



## APPEAL TO MOBILIZATION OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES WORKERS

### Fighting for health and care beyond the pandemic

#### **"TAKE CARE OF US SO THAT WE CAN TAKE CARE OF YOU."**

The COVID-19 pandemic is still with us and many countries across Europe are seeing a surge in cases. This full second wave of infections will again put health and care under massive strain.

We are mobilizing to ensure health and essential workers are protected now and to put our health and social care systems on a firmer footing to respond to this and future pandemics. The billions that are being made available and which should be committed to national and European recovery plans turns the immense challenge we face into an opportunity to transform health and social care for the long term. We urgently need safe staffing levels and decent pay so that health and social services workers can deliver the quality care people deserve.

- **Safety:** During the pandemic health and care workers have faced enormous pressure and serious risks to their safety. We are mobilizing to ensure that proper personal protective equipment, testing and vaccination are available to all staff and in the quantity and quality that will guarantee safety now and in the future. It is essential to ensure that all frontline workers across Europe receive fair compensation for their service during the pandemic. Those infected also need the best possible medical care and the assurance that COVID-19 is treated as an occupational disease.
- **Safe staffing:** Health and social care systems across Europe were already under pressure due to staff shortages before the pandemic hit. This is no longer sustainable. The European Commission calculates that there will be dramatic shortages in health and social care provision in the next decade unless appropriate measures are taken. This means it is necessary to recruit and retain more workers by making the sector more attractive; increase the capacity of education and training systems in health and social care; and deliver permanent jobs for the many young skilled workers recruited under precarious conditions to cope with the pandemic.
- **Higher pay:** The recruitment of staff to health and social care is hampered by long-standing problems of poor pay and working conditions. It is scandalous that those facing such serious risks to their health and who are committed to care for the ill and elderly are so poorly rewarded. As health and social care workers, we deserve better pay and conditions for the work we do and not just one-off bonuses for fighting COVID-19. The strengthening of collective bargaining and coverage of more workers are crucial to achieve this.
- **Quality care for all:** While it is mainly up to national health and social care systems to tackle these challenges, we need to reinforce cooperation, coordination and support at European level. **We ask the EU to contribute to increasing the safety and preparedness of workers. Funding needs to be restored for the EU4health programme to at least EUR 9 billion and in all countries government budgets must respond to the needs of our health and social care systems.**

Nurses, doctors, healthcare assistants, elderly and home care and other frontline workers are mobilising across Europe with their demands to transform the health and social care sectors. As a result of austerity and underfunding our hospitals and care homes were woefully ill-prepared for the pandemic. There has to be no return to austerity and it is time to listen to health and care workers, we can't miss this opportunity.

**It is time to invest in health and social care**