public care providers' reliance on non-standard work vis a vis full-time work (Sørensen, 2024). In addition, NFA has been involved in a series of collaborative projects with Aalborg and Roskilde University on health and safety in the platform economy focusing on young people that work for cleaning and care platforms (Nielsen et al. 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024). Their findings indicate that, in particular, young female platform workers providing cleaning or babysitter services experience harassment and tend to feel more threatened and vulnerable than other groups of platform workers, such as food delivery couriers (Nielsen et al. 2021; 2022; 2024).

University based research communities

Various Danish university-based research communities including scholars from Roskilde University, Aalborg University, FAOS and University of Copenhagen have also extensively researched and published studies in elder and home care. Some studies focus on changes in service provision such as the impact of new public management reforms and the increasing role of outsourcing, privatisation and public procurement for the employment conditions of care workers in the care and home help sector (Rostgaard, 2014; 2017; Kamp et al. 2013; Pedersen, 2023; Mailand and Thor Larsen, 2017; Mailand & Larsen, 2020). Their findings indicate that developments have led to lower employee satisfaction (Rostgaard, 2014), less work autonomy (Kamp et al. 2013; Vergo, 2006), fewer opportunities for upskilling, increased workloads, higher levels of work-related stress, greater proportions of non-standard work, and lower levels of sick leave amongst care workers in the privatised elder care and home help sector (Møller et al. 2014; Rostgaard, 2014; 2017). Other research studies explore the implications of digitising the care sector (Kamp, 2023; Kamp et al. 2023; Hansen, 2021) and New Public Management reforms for the professionalisation of care work, skill levels and worker identity within the care professions (Kamp et al. 2013; Vergo, 2006; Hansen & Kamp, 2018). For example, Kamp (2023), finds that digital solutions such as virtual home care have led to increased work pressure and less time for breaks and social interaction. Further studies investigate regulatory changes of wage and working conditions within the elder care and home help sector focusing on sector and

company-based bargaining results. These studies indicate that the marked changes in the way public unions form bargaining coalitions, their repeated demands for wage increases, industrial actions and budgetary restrictions impact on the negotiation processes and bargaining results at central, sector and local levels (Hansen & Mailand, 2021; 2024; 2018, Hansen, 2013 Høgedahl 2018).

Another strand of literature has focused on non-standard work, and such studies suggest that the share of non-standard work, notably marginal part-time work and zero-hour contracts, have increased over the last few decades (Rasmussen & Hedenus, 2021; Larsen et al. 2023; Mailand & Larsen, 2020; Mailand, 2024; Holt et al. 2018). This research also indicates that compared to their peers in permanent open-ended positions, non-standard care workers often experience lower wages, higher levels of job insecurity, challenges to making ends meet and increased workloads (Larsen et al. 2023; Holt & Deding, 2019; Rasmussen & Hedenus, 2021; Petersen et al., 2021). Few studies focus explicitly on the emerging role of platform work within the care sector but more often adopt a broader approach by exploring other forms of platform work, notably focusing on food delivery platforms, including the regulatory framework (Ilsø & Larsen, 2022; Nielsen et al. 2024; Rasmussen, 2024; Leschke & Scheele, 2024). These studies indicate, for example, that the platform economy remains a marginal subsector of both the care and cleaning sector but is characterised by less regulation than the more traditional elder care and home help sector (Nielsen et al. 2022; Ilsø & Larsen, 2022). These studies also point to lower levels of employee protection, fewer social benefit rights and harsher working conditions compared to the labour standards characterising the traditional Danish care and cleaning sector (Rasmussen, 2024; Hadrup et al 2024; Nielsen et al. 2024).

5. Industrial relations in the elder care sector

Wage and working conditions within the Danish elder care sector are regulated through collective agreements, statutory labour laws and labour clauses that are used in relation to publicly procured elder care and home help services. The collective bargaining coverage is nearly 100% in the public care sector, where the union density and share of union-affiliated workplace representative is comparatively high. The Danish collective bargaining model is considerable weaker in the private and outsourced sections of the elder care sector (Larsen et al. 2010; Arnholtz and Navrbjerg, 2021; Larsen & Ilsø, 2022).

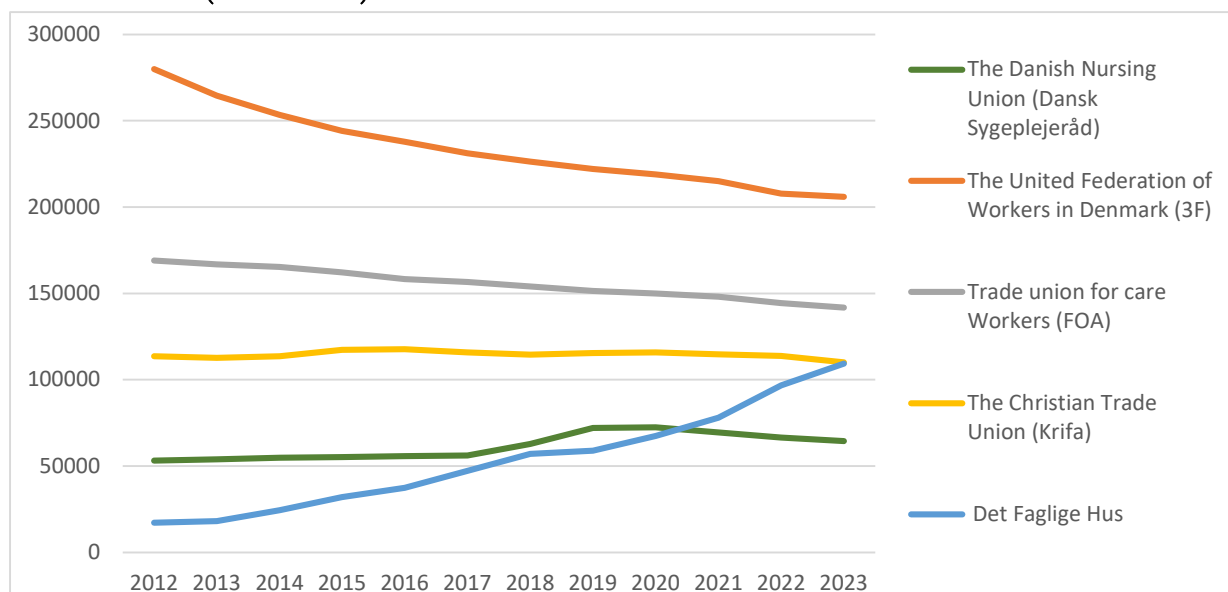
5.1. Trade unions and employer organisations

The main social partner organisations representing care workers and care providers differ slightly depending on the public and private subsectors of elder care.

