The struggles of migrant care workers

during the COVID-19 crisis in Austria

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DREPT-Interessenvertretung der 24-Stunden-Betreuer_innen in Österreich

DREPT-Interest group for live-in care workers in Austria

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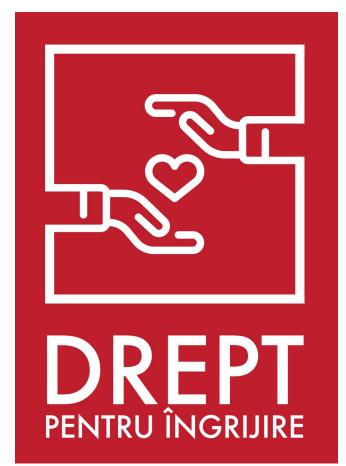
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WHO WE ARE:

DREPT is a self-organised interest group for migrant live-in care workers in Austria. Our organisation consists mainly of Romanian care workers and activists working or living in Austria. Together we fight for better labor rights and for better working conditions in the Austrian live-in care system.

Although its founding members have been active in the live-in care workers' movement for many years, DREPT was officially founded in January 2020 and has activated as an informal, self-organised community group up to August 2020, when it was finally registered as an NGO.

OUR VISION:

Our aim is to offer a fair representation of all migrant care workers active in Austria on an institutional and political level, to ensure access to their democratic workers rights and fight exploitation, abuse and wage dumping.

D.REPTATE R.ESPECT E.GALITATE P.ROTECŢIE T.RANSPARENŢĀ

(Justice)

(Respect)

(Equality)

(Protection)

(Transparency)

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DREPT-Community

Facebook Page: 7.976 Likes / 8.298 Followers; Monthly Post Reach: 74.674 People

Facebook Community Group: 3.810 Members









An Insight into the Austrian Live-in Care

- **58.975** self-employed care workers in the live-in Austrian care system;
- migrant workforce: Romania, Slovakia, Croatia, etc.
- feminised work: most live-in care workers are women



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For Romanian live-in care workers:

- low wages: 40-80 Eur/day
- **long shifts:** 4 weeks shift + 4 week break
- long working hours: on-call duty 24/7, sometimes with no breaks



An Insight into the Austrian Live-in Care

FALSE SELF-EMPLOYMENT:

Although the live-in care in Austria is mostly based on self-employment, and should therefore offer autonomy and flexibility, our direct experiences with Romanian care workers show us that there is a clear dependency and subordination to placement agencies or employer families.

ABUSIVE WORK CONTRACTS:

Most Romanian care workers cannot directly participate in the negociation of their contracts, since this is generally undertaken by the placement agencies. Most contracts include abusive conditions that disadvantage the carers, such as granting placement agencies the power to legally administrate the carer's self-employment or binding them to high fines if they break the contracts.

NO SOCIAL OR LABOR RIGHTS:

The self-employment system does not secure the carers with social and labor protection, such as: unemployment support, the right to take sick leave, collectively negociated and regulated salaries, a fair representation through state institutions or unions, a dignified pension, protection against abuse and exploitation.

LANGUAGE BARRIER:

Although most live-in carers are migrants, there is little access to public information in their native tongue.









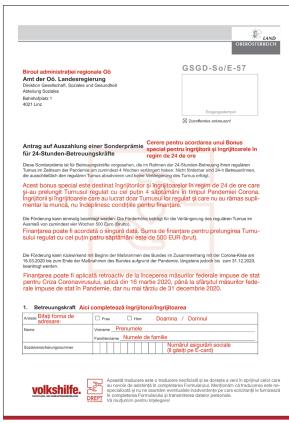
ÖSTERREICH

Coronavirus: Suche nach Lösung für 24-Stunden-Pflege läuft

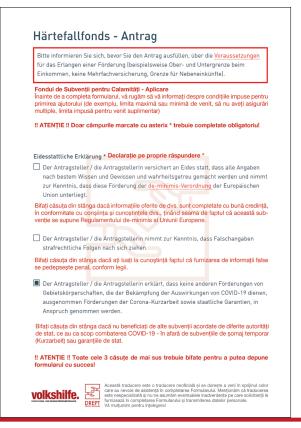




- 1. Restricted access to subventions or financial state support:
- 2. Reinforcing carer-client or carer-agency dependencies:









3. Austria-focused protection against Covid-19 health risks:

Although the carers were requested to bring negative PCR-Tests before returning to work in Austria, their clients or family employers did not face the same strict regulations in return. As a result, Romanian carers often felt unjustly treated by having to pay themselves for PCR-Tests, but not benefiting from the same strict protection against Covid-19 at their work place in Austria.

If tested positive when entering Austria, the reponsibility for the quarantine expenses remained unclearly regulated, exposing the carers to immense financial risks.

4. Increased pressure and abuse on carers during Covid-19 pandemic:

Due to mobility restrictions or closed borders, many shift transfers could not take place. As a consequence, placement agencies or even family employers put pressure on the carers to further extend their shifts. In many cases, the carers were threatened with losing their jobs, with not receiving the financial subventions or even their salary, so they were not in the position to refuse.

5. Violence against women:

It is our impression that the cases of domestic violence against women carers or women clients increased during the Covid-19 pandemic.





Where are we now?

1. Family bonus: indexed for migrant families with children living in their home country.

Austrian families: 360 Eur vs. Romanian families: 177 Eur

2. Refunding PCR-Test costs for the period beginning with March 2020.

Monitoring policy procedures, feedback on procedures, securing easy access to the refund process for care workers.

3. Care Reform

Participating in the "Care Task Force" of the up-coming Care Reform (planned by the Austrian Health Ministry) and representing the interests of migrant care workers.









Our mission?

The annulment of the (false) self-employment system and replacing it with a standard employment system in order to secure protection and fair labor rights.



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Thank you!



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