

VOUCHERS SYSTEMS ARE EFFECTIVE TOOLS IN FORMALIZING PHS SECTOR

Social vouchers (incl. PHS vouchers) are based on key characteristics and should not be mixed up with other systems, also called vouchers.

BRUSSELS, 11 APRIL 2017: Following the abrogation of the *Buoni Lavoro* system in Italy on the 17th of March 2017, the EFSI deplores the confusion it has witnessed between different vouchers solutions implemented in the PHS sector¹. Unfortunately, the *Buoni Lavoro* system did not fulfill all the characteristics that make vouchers efficient to address precarious employment conditions and to formalize jobs. *“It’s important to remind that vouchers programmes are particularly relevant when it comes to tackle the challenges inherent to the PHS sector as they can render these activities more visible and make formal employment as well as administrative duties much more easier for PHS users and workers”* said EFSI’s Director, Aurélie Decker. *“Most of the solutions implemented such as the CESU voucher in France² and the Services-voucher in Belgium³ have proven their effectiveness and the latest events in Italy should not undermine their success”* she added.

As a reminder, the *Buoni Lavoro* have been introduced in 2003 to promote inclusion in the labour market. They were used to regulate occasional activities ranging from household services to agricultural work, occasional work in family businesses, housework, gardening and many other activities such as street vending of newspaper and magazines. Over the years the system was repeatedly reformed, extremely widened up and often used on a regular basis, instead of occasionally. The system’s primary noble objective of formalizing occasional activities has gone over the traditional vouchers’ limits and frame to be more and more used as a replacement of work contracts. On the basis of these experience and pitfalls, the Italian government abrogated the *Buoni Lavoro* scheme and committed to open a social dialogue in order to establish a new system.

Social vouchers - be they paper-based, on card or electronic – rely on specific characteristics, different from *Buoni Lavoro* . They provide individuals with access to predetermined goods or services, within a limited network. Recipients exchange vouchers at designated services providers that are then reimbursed through a simple process. They can be directly accessible by citizens or distributed by employers or public authorities. *“Each voucher programme is based on specific national legislative framework of their own which are usually fine-tuned over the years to ensure that they meet their initial objectives”* outlined Aurélie Decker. *“Witnessing the fact that the system was not fulfilling its original aim is never a good thing, and in this area priority should be given to strictly framed and sector-specific solutions that comply with a number of precise characteristics”* she added.

¹ Personal and household services (PHS) include both care services (for children, the dependent elderly or the disabled) and non-care services or household support services (such as cleaning, ironing, gardening, remedial classes and minor home repairs).

² More information on the CESU voucher implemented in France can be found [here](#).

³ More information on the Service voucher system implemented in Belgium can be found [here](#).

Social vouchers are characterized by their transparency and the fact that they ease data collection, regular monitoring and an assessment by the managing authorities. By giving access to a network of specific providers, they guarantee users' free choice while ensuring that the funds reach their intended destination. While supporting PHS deployment, vouchers also have numerous macro-economic earn-back effects such as the reduction of undeclared work and job creation. Indeed, social vouchers do not only improve workers' quality of life in the long run, but also improve competitiveness of the economy at large, including positive consequences on consumption, the cost of social protection and overall health, reduction of undeclared work, thereby generating both direct and indirect resources for States.

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Note to the editor

EFSI is the representative body of national federations and associations as well as companies involved in the development of personal and household services. Through its members, EFSI is present in 22 EU Members' States.

More: www.efsi-europe.eu