The main trade unions

The public sector trade union, FOA, represents both skilled and unskilled care workers and has a membership of 141,789 (following a drop of almost 30% of membership since 2012) (figure 3). FOA is the main trade union that solely represents care workers engaged in home help provision and cleaning services in collective bargaining within the public sector. The Nursing union (DSR) represents the interests of nurses in public sector bargaining and has a membership of approximately 64,334. Unlike FOA, DSR has gained members since 2012 (Figure 3). Other trade unions such as the Christian trade union (KRIFA) and det faglige hus also organise and represent care workers in the public care sector, but are typically not engaged in public sector bargaining despite representing an increasing share of workers (figure 3).

Figure 3: Recent membership trend among Danish trade unions representing care workers in actual numbers (2012–2023)



Source Statistics Denmark (2024x: LonMED3)

The largest trade unions representing care workers in the private sector are FOA, 3F and DSR. DSR represents nurses working in the private sector while FOA represents care workers involved in providing personal care. 3F represents workers providing cleaning services as part of home help services. Unlike FOA and DSR, 3F also represents workers in other sectors (construction, manufacturing, private services, transport, agriculture, etc) and is the largest Danish trade union despite their shrinking membership base (drop of nearly one in two members between 2012–2023, figure 3). All three unions – FOA, 3F and DSR – are involved in collective bargaining in the private

sector and have signed a series of collective agreements representing various groups of care workers. Trade unions such as KRIFA and det faglige hus also organise care workers in the private sector, and although they have fewer collective agreements in this sector, only one of those agreements (the agreement between Det faglige Hus and KA, 2023) covers cleaning and care services within the elder care sector (KRIFA, 2024: Det faglige hus and KA, 2024: 2023).

The main public and private employers' associations

The main employer associations for public and private care providers are local government Denmark (KL), Danish Industries (DI), the Danish chamber of Commerce (Dansk Erhverv, DE) and the Christian Employers association (KA). The employer association – Local Government Denmark – represents the 98 Danish municipalities in the collective bargaining rounds for the local government sector as well as in the negotiations with central government. Individual municipalities are responsible for the administration, service delivery and local budgets in the elder care sector while central government sets the national regulatory standards and national elder care and disability budgets (Mailand and Larsen, 2020). Danish Industries and the Danish chamber of Commerce (DE) represent the private care providers and private cleaning companies that provide services older people. They have negotiated a series of collective agreements on behalf of care workers in the private sector, including collective agreements on temporary agency care work with FOA, DSR and 3F, respectively. The Christian Employers Association has also negotiated collective agreements with FOA for care workers while their collective agreement with det faglige hus also covers cleaning services in the private care sector (FOA and KA, 2023: Det faglige hus & KA, 2023).

5.2. Collective bargaining structure – public sector

In the public care sector, wage and working conditions are regulated through collective agreements negotiated at four different levels. At central level, it is Local Government Denmark (KL) and the trade union bargaining cartel (Forhandlingsfællesskabet, comprising 40 public sector trade unions including FOA and DSR) that negotiate the general terms and conditions, including the overall economic framework. At sectoral level, collective bargaining takes place between KL and individual sector-level trade unions, such as FOA, that negotiate the occupational-specific wage and working conditions. The third level is the municipal level, at which representatives from the individual municipalities – such as HR and other directors on the employer side – negotiate municipal-specific wage and working conditions with the local union branches of FOA or individual shop stewards representing care

workers. The fourth and final level of collective bargaining is in the individual workplace such as the nursing home, public home help or cleaning provider, whose local workplace managers will negotiate with shop stewards or local union branches of FOA. These local bargaining processes typically involve negotiations of bonuses and other workplace specific terms and conditions (Mailand and Larsen, 2020; Hansen, 2013). Although there has been an increased decentralisation of collective bargaining within the Danish public care sector, collective bargaining remains highly centralised, particularly in regard to wage-setting. This is characterised as the standardised wage-setting system, leaving limited scope for company-based bargaining (Hansen, 2013). The often limited financial resources allocated for company-based wage bargaining further limits company-based wage bargaining (Navrbjerg & Larsen, 2022; Hansen, 2013). Recent figures from FOA indicate that the share of FOA members reporting that workplace bargaining did *not* take place at their workplace has increased from 70 per cent in 2016 to 82 per cent in 2022, with more than one in two of the union members reportedly unaware of the opportunities for company-based wage bargaining (FOA, 2016a; FOA, 2022).

5.3. Collective bargaining structure – private sector

In the private care sector, the collective bargaining landscape differs from the public care sector, appearing more fragmented with a highly complex web of collective agreements. Unlike the public sector, there are numerous sector-level and company based collective agreements covering distinct occupational groups within the private subsector of Danish elder care. For example, there are separate sector level agreements regulating wage and working conditions for care staff involved in personal home care services, cleaning services and nursing in the private sector. These sector-level agreements are negotiated between various employers' associations and trade unions depending on the subsector under consideration. For example, in the case of care workers involved in personal care provision but working in the care recipients' own home, the trade union FOA negotiate and sign sector-level agreements with the employers' associations such as Danish Industries, the Danish chamber of Commerce and the Christian Employers' Associations (KA). Care workers involved in private sector cleaning services are covered by yet another set of sector-level agreements in the private sector. The collective agreements covering this group of care workers are negotiated by the trade union 3F and the employers' organisations, Danish Industries and the Danish chamber of Commerce (DI & 3F, 2023; DE & 3F, 2023). There are also sector-level agreements regulating wage and working conditions for nurses in the care sector, which are negotiated by the Nursing union DSR and their counterparts – Danish Industries and the Danish chamber of Commerce. Care workers working as temporary agency workers are covered by different sets of sector-level agreements

than their peers in full-time, fixed-term or part-time employment. The collective agreements covering TAW also differ depending on the occupational group of care workers under consideration with one set of agreements covering care workers providing personal care services (DI & FOA, 2023a; 2023b; DE & FOA, 2023a: 2023b). Another set of collective agreements covers those care workers exclusively providing cleaning services but working as TAW (DI & 3F, 2023; DE & 3F, 2023). Further sector-level agreements cover workers supporting disabled adults in both the private and public sector.

