

March 2021

EFFE & EFSI Joint statement on 2021 International Women's Rights Day: Fostering the development of PHS is necessary to build a Union of equality

Employment is the backbone of the European social economy. However, gender inequalities prevent the EU to reach its full potential and embrace a sustainable future because women and men do not benefit from the same opportunities. Maternity leaves and family responsibilities are the main barriers that explain women's partial or total disengagement from the labour market. Besides, the lack of quality and affordable solutions limits the impact of the work-life balance directive and strengthens gender stereotypes.

Last December 2020, the Council of the European Union rightly described the challenges at stake in its Conclusions on *Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: Valuation and Distribution of Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work*. By outlining that the gender care and pay gaps are mutually dependent and mutually reinforcing phenomena, the Council underlined the need to allow for the outsourcing of direct and indirect care work and stressed PHS valuable contribution to gender equality.

Along with the proposals included in the Gender equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the European pillar of social rights Action Plan, the **EU needs to support the development of Personal and Household Services (PHS)** that allow women to outsource some of the domestic and family tasks and foster a more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work among partners. Some Member States such as Belgium and France have already improved the share of female employment by implementing people-oriented policies that empower women while providing them access to affordable personal and household services.

Currently employing approximately 9,5 million workers throughout the EU, 90% of which being women, the PHS sector still suffers from a lack of recognition and valuation within our society. It is therefore crucial to improve the sector, especially for the 3,1 million undeclared workers and the additional 2 million who despite of being formally employed do not enjoy the same labour rights and social protection as other workers in their respective country.

Considering the economic and cultural discrepancies observed between Member States, only a comprehensive approach can guarantee the development of the Personal and household services sector that meet women's needs and respect the fundamental rights of its female workforce throughout the EU. Therefore, EFFE & EFSI calls on the European Commission to:

- **Recognize the complementarity and coexistence of different modes of intervention at home: each citizen must be free to decide to become a private employer or to call on a service provider, an agency or an authorized representative to help meet his needs.**

- **Promote the exchange of good practices and provide technical assistance to Member States in the design and implementation of public policies investing in and structuring the PHS sector toward PHS workers better working conditions and users better access to PHS.**
- **Deliver on its promise to revise the Barcelona objectives relating to the development of childcare services for young children and work towards upgrading highly feminized sectors as announced in the strategy on gender equality adopted in March 2020, notably by enhancing the status of care-related occupations and combatting care-related gender stereotypes.**
- **Include the PHS sector in the future ageing policies, develop targeted financing opportunities to reinforce long-term care.**