



# **The impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic on social care provision for older people**

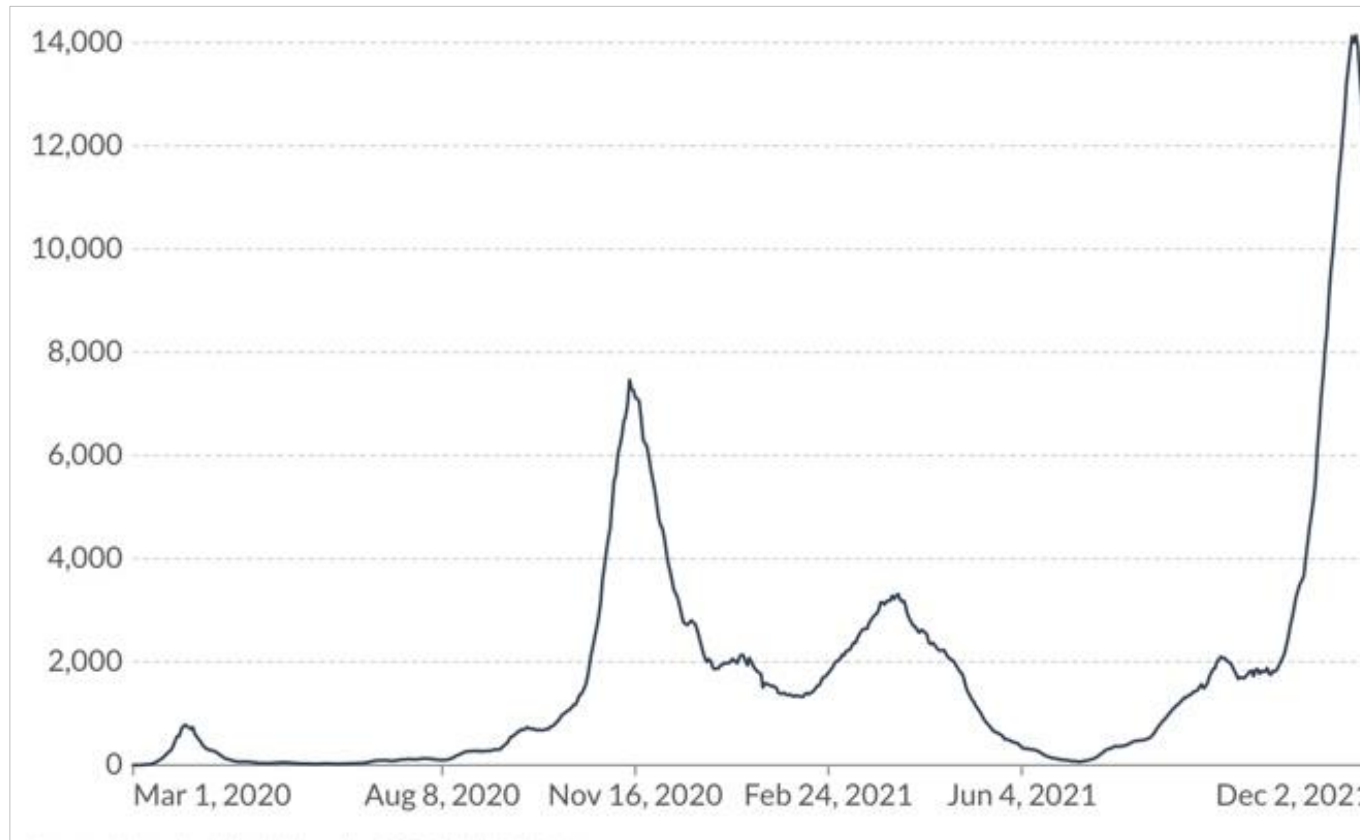
The example of live-in migrant carers in the Austrian LTC system

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## General introduction

### Number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Austria, March 2020 – December 2021



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

Total number of infections:

- By Jan 2021 (second wave): 43% of deaths in care homes (3,245 residents)
- Vaccination started in Jan 2021

Current situation of infections in care homes (fourth wave, Nov 2021):

- 835 staff (1-2%)
- 504 residents (<1%)
- BUT: Regionally concentrated clusters

## Live-in migrant carers in Austria

### How it started

- Exceptional growth of migrant live-in carers over the past two decades
  - Slovak Republic, Romania, Hungary ..., mainly women
  - More than 66,000, more than 30,000 clients (families)
- Public regulations have contributed to a ‘fragile balance’ of rights, precarious working conditions and quality of care
  - ‘White-washing’ (Personal Care Act, 2007): subsidies for clients, regulations regarding competencies, competences and working conditions (unique in Europe)
  - The status as self-employed personal carers
  - Bi-weekly or 3-monthly shifts – working time issues?
  - The role of brokering agencies