On top of the various sector-level agreements, there are also a wide range of company-based collective agreements on care work and cleaning services in private homes. Since 2018, there has also been a company-based agreement for platform workers providing cleaning services to private households – the so-called Hilfr agreement – negotiated and signed by the platform-based cleaning company, Hilfr and the Danish trade union 3F. This agreement was groundbreaking in many ways being not only the first of its kind in Denmark, but also including a series of novel regulations such as providing scope to platform workers to decide on their employment status, guaranteed minimum hourly wages and rules and regulations related to dismissal and the removal of profiles on the labour platform (Ilsø and Larsen, 2022). The Hilfr agreement was successfully renegotiated in August 2024 and streamlined the employment status by only offering employment status choice only to employees, but also included a series of novel AI rights – these made employers accountable for any decisions made by algorithms, enabling the collectivisation of individual personal data rights and thereby enabled evidencing of any violations of personal data rights at the Danish arbitration and labour courts (Hilfr & 3F, 2024). In addition, labour clauses used in public procured care work legally extends the wage and working conditions outlined in the most representative collective agreements in a particular sector (Refslund et al. 2023). The labour clauses are based on the stipulations within the ILO convention 94 and are used by nine out of ten Danish municipalities outsourcing care or cleaning services to private contractors (3F, 2021). Their labour clauses typically stipulate that private contractors are obliged to adhere to the wage and working conditions outlined in the most representative sector-level agreement within a particular sector (KL, 2015; 3F, 2021). In the case of the care sector, the most representative collective agreement for outsourced cleaning services is typically considered to be the agreement by DI and 3F (2023) the 'Service agreement' whilst for care tasks, the sector level agreements by DI & FOA (2023a: 2023b) and DE & FOA (2023a) – the 'elder care agreement' is often referred to by Danish municipalities for public procured care work.

5.4. Content of the collective agreements – main changes since 2017

The collective agreements regulating wage and working conditions in the Danish elder care sector are typically negotiated every 2–3 years. The most recent collective bargaining round in the public sector was in Spring 2024 and the most recent bargaining round in the private sector Spring 2023. Since 2017, there have been three sector-level bargaining rounds in the public sector (2018–2021, 2021–2023 & 2024–2027) and three sector-level bargaining rounds for the private sector (2017–2020, 2020–2023, 2023–2025). Besides the sector-level rounds, local company-based bargaining in the private sector has been undertaken with the most recent being the re-negotiated Hilfr agreement, signed by the Danish trade union 3F and the cleaning platform Hilfr on the 11th of August 2024 following a nearly 4-year bargaining process (Ilsø & Larsen, 2022; Finans, 2024; Hilfr & 3F, 2024). Various themes have dominated the collective bargaining agenda in the public and private sector since 2017 and have subsequently formed part of the most significant changes to the various collective agreements in the public and private sector (Appendix A table 1 & 2).

In the following, we review the main sector level agreements negotiated by FOA and their counterparts (KL, DI & DE) covering care workers involved in personal care as well as the sector-level agreements by 3F and their counterpart (DI & DE) for cleaners involved in care work. In order to identify the main changes and bargaining themes since 2017, we also review the sector-level agreements covering care workers working as TAW or disability assistants. In addition, we include examples of the key changes to company-based agreements using the KA-care and the Hilfr agreement for cleaners working via the digital cleaning platform Hilfr (see also the Danish national report for WP5). These agreements indicate that social partners have prioritised different themes depending on the collective agreement under consideration, which point to important cross-sectoral variations in the rights of care workers operating under the different sector-level and company-based agreement, although similar topics have formed part of the bargaining agenda. The main changes and bargaining themes can be grouped into the following broad themes: wages, work-life balance, atypical employment, further training and up-skilling, Occupational Health & Safety (OSH). The approaches to strengthening the Danish collective bargaining model in the public and private care sector have also been major collective bargaining themes (see Appendix A, tables 1 & 2).

Wages

Wages and demands for wage increases have dominated the bargaining agenda in the last three rounds of sector-level bargaining in both the public and the private care sectors. The bargaining results indicate that Danish trade unions have successfully negotiated substantial wage increases for care workers. For example, during the 2018 public sector bargaining round, the trade union FOA managed to secure a general

wage increase for care workers of 6.82% in 2018 compared to 5.02% in the 2021 bargaining round and 8.8% during the 2024 bargaining round (Appendix A table 1). The private care sector has seen similar wage increases in the last three successive sector-level bargaining rounds. For example, in the private care sector, FOA and their counterparts (DI and DE) agreed to a general wage increase of 7,5 DKK per working hour during the sector-level bargaining round in 2017 and yet another wage increase of 9,55 DKK per working hour in 2021 and 11,75 DKK in 2023 (Appendix, table 2). The sector-level agreements covering cleaners, TAW and disability assistants have also seen substantial wage increases. During the last three bargaining rounds in the private care sector, 3F has successfully negotiated wage increases for cleaners similar to those of care workers working under FOA's collective agreements while FOA has succeeded to secure wage increases for TAWs corresponding to a 5.9% wage increase in 2017, 6.8% in 2021 and 7.8% in 2023 (Appendix A, table 2).

Besides the general wage increase, social partners have also agreed to other wage-related improvements in both the public and private care sector. These have included increasing the unsocial hours allowance and increasing pension contributions across different collective agreements. However, cross-sectoral variations in how wage related changes are implemented in social partner agreements. For example, social partners in the public care sector have initiated a range of pilot projects with earmarked funding to tackle wage inequalities and recruitment challenges within the elder care sector. The pilot projects have typically been accompanied with various pay increases explicitly targeting care workers (Appendix A table 1). In the private care sector, the trade union representing cleaning assistants (3F) agreed with the employers' organisations DI and DE to introduce a sector-based transferrable pay allowance for all cleaning assistants covered by their collective agreements during the 2017 sector-level bargaining round. This sector-based pay allowance is novel in that it is linked to individual workers' employment record, not to their workplace, and will thus follow the individual cleaner when moving from one cleaning company to another to avoid a potential loss of accrued wage rights when changing jobs within the cleaning sector (Appendix A, table 2). In addition, social partners within the cleaning sector agreed to a new and more flexible pay system in 2017, which can be considered a radical change to their traditional highly centralised wage-setting system. Social partners within the cleaning sector have subsequently expanded the opportunities for company-based bargaining and increased wage flexibility during the last three successive sector-level bargaining rounds in the private sector (Appendix A, table 2).

