



Young carers' mental health

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The Eurocarers Network

European network of carers' organisations and relevant research institutes. 67 members from 25 European countries.

Our mission

Ensure that the significant contribution made by informal carers to health and social care systems and the economy as a whole is recognised and safeguarded through adequate support.

Who are the informal carers?

Any person who provides care - usually **unpaid** - to someone with a chronic illness, disability or other long lasting health or care need,

outside a professional or formal framework.



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Who are young carers?

Young carers are children and young persons under 18 who care, unpaid, for a family member with an illness or disability, mental health condition or addiction.

They carry out, often on a regular basis, significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility that would usually be associated with an adult.

Young adult carers

18– 24 years

Adolescent young carers

15- 17

What do young carers do?

- Practical tasks (e.g. cooking, housework and shopping);
- Physical care (e.g. helping someone out of bed);
- Emotional support (e.g. talking to someone who is distressed);
- Personal care (e.g. helping someone dress);
- Managing the family budget and collecting prescriptions;
- Helping to give medicine;
- Helping someone communicate;
- Looking after brothers and sisters.



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Number of children caring England & Wales (Census 2001, 2011)

AGE	2001 England and Wales	2011 England and Wales	Increase	% increase
5 - 7	5,465	9,985	4,520	83%
8 - 9	7,834	12,148	4,314	55%
10 - 14	62,661	72,266	9,605	15%
15	21,402	23,848	2,446	11%
16 - 17	52,580	59,671	7,091	13%
All	149,942	177,918	27,976	19%

Hours per week spent caring, England & Wales (Census 2011)

AGE	1 - 19 HOURS	20 - 49 HOURS	50+ HOURS	TOTAL
5 - 7	7,177	1,166	1,642	9,985 (6%)
8 - 9	9,424	1,204	1,520	12,148 (7%)
10 - 14	59,262	7,043	5,961	72,266 (41%)
15	19,596	2,489	1,763	23,848 (13%)
16 - 17	47,309	7,520	4,842	59,671 (33%)
All	142,768 (80%)	19,422 (11%)	15,728 (9%)	177,918



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Number of young carers across Europe

UK

8% young carers (11-18 years)

Sweden

7% young carers (14-16 years)

The Netherlands

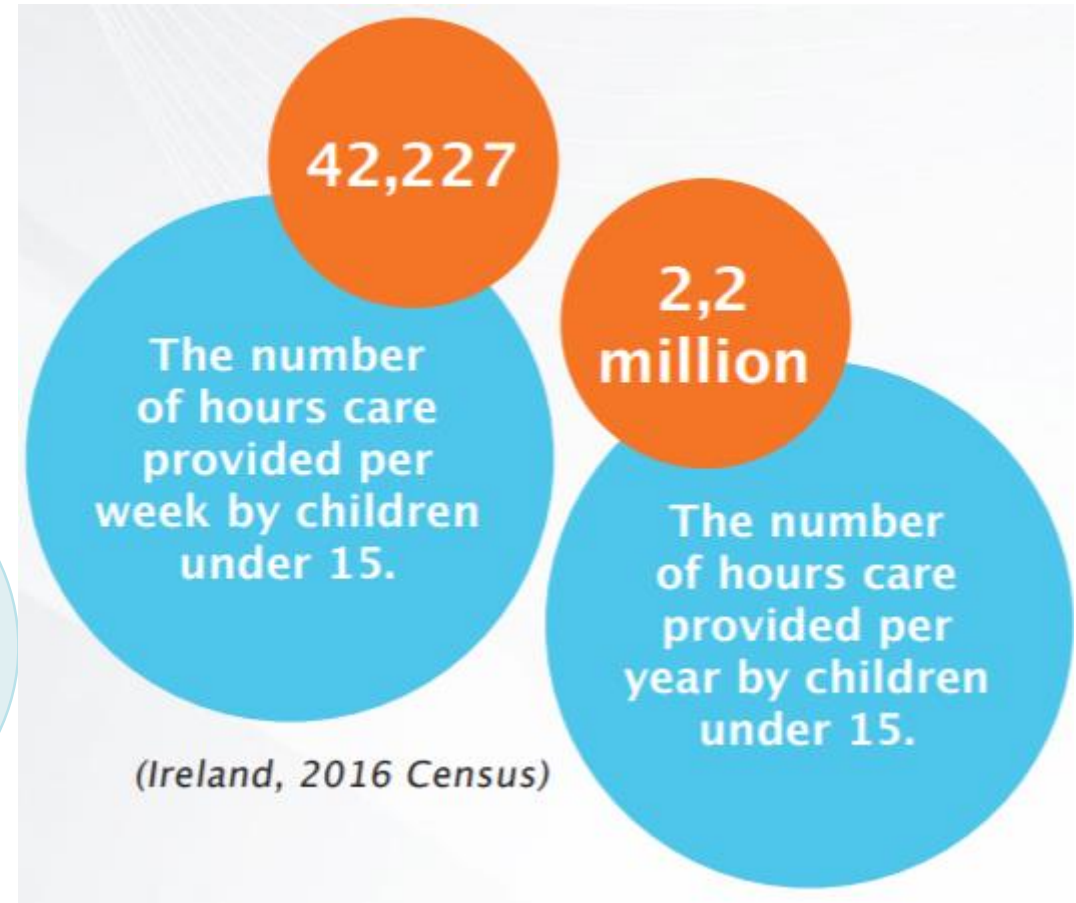
6% young carers (13-17 years)

