Impact of digitalisation on social services

Presentation to EP Employment and Social Affairs Committee

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19 April 2021
How is digitalisation applied to social services?

Along three vectors of change:

- **Automation of work tasks and occupations:**
  advanced robotics (e.g. lifting in care), AI and machine learning

- **Digitisation of processes:**
  telepresence, Internet of things, virtual, augmented reality – applications in care, wearable devices; handling of benefits, employee monitoring

- **Coordination by platforms**
  mainly home care and childminding

*Impacts are different, therefore the policy action has to be targeted*

Who addresses digitalisation in social services at EU level:

- **Research** - such as by JRC on ICT-led innovation in social services, Eurofound on working conditions and on platform work

- **Social partners** – such as in case of FSE-EPSU 2019 Joint paper on Digitalisation in the Social Services Sector

- **Providers** – such as ESN 2021 ‘Transforming social services through digitalisation’

The potential and space for policy-led improvement

*Eurofound’s research helping to assess current and future trends:*

**ANALYSIS:**
- 34% care workers in healthcare and social work are 50-64 year old

**MONITORING AND REPORT SERIES:**
- New forms of employment; platforms
- Game-changing technologies
- Use and delivery of public services

**SURVEYS:**
- ECS asks about how the enterprises use data analytics
- EQLS asks about service user satisfaction
- EF COVID survey asks about use of care services during pandemic

**Expand knowledge on scale and take-up of digitalisation in social services**

**GOVERNANCE**
- Tackle *fragmentation*: linking public administration databases; linking provision of health and social care

**WORKFORCE**
- Digital infrastructure has to be followed by the *skills upgrade*: take the services staff along the technological progress – the change is fast, an ageing workforce needs support; involve users in co-designing services

**SERVICE USERS**
- Develop regulation on:
  - *transparency of algorithms*
  - *opportunities to redress decisions based on algorithms*
Limitations of digitalisation as experienced during the pandemic

• The technologies are vital in ensuring the continuity of care, tackling social isolation and meeting spikes in the demand of care.
• The pandemic encouraged to maximise the potential of digital technologies, but also disclosed where the limitations can be. Organisational innovation necessary along the digitalisation.

In progress: Eurofound 2021 project
Adapting to a new reality – provision and use of public services in COVID19 times:

• Events and services online enhanced participation by people with mobility limitations and those in active ageing activities, which was a positive development
• Coverage by outreach services for at-risk groups decreased due to skill/technology barriers
• Participation in informal education and social work with young people decreased over time due to online fatigue
For more information, data and findings

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