Work-life balance

Work-life balance is another main collective bargaining theme that has strengthened care workers' social rights. For example, in both the public and private care and

cleaning sectors, paid parental leave, including periods with ear-marked parental leave has been extended during successive bargaining rounds, as have the levels of wage compensation (full wage compensation) during the paid parental leave period (Appendix A table 1 & 2). New rights for additional paid and unpaid carer days as well as paid hospitalisation leave for parents whose children are ill have also been introduced in both the public and private sector-level agreements since 2017. In the public care sector, social partners have also agreed as part of their different collective bargaining compromises to new rights to paid compassionate leave for parents losing a child and time off for fertility treatment. However, whilst the various new work-life rights cover all care workers in the public sector, the situation is slightly different in the private sector where many of these new work-life balance rights are only accessible to workers employed for at least 9 months with the private care or cleaning company. There are also many instances where new work-life balance rights do not apply to TAW working under collective agreements signed by FOA and their counterparts, as social partners have agreed to surrender such social benefit rights in return for a higher hourly wage (DI & FOA, 2017a: 2017b, 2021a: 2021b, 2024a: 2024b; DE & FOA, 2017a: 2017b, 2021a: 2021b, 2024a: 2024b).

Older workers have also gained new rights during the collective bargaining rounds in both the public and private care sector. For example, in the public care sector, social partners have agreed via collective bargaining to additional paid and unpaid days of for older workers, pay bonuses and coverage of retirees to increase retention of these workers in paid work (Appendix A, table 2). In the private care sector, new rights to unpaid senior workers days and outpayment from pensions contributions for older people have formed part of some of the sector-level bargaining results (Appendix A table 2). In addition, social partners in the private care and cleaning sector have agreed to more generous entitlements under the so-called *free choice scheme*, which enable care workers to choose to exchange their rights to paid carer days for further training, additional pension contributions or an outpayment (Appendix A, table 2: DI & 3F, 2023: DI & FOA, 2023a). Although the free choice scheme has existed in most private sector-level agreements since 2007, such schemes do not yet exist in the public care sector (DI & CO-industri, 2007: KL & Forhandlingsfælleskabet, 2024). However, during the 2024 collective bargaining round in the public care sector, social partners agreed to a pilot project exploring the benefits and drawbacks of introducing the free choice scheme in the public care (KL & Forhandlingsfælleskabet, 2024).

Atypical employment

Atypical employment has also been high on the public and private bargaining agenda and social partners have agreed to various new rights and joint pilot projects to improve working conditions for this group of workers (Appendix A, table 1 & 2). For

example, in the public care sector, social partners have initiated a joint pilot project with earmarked funding to increase the proportion of full-time positions and have agreed to jointly explore the quality and availability of data on atypical work. This pilot project has been extended and additional funds added to the project over the last three collective bargaining rounds in the public care sector. Other public social partner initiatives specifically targeting atypical work include an awareness campaign targeting on call-temps to inform them of their pension rights and new rights to holiday entitlements for the newly employed (Appendix A, table 1). In the private sector, social partners have strengthened the rights of atypical workers across the different sector level and company based collective agreements implemented since 2017. This includes, for example, the introduction of new social rights and increased pension contributions for TAW (Appendix A, table 2). Examples of other joint social partner responses are particularly seen within the cleaning sector. During the 2020-sector level bargaining round, social partners agreed to introduce a new form of on-call temps who are permanently employed with minimum guaranteed weekly working hours, but with flexible workplaces across the cleaning company (Appendix A, table 2). Social partners within the cleaning sector have also developed, and subsequently strengthened, various tools aimed to prevent social dumping through better control of employers' usage of zero-hour contracts and subcontractors during the last three successive sector-level bargaining rounds. For example, in 2020, shop stewards and trade unions gained new rights to access to payslips, employment contracts and subcontracts in cases of suspected violation of labour standards amongst cleaners employed on zero-hour contracts or working for subcontractors (Appendix A, table 2). To tackle atypical work, notably contracts of few hours, which is fairly widespread within the Danish cleaning sector, social partners have also agreed to a new regulation that gives existing cleaning staff the right to be allocated any available hours (rather than the company employing new staff) thereby increasing weekly working hours as part of the 2020 collective bargaining compromise (Appendix A, table 2).

It is also within the cleaning sector that there are recent examples of innovative collective agreements aimed at regulating wage and working conditions of platform workers. This includes, for example, the Hilfr-agreement, a company-based agreement signed between the Danish trade union 3F and the cleaning platform Hilfr in 2018 and renewed in 2024, aimed at regulating the wage and working conditions of platform workers providing cleaning services in private homes. The Hilfr-agreement is groundbreaking in many respects as it introduced new digital employee rights, granted platform workers employee status and most recently was the first Danish collective agreement regulating AI with different AI-based employee rights along with cloud-based union-led representation fora (3F & Hilfr, 2018; 2024; Ilsø & Larsen, 2022). In fact, the social partners in the Danish cleaning sector are renowned for their ability to strike compromises in bargaining areas – where other sectors often

experience deadlocks – and will develop innovative solutions to pressing challenges, which will not only regulate the Danish platform economy, but also protect subcontracted workers and workers on zero-hour contracts, etc. (Larsen & Mailand, 2018; Ilsø, 2020).

Further training & Up-skilling

Further training and upskilling of the care workforce have also attracted social partners' attention in the public and private care sector, often in relation to the various debates on labour shortages (FOA & Forhandlingsfællesskabet, 2018: 2021; 2024: DE & FOA, 2017a: 2020a: 2023a: DI & 3F, 2017: 2020: 2023). In the public care sector, social partners have agreed to various joint pilot projects with ring-fenced funding to upskill the care workforce, along with various joint campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness of further training opportunities. The eligibility criteria for accessing further training have also been lowered over the course of successive public sector-level bargaining rounds (Appendix A, table 1). In the private care and cleaning sectors, social partners have also prioritised upskilling and further training, which has led to new rights for further training, but with important variations across different employee groups (Appendix A, table 2). For example, care workers employed as TAWs have limited, if any, rights to further training and only care workers of a certain age with a specific employment record within the company and working under specific FOA's collective agreements have gained new rights to further training during the last three collective bargaining rounds (FOA, 2027: 2020:2023, Appendix A, table 2). In contrast, the collective agreements covering cleaners rarely differentiate between employee groups and all have access to the new rights on further training and upskilling, provided they meet the eligibility criteria (Appendix A, table 2).

Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational health and safety (OSH) has also been debated during the last three successive sector-level bargaining rounds. For example, in both the public and private care sector, social partners have agreed to address the OSH-risks associated with night shifts following the recommendations by the Danish Health and Safety Agency (NFA) during the 2023 and 2024 sector-level collective bargaining rounds (Appendix A, table 1 & 2). This initiative is novel in that social partners decided to directly integrate the recommendations on night shifts by the Danish health and safety agency into their collective agreements (Hansen et al. 2023). Other recent collectively bargained OSH-initiatives include the joint public social partner response to combat harassment and violence, their initiatives on digitalisation and employee surveillance and different attempts to improve working conditions (Appendix A table 1 & 2).