Italy

7,3 % boys
6,9% girls
(15-24 years)

Switzerland

7,9% young carers (10-15 years)



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Young carers: a “hidden army” of carers

- ✓ Problem in self-identification
- ✓ Fear of being judged or misunderstood by their peers, teachers or service providers
- ✓ A parent may discourage or disallow a young carer accessing services, because of privacy concerns, fears of child protection intervention (separation), cultural norms or even denial of existing circumstances
- ✓ Fear to appear not good enough in providing support for their family member
- ✓ Stigma (e.g. when cared for person has mental illness or substance dependency)
- ✓ Uncertainty about who to talk to
- ✓ Believe that nothing will change if they disclose their caring responsibilities
- ✓ Service providers tend to focus on the cared for person
- ✓ Wider community is not aware of specific services for young carers (if any)



Young carers remain unidentified and they do not receive the support they need

The impact of caring

Mental health and wellbeing

Young carers can gain satisfaction from caring and experience self-esteem, empathy, maturity. Yet, having to reconcile new life challenges (e.g. entering the labor market, attending university courses, starting their own family) with caring responsibilities can be overwhelming. The pressure associated with caring can be considered as a risk factor for mental ill-health.

Education

In the absence of adequate support, caring can have a negative impact on young carers' education, as it can entail under-achievement, absence and drop-outs. These short term effects can cause low employability in the long term.

Social Life

Young carers might have less dedicated time for personal development and leisure. They can also become victim of social stigma and bullying, with the result of a higher life course social exclusion.

Focus on mental health

Positive aspects of caring: young carers may gain satisfaction from caring and experience a range of enhanced emotional aspects (self-mastery, self-esteem, maturity, empathy and coping strategies). But when care become intense:

- worse mental health than their peers.
- Lower levels of life satisfaction
- internalised problem behaviours (feeling depressed, being withdrawn and anxiety)



The most common worries concern the health of the person cared for, their own health, who will look after them (if their parent is hospitalised for example), school work, money, bullying and having no friends.

Their most common problems relate to sleeping, suicidal thoughts, self-harm and eating disorders.