## Live-in migrant carers in Austria

### How it developed

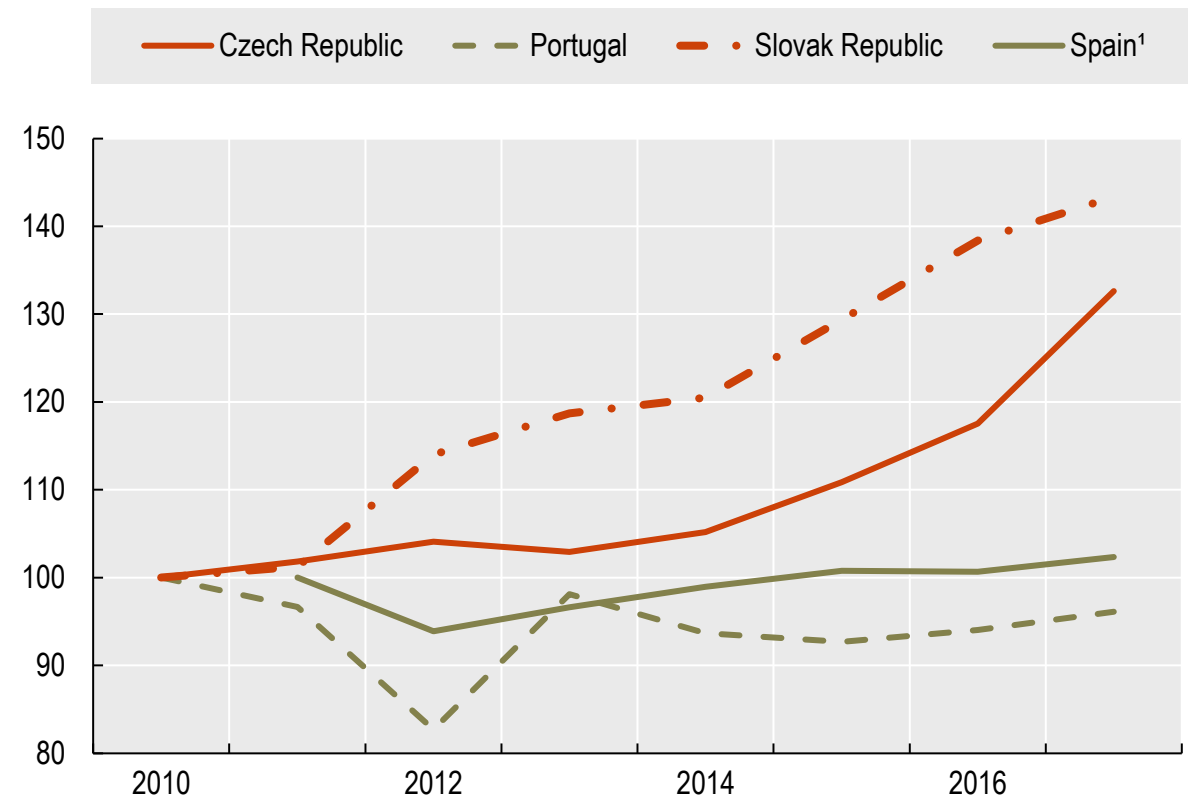
- COVID-19 revealed the fragility of the live-in carer model
  - Travel restrictions
  - Isolation in private homes
  - Activation of emergency transport during lockdown periods
  - Self-employed (registered with the Chamber of Commerce) but no or only restricted entitlements and access to support measures
- Some public attention, but no substantial debate or reform
  - Voluntary quality certificate for brokering agencies
  - Possibilities for political action restricted
  - Lack of data

## Live-in migrant carers in Austria

### How it is proceeding

- Back to normal?
  - Increase in subsidies claimed by Chamber of Commerce
- European context and future perspectives
  - German Federal Labour Court sentenced that 24-hour care means an entitlement for 24 hours of minimum wage ...
  - Exceptional pay rise in health care and nursing professions (e.g. CZ, SK)
  - Development of LTC systems also in Eastern European Member States

Trends in the remuneration of hospital nurses, nominal terms, 2010-17 (Index 2010 =100)



Source: OECD (2019). Remuneration of nurses, *Health at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. Paris, OECD Publishing.

## Learning from the pandemic?

- Better coordination of social and health care
- Joint efforts to improve working conditions, education, training and retention of workforce (autonomy, wages, working-times, less bureaucracy ...)
- More cooperation of sending and receiving countries
- Ethical recruitment
- Supporting the development of LTC systems in Eastern Europe

# References

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