Employee voice & the Danish collective bargaining model

Our review of different collective agreements in the private and public sector also indicates that the consultative and representation rights of care workers have been strengthened during the last three collective bargaining rounds (Appendix A, table 1 & 2). For example, in 2023, care workers working as TAWs gained new rights to two online information meetings with the trade union FOA, where the care company is legally obliged to advertise these meetings. Personal disability assistants also gained new consultative rights following the appointment of educational ambassadors and new rights to elect shop stewards during working hours. Disability assistants also gained the rights to consult with their shop stewards during office hours as part of the collective bargaining results in 2023 (Appendix A table 1 & 2). In addition, the rights of health and safety representatives have been strengthened in both the public and private sector agreements following the last three rounds of sector-level bargaining. There has also been an increased focus on strengthening social dialogue among local social partners on topics such as further training and upskilling in the collective agreements covering both the public and private care and cleaning sectors (FOA & Forhandlingsfællesskabet, 2018; 2021; 2024; DI et al 2017; DI & 3F, 2021; 2023; DI & FOA, 2021a; 2021b; 2023a; 2023b). Another recent example is the Hilfr-agreement, where social partners agreed to a cloud-based fora, where workers can meet online with the union and workplace representatives (Hilfr & 3F, 2024).

5.5. Enforcement of collective agreements

In Denmark, it is the trade unions and the union affiliated workplace representatives that are responsible for enforcing the collective agreements at company level. It is also the trade unions that decide whether a case should be brought before the Danish arbitration system and labour court, notably, if it concerns violation of the collective agreements. Regarding statutory labour law, individual workers have the right to bring potential violations of statutory labour laws before the traditional legal court system. Trade unions can also bring court cases before the juridical system on behalf of their members. The system is slightly different for violations of wage and working conditions that form part of public procured work. In Denmark, most public authorities apply labour clauses in publicly procured care work, but only few public authorities, including Danish municipalities, regularly inspect and have implemented systematic enforcement of their labour clauses (Refslund et al. 2024: 3F, 2017: KL 2015). In this context, it is the public procurer, not the trade unions that has the right to enforce the labour clause and decide whether such violations should be pursued further. This has triggered much debate in Denmark, including in the elder care sector due to a series of bankruptcies of private care providers that left care recipients without the promised

care provision, the care workers losing their jobs and the local governments having to pay the compensation (Mailand and Larsen, 2020; Refslund et al. 2023; Jæhring et al. 2018).

5.6. Mapping of the visions/actions/strategies of social partners on the sector

The visions, strategies and actions by the Danish government and social partner organisations are outlined in various policy documents and share several similarities in terms of what each individual organisation envisions and prioritises for the coming years. Below, we briefly outline the key stakeholders' strategies, visions and strategies.

5.6.1. The Danish government's vision and future actions

The Danish government's vision and future actions for the elder care and home help sector are outlined in their recently adopted *aged care reform package* with the legislative changes being introduced via the newly proposed Aged Care Act (subject to consultation at the time of writing but expected to be adopted and come into force in July 2025), (Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Elder care, 2024b). The three main visions of the reform package involve 1) increased empowerment of older people, 2) higher levels of trust in the capabilities of care workers and care management to move towards establishment of self-governing care worker teams, and 3) closer collaboration between carers, local communities and civil society. The reform package also aims to establish 4) a more holistic approach and citizen orientated care visitation, 5) increased privatisation and equality between public and private care providers, 6) expansion of welfare technology in the form of a new welfare technology strategy and 7) improved care quality (Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Elder care, 2024b). The reform package is accompanied with substantial additional funding and appears to be a broad political compromise. In early September, the new proposed Aged Care Act (2024) was published and aligns with the government's priority to secure increased self-determination of older people and trust in care workers and closer collaboration with informal carers, local communities and civil society. The overall aim is to support the notion of shifting from a welfare state towards a welfare society with increased local autonomy (Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Elder Care, 2024b). The specific elements related to care workers include supporting both management and care workers in their new roles and with new responsibilities to ensure the best possible conditions for a more supportive and interdisciplinary collaboration between occupational groups within the elder and home care sector. This is partially done by expanding the pilot schemes of self-governing care staff teams which is heavily inspired by the Dutch *Burrtzorg* model. This aims not only to overcome occupational divides amongst groups of care staff, but also to support more flexible ways in which to deal with the day-to-day work tasks. The effect of these changes is expected to lead

to lower levels of sick leave, greater work satisfaction and professionalism for service delivery, and improved care quality (Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing & Elder care, 2024b).

5.6.2. The Danish Employers' future vision and actions

The Danish employers' future vision and actions for the elder care and home help sector are outlined in the care strategies by the three employers' organisations representing the public care providers (KL) and the private care providers (DI and the Danish Chamber of Commerce).

KL – vision for the future

KL's vision for the future care provision is outlined in various policy documents such as their 2020 and 2021 recommendations for future proofing the elder care sector, their recommendations to address labour shortages within the sector and their joint strategy with the Danish regions on future-proofing the health care sector. Most recently, KL has also welcomed the Danish government's vision for the future elder care and home help sector, which shares many similarities with the visions set out by KL (KL, 2024a). KL's strategy for the elder care and home help sector from 2020, revised in 2021, forms the backbone of their vision for the elder care sector and is centred around the following themes:

- *A tripartite recruitment plan*, involving ways in which to strengthen recruitment and retention of social and health education students, ensure motivated care workers and attractive workplaces and a restructuring towards a more digital welfare.
- *A holistic care approach* with continued experimentation on the pilot schemes of self-governing care teams with inspiration from the Dutch Burtzorg model, where home help is organised in interdisciplinary teams around a permanent group of care recipients. The aim is to facilitate greater flexibility, greater stability in the care provision and increased empowerment of care workers in care decisions
- *A new Health care reform* to provide clarity on the division of health and social care responsibilities between regions (hospitals) and municipalities.
- *A simplified and coordinated inspection model* to allow more time for care staff and management to address their key work tasks rather than addressing the uncoordinated care inspections by the higher authorities, which is reportedly overly time consuming.
- *Revision of the requirements for documentation* to avoid unnecessary paperwork and free up time for care staff.

