



Brussels, 29 January 2019

8TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

ON PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD SERVICES

Organised by

EFSI
European Federation
for Services to Individuals



European Economic and Social Committee

Innovation in Personal and Household Services

HIGHLIGHTS

On the 29th of January 2019, the eight edition of the European Conference on Personal and Household Services gathered about 65 participants who discussed innovative practices in the Personal and Household Services (PHS) sector. PHS cover a broad range of care and non-care activities that contribute to well-being at home of families and individuals such as child care, long term care for the elderly and for persons with disabilities, cleaning, remedial classes, home repairs, gardening, ICT support, etc.

Co-organised by the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Federation for Services to Individuals (EFSI), the event addressed innovative practices in PHS linked to the digital revolution notably in the home care sector. It also questioned how innovation can solve some challenges face by the sector, namely the problems raised by current statistical databases; and the work-related risks – and in particular dangerous substances - face by PHS workers. The event's agenda can be viewed [here](#).

WELCOME MESSAGES

A lot of progresses have been observed in PHS in recent years, but the quality of the delivered services remains the main concern of organisations, companies as well as public authorities active in the sector. Knowledge on the sector has also considerably improved thanks to several EU-funded projects. Despite these progresses, there remains some way to go. Jacques Glorieux stressed that the CCMI – which he presides - shares with EFSI the preoccupation of adequately developing the PHS sector. With this new edition of the European Conference many pending issues will be tackled. “*How does innovation look like in the sector, what challenges it meets and creates will be the key questions addressed today*” said Philippe Symons, EFSI President.

Being a labour-intensive sector “*most aspects of PHS delivery cannot be standardised or automated thanks to technical equipment*” stressed Aurélie Decker, EFSI Director. It is generally accepted that PHS is a sector for which the potential

for innovation is rather limited. However, a [survey](#) conducted by EFSI revealed that for 65% of the respondents innovation is considered as being crucial or very important. Working conditions; work organisation and services design were highlighted as areas under the most intensive processes of innovation. Respondents neatly pointed the growing needs of an ageing population as the main driver of innovation, whereas the lack of financing for innovative PHS solutions is considered to be the main obstacle. Finally, the most significant past change identified is the emergence of online platforms and respondent also shared the idea that technology-related innovation processes will be the most intensive for the sector in the next three years.

1ST ROUNDTABLE | DIGITAL REVOLUTION MEETS PHS. WHAT'S NEXT?

The first panel explored the various challenges faced by the PHS sector and how – from the perspective of both PHS users and providers – these challenges could be overcome in order to make the most of digitalisation. Firstly, the technological changes witnessed in the PHS sector and different solutions to transform them in successful development opportunities have been discussed. Co-creation and co-production have been mentioned as a safeguard to ensure an adequate coverage of users' needs. Whereas the diversity of solutions offered by advanced technologies were stressed, Dirk Jarré, President of EURAG underlined that *“it is not only assistance that can be offered but real support and real care”*. Speakers also underlined the need for ethical parameters, for carers' new knowledge and to bridge the gap between the availability of technologies and their take-up. On this last point, partnerships between providers and platforms developers was stressed as an opportunity.

Focusing on online platforms emergence and their concrete impact on working conditions, a typology of existing platform jobs elaborated by Eurofound were presented to participants. Whereas the challenges raised by this new type of work has not yet been addressed by Member States in legislation, solutions are already emerging on the ground. Concrete practices related to the PHS sector have demonstrated how platforms can facilitate workers' empowerment. Collective agreements implementation is also possible as shown by the Danish 3F Trade Union and the online cleaning platform Hilfr. It was also stressed that platforms can be a proactive way to better answer challenges faced by home care providers such as workers' retention and service quality. It also contributes to the reduction of undeclared work by easing the way to formalise cash situations.

2ND ROUNDTABLE | INNOVATING STATISTICS ON THE PHS SECTOR

During this second roundtable, focus was put on the research conducted by EFSI in the [PHS Industry Monitor](#). The imprecision and inadequacy of statistical categories for the PHS sector lead to a limited range of estimates rather than precise figures on the sector. Panellists held a fruitful discussion on how it could be improved. As such, a new statistical definition of domestic work adopted last October at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) should enable more precise estimates once it will have been adapted in the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Furthermore, the forthcoming adaptation of the NACE¹ would allow in the future a better reflection of the PHS weight in the economy.

Participants stressed that various survey conducted by Eurofound such as the European Working conditions Survey (EWCS) and the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) should be looked at. Indeed, they explore issues directly related to the PHS sector such as access to care services, work-life balance of workers as well as work intensity and skills. Finally, the possibility of relying on national data was also debated but it raises comparison issues at EU level.

3RD ROUNDTABLE | INNOVATION IN PHS: PREVENTION OF RISKS POSED BY DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES

The last roundtable explored the work-related risks faced by PHS workers. Indeed, they face psychological hazards (e.g. solitary work, mismatch between the time allocated and the service/assistance required by the client); ergonomic hazards; physical hazards (e.g. heavy loads and repetitive work); as well as chemical hazards (e.g. cleaning products chemicals, substances present in dust, dirt or soot, disinfectant, patient's medications). The chemical risks are currently subject to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (OSHA) “Healthy workplace campaign”. This campaign aims at making challenging aspects understandable by stakeholders and therefore improve prevention thanks to the development of various tools.

The intrinsic nature of domestic work (e.g. private home as a workplace, solitary work, etc.) and the challenges it raised when putting in place prevention programs and controls have been underlined by many speakers. Furthermore, current European OSH legislation benefits only to a small share of PHS workers. However, the ILO Convention No. 170 provides

¹ NACE stands for “Statistical definition of economic activities in the European Community”.

a blueprint for the sound management of chemicals that can be applied to domestic work. Furthermore, the concrete example of a Belgian Service voucher company demonstrated that effective and comprehensive prevention programs can be implemented in the sector.

CONCLUDING PANEL | SUPPORTING INNOVATION IN PHS, WHAT ROLE FOR PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

The panellists agreed that a discussion on the challenges encountered by the PHS sector and its benefit to our society is very important. A lot of opportunities to improve working conditions and access to PHS, have arisen in the past years, notably thanks to new technologies. Nicholas Costello from the European Commission's DG EMPL expressed its optimism in the short or medium term. He considered that public authorities should contribute to the emergence and dissemination of good practices on the sector, thanks notably to the financing of European projects. In this regard, the newly launched [Ad-PHS project](#) will contribute to this goal.

For her part, MEP Maria Gabriela Zoană recalled the adoption by the European Parliament last November of a [report](#) on care services for improved gender equality. The report invited – inter alia – the European Commission to strengthen the provision of funding for care services and to develop guidance for Member States on developing employment-friendly, person-centred, community-based and accessible care services. She highlighted the impact of austerity measures on the sector and the necessity to increase public investment in care services.

Finally, Jean-Pierre Haber, CCMI delegate, presented the ongoing preparatory work for the EESC opinion on “Economic, technological and social changes in advanced services for the elderly”. He underlined that the main problem encountered by the sector is the solvency of the demand which requires public authorities to act as market regulators. He notably stressed the necessity to launch an Observatory on services for the elderly to better monitor their evolution and opportunities. The recognition of PHS workers professional qualifications and wage increases, as well as a coordinated approach between health and care services were also mentioned as areas in which public action are required.

Event materials and speakers' presentations are available online on [EFSI's website](#). A full report will be issued at Spring 2019.