

Brussels, 7 November 2014

**6<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN CONFERENCE  
ON PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD SERVICES**

Organised by

**EFISI**  
European Federation  
for Services to Individuals

**European Economic and Social Committee**

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Quality of Daily Life Solutions

With the high patronage of **2014 Italian Presidency  
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## PRESS RELEASE

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### PHS and work-life balance: a great opportunity for European societies

In the European Union, **80% of care hours are provided by informal carers** and on average EU citizens spend 23 hours per week caring for children and another 11 hours on cooking and housework.

As a consequence, **27% of EU workers felt that they spend too much time at work**. Moreover, at present approximately **7 million Europeans purchase cleaning services on the undeclared labour market**.



This represents a major concern for Europe's economy and welfare systems. But behind the numbers are great opportunities: the European Commission estimated that **5.5 million additional jobs could be created in the PHS sector** thanks to adequate supporting policies throughout Europe; and more and more employers become aware of the benefits of work-life balance policies.

This is why on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Conference on Personal and Household services gathered one hundred participants in Brussels to exchange on the contributions of Personal and Household Services<sup>1</sup> (PHS) and work-life balance (WLB) policies to our societies.

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<sup>1</sup> "Personal and household services' (PHS) cover a broad range of activities that contribute 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." EUROPEAN COMMISSION Staff Working Document on exploiting the employment potential of the personal and household services, SWD (2012) 95 final.

Thus, the development of affordable PHS such as childcare and elderly care plays a key role in women's access to the labour market, while creating hundreds of thousands of jobs across Europe. WLB policies also have a considerable impact on companies' productivity and reputation, by lowering absenteeism and favouring workers' motivation and wellbeing. However, in these times of economic recession and austerity, the implementation of such measures tends to be seen as a luxury that cannot be afforded, and as a consequence, such policies are often neglected. **Investing in PHS is nonetheless a key condition for reaching WLB**, and political action is needed at EU and national levels.

Indeed, for Béatrice Ouin (Member of the EESC), the structuration of the sector is a priority: according to her, **we need “to get out of the black economy and direct employment by creating intermediary structures, private companies and cooperatives”**. Speakers also insisted on the importance of public spending on WLB and PHS. For instance, Maurizio Mosca (Gender expert at EIGE) stated that **“we should not talk about costs but about investment when it comes to childcare and work-life balance policies”**. Following that idea, Jean-François Lebrun (European Commission official) and Aurélie Decker (Director of EFSI) both underlined the substantial earn-back effects of such investments. **Working towards work-life balance is a great opportunity, not a luxury**. This is, in substance, the message that this event has spread among the audience.

The conference took place under the high patronage of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU and was co-organised by the European Federation for Services to Individuals (EFSI) and the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

**[More information about the event](#)**

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