

Whatever happened to care? Why the challenge for progressive economies is to find a more inclusive, people-focused approach to growth and policy priorities.

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In specifying the overlapping crises as economic, climate, migration, security etc. one crisis clearly missing is that of care and social reproduction.

The outcome is to focus on public policies that and potential for public investment that is oriented solely to production and physical infrastructure and not to a more inclusive and people first approach to growth. Austerity policies in Europe are not only undermining growth and employment but also leading to cuts in care services and preventing economies with underdeveloped welfare systems from catching up with demands for such provision.

The investment in care services is vital for the future health and development of Europe's children, and thus Europe's future - as made clear in the European social investment package- but also matters if Europe is to remain true to its social values and ensure a dignified and good old age for the increasing cohort of older citizens. Furthermore, cutbacks in support for social reproduction are being disproportionately borne by women and by poor women and families who are losing access to care services and to public service jobs and careers.

They are expected to fill the gaps in this provision (a cheap solution to the problem for most governments) at the same time as being under pressure to increase their commitments to wage work (to fill gaps in family finances and to secure pensions).

Progressive forces in the EU need to be seen to be developing an alternative and more inclusive approach to growth and development; this is part of filling the democratic deficit as the current debates on the future of Europe are not addressing the concerns of women and carers.

Investment in care has strong potential for generating growth as well as wellbeing (see the [UK Women's budget groups Plan F](#) for an alternative approach to economic growth and their study on [investing in the care economy](#)).

The need for investment to be expanded to include care has also been focused on in [FEPS](#). It is therefore disappointing that these concerns have not yet figured in Progressive economy debates and statements on the crisis, despite this perspective being raised at each meeting. The refugee crisis puts further pressure on all aspects of social reproduction but it would be short sighted in the extreme to use this new pressure to sideline the needs of existing European citizens for care services, thereby giving credence to the claim that refugees are the cause of pressure on public services.