The young carers with the **highest levels of caring** don't cope as well with everyday living compared to the whole young carers' group. Their **mental health and wellbeing is more at risk.**

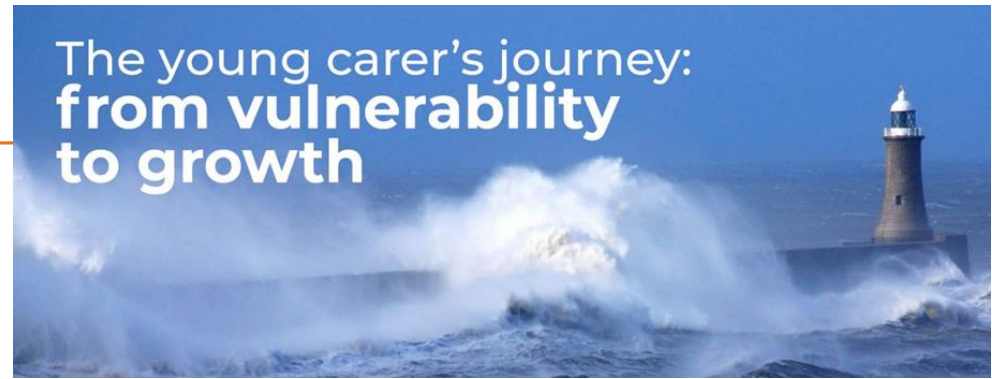


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What we want

Aim is to reduce **inappropriate and excessive caring** and negative outcomes (moving YCs ‘**from vulnerability to growth**’)



From *Vulnerability* ...

Inappropriate care	Excessive care	Restricted education
Reduced life chances	Affected wellbeing	Isolation
	High impact	

... To *Growth*

Learn	Thrive	Achieve
Protected	Enjoy	Supported
Identified	Assessed	Flourish

A continuum of children's caring

CARING ABOUT

Low levels of caring and responsibility

Most children

'Routine' levels and types of caregiving, including some help with instrumental tasks of daily life

Little evidence of negative outcomes

TAKING CARE OF



Caregiving tasks and responsibilities increase in amount, regularity, complexity, time involved, intimacy and duration

CARING FOR

High levels of caring and responsibility

Few children

'Substantial, regular and significant' caregiving, including considerable help with instrumental tasks of daily life

Evidence of significant negative outcomes



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Why do we need to support young carers?

Human rights argument

Young carers should benefit from equal opportunities to realise their full potential through social inclusion, education and employment.

They are a **vulnerable groups with specific needs** → Young carers have the right to **extra, tailored positive actions (reasonable accommodations)** to ensure that they have access to education and employment, to the highest attainable standard of psychical and mental health, to participation, to an adequate standard of living and to a family life be respected.