- *Integrate family care givers* in care provision, involving strengthening the collaboration with care recipients' families to optimise care provision
- *Upskilling care staff and care managers*. Additional funds allocated to upskilling the care workforce and ensure smaller teams
- *Welfare technology*. Greater investment in welfare technology and digital solutions to empower care recipients and create a more attractive work environment for care workers by simplifying and optimising work processes (KL, 2021).

DI's visions and actions

DI's visions and actions on elder care are outlined in various documents, which outline their overall aim to create the best possible framework for private service and care companies in Denmark and to ensure these companies play a key role in the Danish society (DI, 2024a). Most recently, DI has also welcomed the government's reform package, especially the need to focus on dignity, empowerment and greater flexibility in service provision and the vision to reduce administrative bureaucracy by streamlining the various documentation requirements (DI, 2024e). In addition, the aim to address the labour shortages within the care sector and the improved public-private collaboration has also been embraced by DI (DI, 2024e: DI 2023). DI's vision for the elder care and home help sector does not only targets this subsector, but targets private services more broadly. Their vision includes the following broad themes:

- *Social sustainability and the labour force*, which include loosening regulations on the employment of foreign labour (notably from non-European countries); upskilling the service workforce; targets for social inclusion to improve the image of the sector through improved integration of foreign workers; vulnerable groups; disabled people and older workers. Part of this is also to increasingly utilise the educational funds for company specific projects, actions and initiatives (DI, 2024a: 2024b).
- *A Digital and sustainable service sector*: This vision includes ways to make specific technologies and digital solutions more visible to private service companies to enable them to optimise their company or develop new services. DI also aims to offer their members access to networks and progress the development of digital projects such as a new digital sandbox project. Part of their strategy or vision is also to inspire and contribute to a greener business model with more recycling and lower levels of CO2 emissions involving, for example, a CO2 emission evaluations target for all companies with 250+ workers (DI, 2024a; 2024c).

- *Expanded and improved public-private collaboration.* This theme involves a greater focus on public tenders to ensure decent working conditions as well as an aim to develop various sustainability and quality indicators to provide evidence to public clients on the best or worst performers. Part of this strategy is to introduce a systematic dialogue with public clients and to strengthen network and knowledge sharing between private service companies (DI, 2024a; 2024d).

The Danish Chamber of Commerce's vision and actions

The Danish Chamber of Commerce (DE) vision shares many similarities with the two employer associations previously mentioned and DE has also welcomed the Danish government's recent reform package for the elder care and home help sector (DE 2024a: 2024b: 2024c). However, unlike the two employers' organisations, there is a limited focus on the care workers for the future care sector (DE, 2024a: 2024b). Their vision is divided into the following broad themes:

- *Active information about the free choice between public and private care providers.* This vision involves the appointment of an independent advisor within local government to provide advice on the relevant care services. Part of this vision is that municipalities report fairly and systematically on all local public and private care providers.
- *Challenging care homes should also be subject to public tenders.* This theme aims to ensure that inspection of the elder care sector should be independent of local government to ensure independent and non-biased assessment.
- *Allowing the private sector to contribute to the future of welfare.* This vision proposes that all care tasks be subject to public tender. In this context, private companies should also be permitted to build and operate new elder care centres. Part of this strategy or vision is to allow buyers the scope to select public or private care providers based on an open tender (DE, 2024a: 2024b).

5.7. Danish trade unions & their future visions and actions

The Danish trade unions such as the Danish trade union confederation (FH), FOA and 3F have also recently published their vision for the future elder care and home help sector. Across their visions, strategies and actions there is a much stronger focus on care workers than the employers' associations. Most union strategies or visions also include broader perspectives on how they envisage the future of elder care and home help sector. FOA, the trade union for care workers, has the most comprehensive strategy for the future of the Danish elder care sector.

FOA

FOA's visions, aims and actions for the coming years are outlined in their vision paper, *'Jointly, we make a difference'*, adopted at the union congress in 2023 (FOA, 2023c). Their strategy identifies four main themes with associated visions and actions under the broad headings of *'the future workers' collective'*, *'the future working life'*, *'future professionalism'* and *'the future welfare'*. For the *'future workers' collective'*. The vision and associated actions under each theme are for example:

- *The future workers' collective*. FOA's headline vision under this theme is to reverse the recent membership decline by uniting and engaging all members and elected representatives with specific actions to reach out to non-union members by integrating the organisation of members in all relevant work tasks. Part of this is also to contact all new colleagues, even before their employment commences, to encourage them to become union members. Other actions include strengthening the network of union affiliated workplace representatives, improving their working conditions and strengthening their bargaining mandate. FOA also envisage enhancing their visibility through regular union visits to relevant educational institutions to raise awareness amongst students of the FOA and the Danish bargaining model and to invite students to join FOA (FOA, 2023c).
- *The future working life*. FOA's vision under this theme is to ensure wages match the work tasks and responsibilities of care workers and that wages reflect the impact care work has on care workers' health. A specific focus is on improving occupational health & safety (OSH), which includes work autonomy for the individual care worker, higher levels of employee influence on work organisation as well as ways to increase flexibility over the life course. The latter includes improvement of older worker's schemes, a dignified retirement, and flexible working with consideration of OSH risks. The overarching aim is to protect care workers' rights to time-off, full-time work and permanent positions as well as to ensure a sustainable working life through visible improvements of OSH to prevent adverse effects on mental and physical wellbeing. Strengthening the workers' collective is also an essential part of FOA's vision to develop the future working life (FOA, 2023c).
- *Future professionalism*. Under this theme, FOA seeks to inspire more young people to become skilled care workers and thus aims to reverse the recent trend of rising proportions of unskilled vis a vis skilled care workers. FOA also aims to promote the visibility of the occupations that the union represents. There is also a series of initiatives to add a green and sustainable profile to care jobs and develop entirely new positions in the labour market across various occupational groups. Their agenda also aims to ensure that the correct competencies match specific work tasks and preparing the range of occupational groups for future skill demands. The

proposal is for greater cross-occupational collaboration, sharing of work tasks between different occupational groups and support for members in mastering different technological solutions. Specific actions include aims to secure full wage compensation during further training, new career paths with a focus on interdisciplinary skills, the green transition and sustainable welfare. The vision is for employers to offer unskilled workers access to further training to become skilled care workers after 2 years of employment (FOA, 2023c).

- *Future welfare:* Under this theme, FOA aims are to ensure that elder care services reflect the recent welfare trends and considers the environment in its practices. Specifically, FOA will push for more solidaristic welfare reforms that address the increased inequalities in care provision. In addition, FOA will strongly lobby for developing public care provision, oppose increased outsourcing and private- for-profit welfare services such as private health insurances. Other specific actions aim to prevent downward pressures on wage and working conditions in public tenders by demanding the implementation of labour and social clauses in public tenders with a specific focus on OSH and further training. FOA also calls for the abolition of financial penalties when municipalities overspend on their budget (FOA, 2023c).

