

European context

Since 2000 and the Lisbon Strategy, personal and household services have been identified by the European Institutions as a sector with a high job creation potential.

In April 2012, as part of the Employment Package, the European Commission adopted the Staff Working Document on exploiting the potential of the personal and household services¹. It defined personal and household services as a *“broad range of activities that contributes to well being at home of families and individuals : child care (CC), long term care (LTC) for the elderly and for persons with disabilities, cleaning, remedial classes, home repairs, gardening, ICT support, etc.”*². Formal employment in the personal and household services sector is estimated by the European Commission at 7.5 million, that is to say 3% of the active population and 1% of the added value.

With population ageing, the expected decline of the potential family carers, the increase of the female employment rate and an higher family fragmentation, the demand for personal and household services is foreseen to increase. Therefore, the European Commission identified personal and household services as a sector with job creation opportunities for relatively low-skilled people. Thus, *“if each person currently employed (215,000,000) externalises only 1 hour/week (compared to the 2.5 hours which adults Europeans on average spend on household work each day), a potential of almost 5.5 million jobs exists”*³.

The European Commission stressed that without public support, formal employment in the sector is quite costly. Thus a large part of personal and household services is provided informally by undeclared workers. Given the predominance of informal work, public intervention will contribute to move these services from the shadow to the formal economy. The document underlined that public authorities should have a broad vision of the cost of public intervention as their real cost appears low. In addition, these services offer solutions to a better work-life balance and an improvement in the quality of care.

The European Commission also invited stakeholders to express their views on issues such as improving measurement and monitoring of the sector’s employment level; the utility of developing sharing of experiences; ways of ensuring quality services and jobs and ways to ensure greater professionalization within the sector.

During its conference on the 30th and 31th of January dedicated to the job creation potential of personal and household services, the European Commission will present a synthesis of the public consultation responses.

¹ SWD (2012) 95 final

² Staff Working Document, p. 4

³ Staff Working Document, p. 14