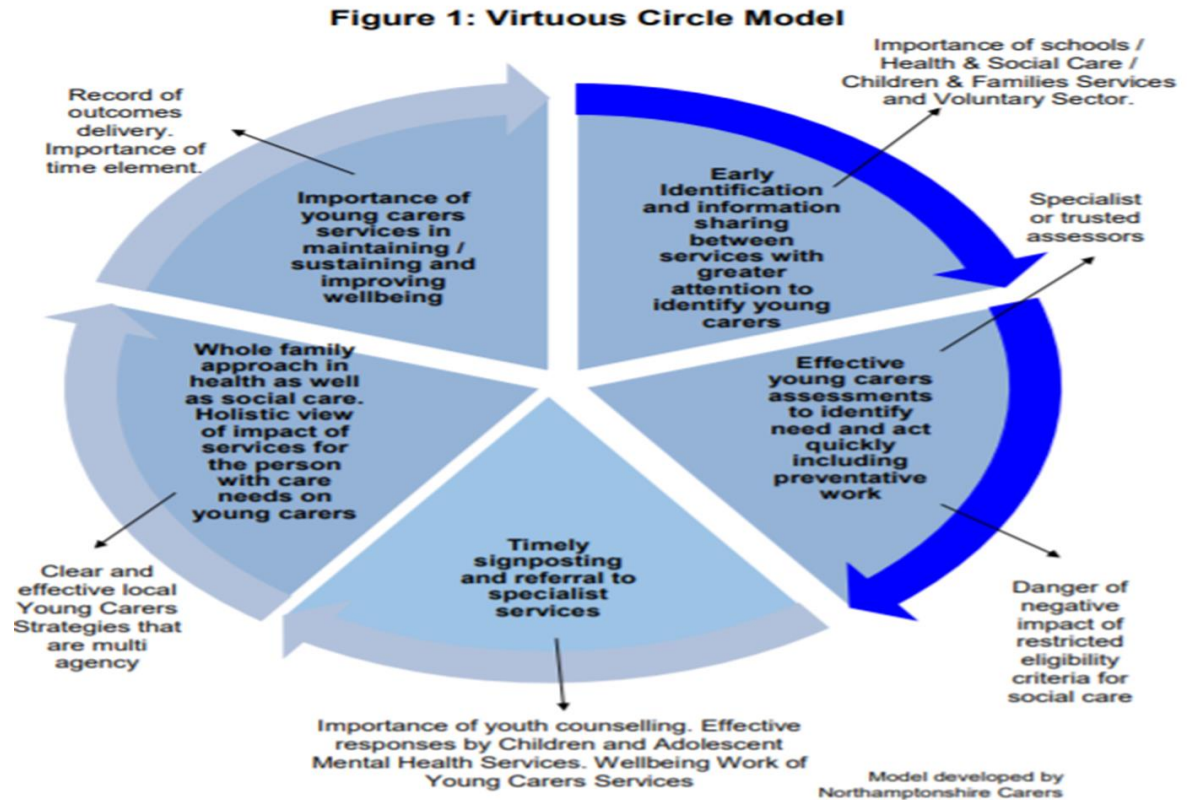


Economic argument

Investing in young people is a **social investment**
Early school leaving is an obstacle to economic growth and employment
Poor mental health is a cost for societies

How to support young carers?

- ✓ Provide more adequate and intensive **formal care** services to the cared-for person
- ✓ **Identify** young carers (vital role of schools!)
- ✓ **Assess** the health and social needs of care recipients, carers and the family as a unit (**whole family approach**)
- ✓ **Early intervention** (adopting a **preventative, lifelong approach**, focusing on specific needs at specific times and a **collaborative approach**, bringing together different services (youth, education, care, health, family).
- ✓ **Raise awareness** on young carers among health, education & social care practitioners and policy makers
- ✓ **Research** and evaluation is needed – what works and why?
- ✓ **Exchange of knowledge** and **good practices** between countries enables country specific research to be conducted.