3F's vision and actions

The 3F's vision and actions are outlined in their 2030 strategy entitled: '*Less inequality, more security and ready for the green transition*' (3F 2022a: 2022b). They adopt a broader perspective – beyond just the elder care and home care sector. Their aims include the expansion of the welfare state, increased investment in upskilling the workforce, along with measures to prevent social dumping, and strengthening the Danish collective bargaining model. The latter includes the introduction of new employer contributions to develop measures to prevent precarious employment as well as a proposal to increase the tax relief for union membership fees currently in place individual workers. Other aims include increased investments in preventive measures on health and safety and strengthening social protection, notably unemployment benefit levels, sick pay and early retirement schemes besides reforming the overall taxation system (3F, 2022a: 2022b).

FH's vision and actions

FH's vision and actions for the future elder care and home help sector is outlined in their 2030 plan, which was published in August 2024 and offer a broader approach to the future welfare state, beyond the elder care and home help sector (FH, 2024a: 2024b). Their vision includes a sustainable and balanced financial plan with investment in welfare, education and training as well as ensuring a highly qualified workforce to deliver welfare services and facilitate productive private companies (FH, 2024a). More

specifically, FH emphasise in their 2030 plan the need for increased investment in the care sector to maintain service levels. They also foresee a need to invest in upskilling the care workforce with ringfenced funding for education. Investment in the green economy is also deemed important (FH, 2024b). FH has welcomed the government's new aged care reform package, particularly the aim to streamline administrative bureaucracy. FH also welcomes the government's holistic care approach with associated greater autonomy and empowerment of care workers and care. However, FH is critical towards the government's aim to expand privatisation of the welfare services (FH, 2024c).

6. Summing up and conclusion

The Danish elder care and home help sector is changing not only in terms of its workforce composition, but also in the increasingly fragmented and complex regulation of wage and working conditions, involving sector-level and company specific collective agreements, labour laws and labour clauses. Our findings indicate that the sector struggles to recruit and retain skilled care workers and that the proportion of unskilled care staff is rapidly increasing. We also find that atypical work, notably part-time work, continues to be widespread in the sector although social partners have introduced a range of initiatives to promote full-time work and strengthen the rights of atypical workers. In contrast, platform work remains a marginal phenomenon within the Danish care sector. Other characteristics of the Danish care sector are the high levels of sick leave and the comparatively high risks of work-related stress, harassment, violence and bullying. Research findings indicate that many care workers leave the sector due to issues with their working environment, heavy workload and – in particular – where harassment and violence at work is experienced. Some studies also examine health and safety risks amongst those care workers providing cleaning or caregiving via a labour platform; research indicates that female platform workers are more likely to be exposed to an increased risk of bullying and sexual harassments (Nielsen et al. 2024; Rasmussen, 2024). Social partners have in various ways attempted to address the high incidence of bullying and harassment through collective bargaining, but research identifies that this remains a significant problem throughout the sector. Besides addressing such health and safety concerns, Danish social partners have also agreed to a plethora of new provisions and employee rights in their various collective agreements, most recently, with the so-called Hilfr-agreement covering cleaners working for the Hilfr labour platform. When it comes to futureproofing the Danish elder care and home help sector, Danish trade unions and employers' organisations have, similar to the Danish government, proposed and

developed a series of strategies, visions and actions for the future of care. Many of their initiatives share certain commonalities; the overarching aims across the key stakeholders often evolve around addressing the rising labour shortages within the sector, the needs to upskill the care workforce and finding ways in which to retain and recruit care staff. There also seem to be a shared vision to ensure greater empowerment of care workers and care recipients as well as greater collaboration between different levels of government and across occupational groups to ensure an overall improvement of the working conditions and care quality. All in all, our findings point to a key feature of the Danish industrial relations system within both the public and private care sectors – both trade unions and employers’ associations, in close collaboration with the Danish government, take on a social responsibility to not only improve wage, working conditions and care quality, but also seek to jointly futureproof the Danish elder and home help sector.

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Appendix A: Overview of examples with main changes & bargaining in public and private sector agreements covering care workers (2017–2024)

Table 1: Examples of main changes and bargaining themes within public sector agreements covering care workers (2017–2024)

	<i>Public sector main changes & bargaining themes</i>
<i>2018–2021</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General wage increases of 6,82% - Increased unsocial hours allowance & pension contribution for those hours - New rights to carer days for foster parents - New rights for employees in fertility treatment - New rights for grievance leave for fathers and second parent in case of still born child(ren) - New rights to accrued holiday entitlements – newly employed rights to paid holiday in their first year of employment <p><i>Joint social partner led pilot projects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal pay project with earmarked funding to reduce gender pay gap, especially within female dominated occupations. - Pilot project with Ear-marked Recruitment funds to attract social and health assistants with wage increase for apprentices/students and increase unsocial hours allowance. - Pilot project with earmarked funds to increase full-time work and implicit facilitate gender equality & address labour shortages - Pilot project: Strengthening further training & competences especially among unskilled & low skilled - Increased awareness campaign of pension rights for on-call temps
<i>2021 – 2024</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>General wage increases of 5,02%</i> - <i>Increased overtime pay & rights to new unsocial hours allowance</i> - <i>New rights to paid grievance leave from 14 to 26 weeks and up until child 18 years.</i> - <i>New rights for older workers aimed to retain them in paid work (offer for senior position, 2–4 senior days etc.).</i> - <i>Lowering eligibility to further training from 5 to 2 years</i> <p><i>Pilot projects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pilot project on permanent temps & simplification of shifts & working time - Set-up of ear-marked low wage fund to increase wages for care workers on wage level 11–21 (wage increase for individual workers = 993 DKK per year, 2022)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set-up of ear-marked Equal pay fund specific for care workers under FOA) to reduce gender pay gap in female dominated sectors - Earmarked recruitment fund to attract social & health assistants to improve working conditions - Continuation of pilot project on strengthening further training & competences - New information campaign on further training opportunities targeting care workers & management - Pilot project on sick leave reductions - Pilot project on full-time employment, on call temps, fixed-term work including improving statistical data on these groups - Pilot project on ensuring green & sustainable workplaces - Pilot project on developing the digital working life, using welfare technologies and their implications for service provision & working conditions
<p><i>2024-2027</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General wage increases of 8,8% - Additional wage increase for care workers from the 2023-Tripartite agreement - Increase of unsocial hours allowance & associated pension contribution equalling an additional wage increase of 500- 789 DKK per year per employee depending on employee group - New rights to accumulate 15 days of paid holiday & increased paid holiday allowance - New rights to paid parental leave with 3 additional weeks - New rights for retirees to be covered by collective agreement if taking up employment - New rights to senior bonus for older workers - Night shifts to be part of annual OSH-review, incl. information campaign on OSH-risks associated with night work - Update 2008-agreement on surveillance and control to include digital surveillance tools - New separate collective agreement for self appointed care assistants <p><i>Pilot projects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuation of pilot project on low wage workers with additional ear-marked funding (yearly wage increase per employee of 1924 DKK) - New pilot project on prevention of (digital) harassment, work-related violence & bullying