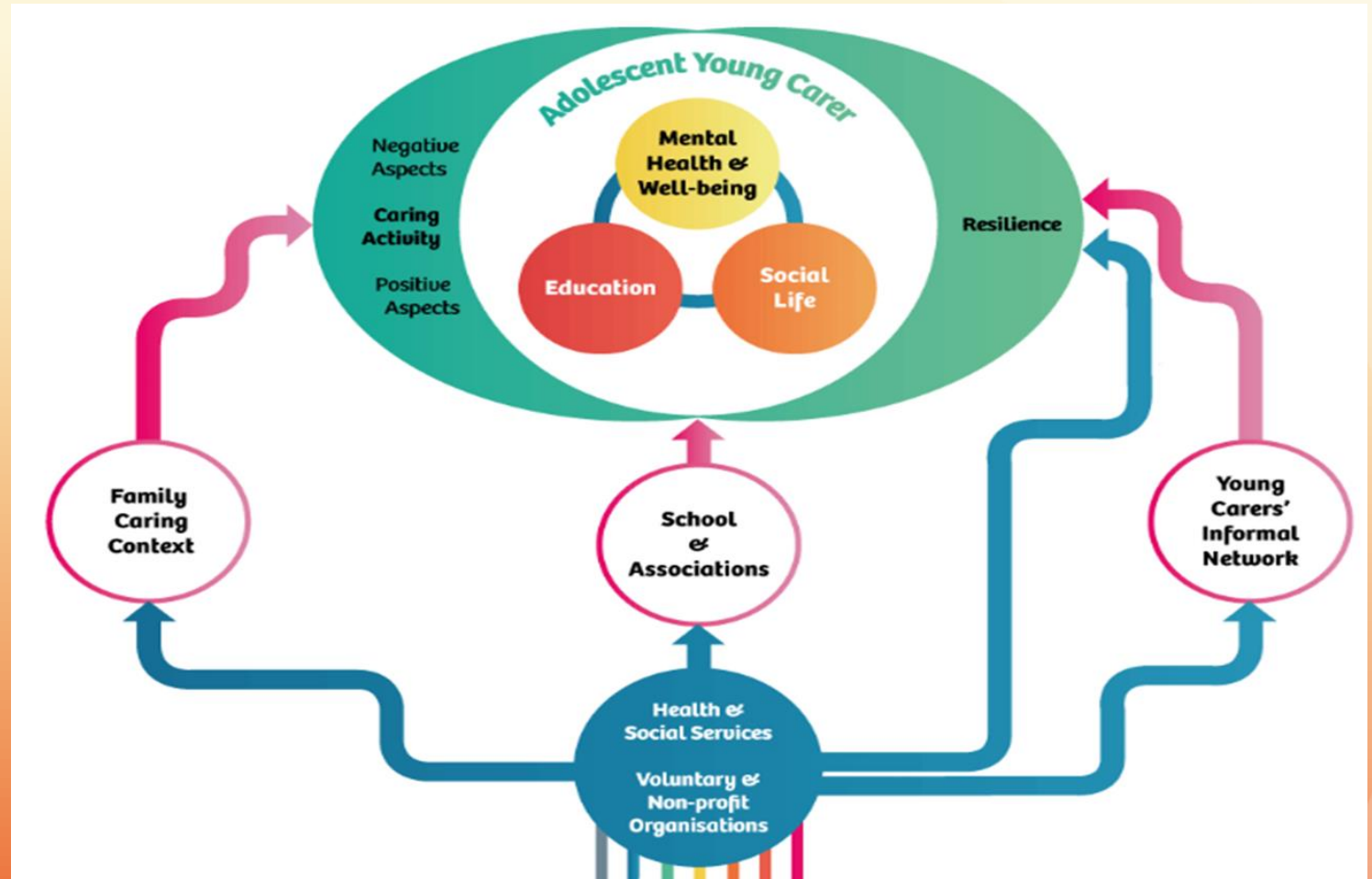
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Towards improved resilience and enhanced social support for adolescent young carers

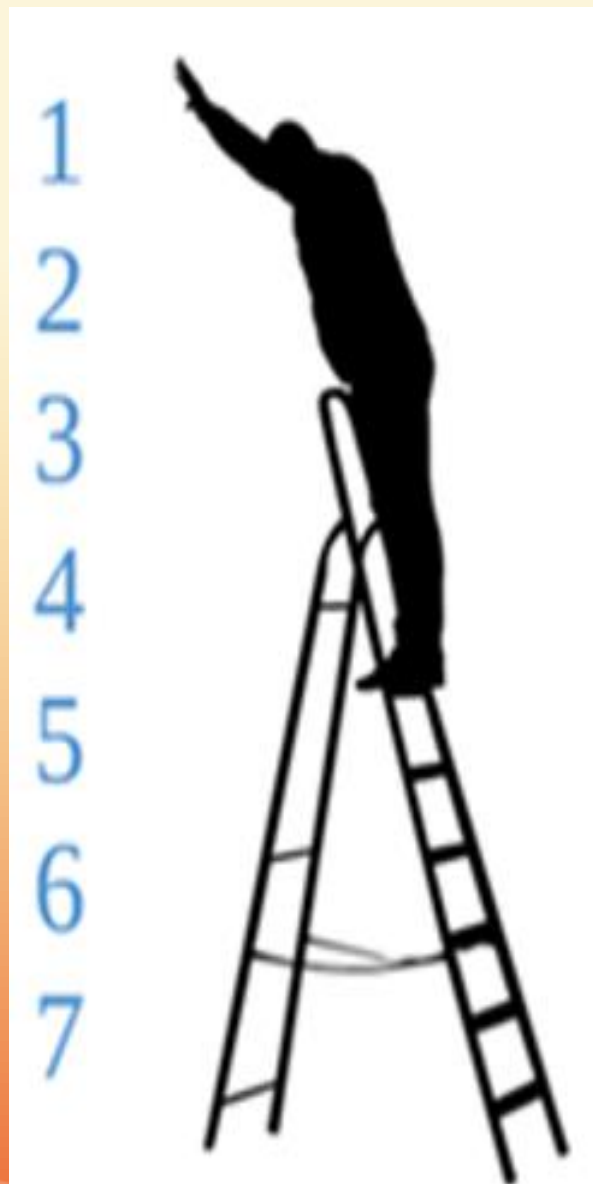


Aim: to mitigate the risk factor of being an adolescent young carers by empowering the young with **improved resilience** (the process of negotiating, managing and adapting to significant sources of stress or trauma) and **enhanced social support** (from family, school, peers, services).





The Me-We Project Consortium



Objective 1: Systematise knowledge

Adolescent Young Carers' profiles,
needs and preferences

National policy, legal and service
frameworks

Good practices, social innovations &
evidence

Objective 2: Co-design, develop and test with AYCs an effective framework of interventions

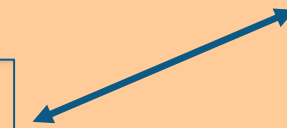
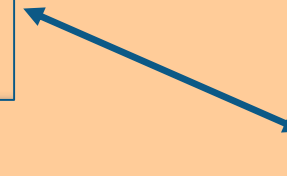
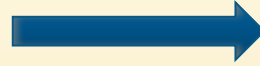
Participatory co-
design

Implementation

Evaluation and
impact

Objective 3: Carry out wide knowledge translation actions

Knowledge translation, dissemination and communication



Individual level

Short & medium term

Improved mental well-being in the targeted group of young people

Long term

Contribution to (a) reducing school and college/university dropout in the short term, (b) strengthening personal confidence and cognitive function, (c) improving educational efforts and (d) enhancing employability.

Societal level

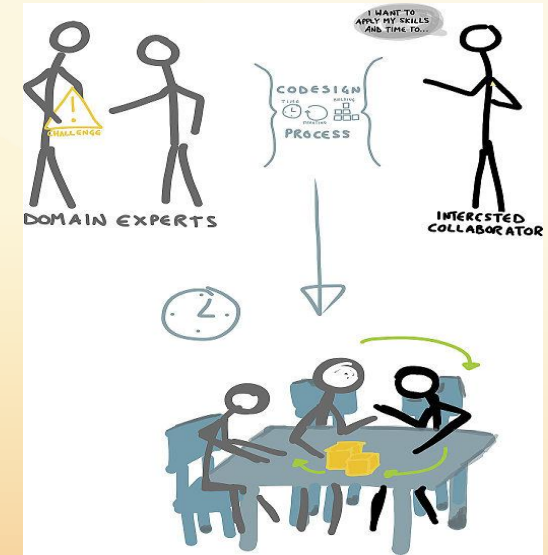
The innovative interventions will create (a) a strong evidence base for mental well-being promotion programmes in Europe, contributing to (b) greater health equity and (c) improved societal benefits.