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Set-up of dialogue platform to facilitate further training, incl. new website (vpt.dk) to ease accessibility to information on further training- Continuation of pilot project on promoting full-time work with focus on that increased full-time work do not necessarily trigger increase in non-standard work – a focus area for the coming years incl. data availability on non-standard work- Pilot project on exploring potential free choice schemes (carer days, pension, further training, wage) with the aim to discuss this for OK-2026
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Source FOA, 2018, 2021: 2024: KL & Forhandlingsfælleskabet, 2018, 2021: 2024)

Table X: Examples of main changes and bargaining themes within private sector-level and company-based agreements covering care workers and cleaners(2017-2024)

	<i>Private sector main changes & bargaining themes</i>
2017-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>General wage increases (FOA –care workers & 3F cleaners: 7,5 DKK per working hour, FOA-TAW: 5,9%)</i> - <i>New rights to paid and unpaid carers leave & hospitalisation leave for parents with ill children</i> - <i>New rights to full wage compensation during paid parental leave (excluding FOA-TAW)</i> <p><i>Only FOA-care workers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>New rights to 32 unpaid senior days for older workers (FOA-care workers)</i> - <i>Increased allowance for free choice scheme (carer days, pension, wage, further training (excluding TAW)</i> - <i>New tools for shop stewards to inspect TAW work</i> - <i>New rights for TAW to transfer accrued employment rights with user company if shifting from TWA to direct employment with user company (Only DI CA)</i> - <i>Increased pension contribution for TAW working as hourly paid workers (7,2%)</i> <p><i>Only 3F-cleaners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Increased unsocial hours allowance</i> - <i>New wage model incl. company-based wage bargaining</i> - <i>New rights to transferrable sector-wide allowance</i> - <i>New rights to further training</i> - <i>2018- Hilfr agreement covering platform workers</i>
2020-2023,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>General wage increase (FOA–care workers & 3F-cleaners: 9,55 DKK per working hour, FOA-TAW: 6,8%)</i> <p><i>Only FOA-care workers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>New rights to paid carer days & hospitalisation leave (only for those with 9 month employment record)</i> - <i>Free choice scheme – increased allowance 3% (excluding TAW)</i> - <i>New rights to paid parental leave (3 weeks for the parents not on leave) (excluding TAW)</i> - <i>New rights for older workers to get outpayment from pension contributions as an allowance (excluding TAW)</i> - <i>Joint initiative to promote further training for unskilled (excluding TAW)</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>New rights to skilled training with pay for those aged 25 with 2 years seniority (excluding TAW)</i> - <i>New rights to take annual leave in hours not just whole days (excluding TAW)</i> - <i>–Increased competence allowance of 6,8% (only TAW)</i> - <i>–Increased pension contribution (only TAW)</i> <i>Only 3F cleaners</i> - <i>New form of on-call temps (flyvere), who are permanently employed with a minimum guaranteed weekly working hours, but flexible workplaces across the cleaning company</i> - <i>New rights to paid Danish language courses during work hours (2 weeks paid training)</i> - <i>New rights to control employers potential misuse of zero-hour contract</i> - <i>New rights and tools to inspect for social dumping</i> - <i>New rights to social allowance during sick leave</i> - <i>New rights to outpayment of accrued pay under the free choice scheme in case of dismissal</i> - <i>New rights to calculation of transport routes from strait line to google maps.</i> - <i>New rights that available working hours are allocated to existing employee rather than recruitment of new workers</i>
2023–2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>General wage increase (FOA-care workers & 3F cleaners: 11,75 DKK per hour, FOA-TAW: 7,8%, FOA disability care workers: 8%)</i> <i>Only FOA care workers</i> - <i>Increase pension contributions</i> - <i>Implementing working conditions directive</i> - <i>Implementation of NFA’s night shifts recommendations (max 3 nights shift in a row, max 9 hour shifts, 11 hours rest btw. Shifts, pregnant women max 1 night shift per week)</i> - <i>New rights to paid parental leave (4 weeks) (excluding FOA TAW)</i> - <i>Increased allowance under free choice scheme (2%) (excluding TAW & Disability care workers)</i> - <i>Rights to paid further training for 25+ with min 24 weekly working hours & 1 year employment record (only DE) with ordinary pay (excluding TAW & Disability care workers)</i> - <i>CA extended to cover residential care for older people and disabled people (only DE) (excluding TAW)</i> - <i>Pilot project on 4 day working week (DI) (excluding TAW & Disability care workers)</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in qualification allowance of 7,8% (only TAW) - New rights for 2 online union organised information meetings with TAW, which care company is obliged to advertise. - New rights for election of shop stewards (elected in working day, new rights to meet with new workers during working time (only FOA disability care workers. - Election of educational ambassadors (only FOA disability care workers) - New rights to 30 days notice period if client dies (only FOA disability care workers) - Pilot project on self-managing team-based groups (DI) (excluding TAW & Disability care workers) - <p>Only 3F cleaners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New simplified and more transparent wage structure - Lower starting and higher end salary - Reduced notice periods (1 days notice within the first 14 days, the maximum notice period reduced from 4 to 3 months) - Increased unsocial hours allowance & overtime payments - Increased pension contributions - Wage increase for apprentice & Students of 8% - 2024 Hilfr agreement – new AI-rights & social benefit rights
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Source: FOA, 2017a; 2017b; 2020a; 2020b, 2023a; 2023b: DI et al, 2017; DI & 3F 2020; 2023; Dansk Erhverv et al. 2017, DE & 3F 2020; 2023; DA & FOA, 2017a; 2017b; 2020a; 2020b; 2023a; 2023b; DE & FOA, 2017a; 2017b: 2020a: 202b: 2023a: 2023b