Preventative strategies are established which have a real effect of reducing the occurrence of mental disorders and comorbidities associated with mental disorders later in life

The innovative aspects of the project



- It develops an **innovative framework of primary prevention interventions** to be tested and **adapted in 6 European countries** at different stages of awareness and development of services for adolescent young carers.
- **Co-design approach:** researchers will engage directly with and involve adolescent and adult young carers, together with carer organisations and major stakeholders through all the stages of the project.
- It implements innovative **Blended Learning Networks, i.e. heterogeneous 'communities of practice'** involving adolescent young carers and relevant stakeholders for discussing and finding best solutions.
- It is the first large scale programme to demonstrate the impact of a comprehensive primary prevention intervention for improving resilience of adolescent young carers.
- It ensures transversal knowledge sharing activities among partners and within cluster of countries.



Aim: Empower teachers and other school staff (e.g., school nurses, psychologists, social workers, management) in upper secondary education to recognise adolescent young carers (16-19 years old) in classes and maximize their learning opportunities, while ensuring their social inclusion.

Current situation

Lack of awareness among school staff about existence of young carers and their needs

- failure in tailoring education at schools to YCs' needs
- negative consequences on their educational attainments (as well as on their health, social inclusion and employment opportunities)



Desired situation

School staff is empowered to identify and support YC in their educational career→

- school dropout of YCs decreases
- educational efforts and attitudes towards higher education are improved
- Young carers employability is improved

Raising awareness about young carers at EU level



European Parliament Informal Carers Interest Group,
Meeting on Young carers: challenges and solutions, 6
March 2018



Many governments and services providers instances are unaware rather than unwilling → we need to raise awareness (1st step)

2nd step: **focused research** in order to develop **policies** (3rd step).
Final step: **putting policy into practice.**

→ Pilot project on supporting Young Carers by MEP Pietinkainen

[Eurocarers Policy briefing on young carers](#)

[Universal Children's Day: young carers deserve full enjoyment of their rights! \(20 November 2017\)](#)

[Press Releases: European Parliament Informal Carers Interest Group calls for action to support young carers \(7 March 2018\)](#)

DG Justice Newsletter on rights of the child No 3 2018 – 18 April 2018

EUROCARERS POLICY PAPER
YOUNG CARERS

PRESS
RELEASE



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Hearing from the experts: the Eurocarers Young Carers Working group



Common challenges:
loneliness, exclusion, no
one listening, and often a
sense of being different

Different
childhood,
same needs as
every other
child.

Need for more assistance from
professionals and from the rest
of our surroundings

Don't reduce us to
just being young
carers. We have the
right to be normal
children and young
people!

A simple action can change
the life of young carers!

Young carers have important
skills!



Working on a campaign to support young carers

Aim: To develop an EU-wide campaign to support young carers addressed to policymakers, based on the principles of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**



The Principles	The relevance for young carers
<p>Principle n. 1 – Education, training and life-long learning</p>	<p>Caring responsibilities can have a negative impact on young carers’ education (under-achievement, absence and drop-outs)</p>
<p><i>Principle n. 4 – Active support to employment</i></p>	<p>Young carers are more likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training) than their peers.</p>
<p><i>Principle n 11 – Childcare and support to children</i></p>	<p>Young carers needs to be considered as children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to extra, tailored support so that they can have equal opportunities in enjoying social rights.</p>
<p><i>Principle n. 18 – Long-term care</i></p>	<p>By providing good quality formal LTC services to the person they care for, inappropriate caring can be avoided.</p>

Save
the
Date

20 November 2020 - International
Young Carers Conference, Brussels



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Together we can achieve the desired
change!

Thank you!

Email: fc@eurocarers.org

www.eurocarers.org

More on young carers: <http://eurocarers.org/Young-Carers>

Edy-Care Project: <http://eurocarers.org/edycare/index>

Me-We Project: <http://me-we.eu/>



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