

10 Recommendations to the new EU leaders for the next five years

European Parliament – European Commission

I Introduction

EFSI represents national federations and associations as well as companies involved in the development of personal and household services in Europe. Through its members, EFSI is present in 22 EU Members' States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United-Kingdom). The EFSI seeks to ensure that the specificity of the sector is recognised and that the provision and access to high quality and affordable personal and household services are granted thanks to adequate economic, social and legal conditions.

Personal and household services (PHS) comprises of a broad range of activities that contribute to the well-being of families and individuals which are: home services (housework, ironing, gardening, small repair work, delivery of food, etc.), child care facilities including all kind of services (nursery, nanny, shared childcare, holiday centres, baby sitting, etc.), tutoring (school help, IT assistance etc.) and services to enable disabled, dependants and elderly people to continue to live in their own home. At present the sector employs 7.5 million of workers throughout Europe and its job creation potential is estimated by the European Commission at 5.5 million in the coming years.

Personal and household services' sector is a key element towards the achievement of the Europe 2020 strategy's objectives, as it:

- creates quality non-relocatable jobs for long-term unemployed and low-skilled people as well as for migrant workers,
- contributes to women's participation to the labour market and social inclusion, by directly providing them a job (thus on average 90% of PHS workers are women) and by giving them access to services enabling them to better combine their private and professional lives,
- provides innovative solutions to adequately tackle EU population ageing thanks to the provision of home care services for the elderly as well as services easing the daily life of family carers,
- helps to conciliate professional and personal life,
- contributes to the social inclusion of the most dependent ones.

EFSI calls on Members of the European Parliament and future European Commissioners to commit to support the development of the PHS sector throughout Europe. We believe that the contributions of the PHS sector to European societies are numerous in terms of employment, social inclusion and work-life balance and we thus invite the new EU leaders to contribute to the sector's development.

II- Recommendations

So far the European Union's action towards the PHS sector has been limited to the recognition of the job creation potential of the sector. More comprehensive and ambitious initiatives are needed to fully unlock the sector's potential. Demographic changes and high unemployment rates are both major challenges facing Europe. They are also the two main areas in which the PHS sector contribution could be easily developed in the coming decade. In this framework, a **EU strategy for the development of PHS** could be an important vector of growth and job creation. Thus, EFSI calls on Members of the European Parliament and future European Commissioners to take into account the following recommendations and to acknowledge the positive role played by private actors in the sector's development. It is worth mentioning the fact that these recommendations are not presented in order of importance and specific attention should be given to each of them.

1. Promote job creation especially for low-skilled and long-term unemployed

The EU unemployment rate has increased steadily over the years and low-skilled workers, long-term unemployed, female and young workers are among those most hit by the current crisis. One of the most important challenge to be tackled by the renewed Europe 2020 strategy is the creation of job opportunities for the low-skilled and long-term unemployed. EFSI considers that the EU should adopt an ambitious attitude and commit itself by 2020 to keep the long-term unemployment rate below 5% in every EU Member States and reach:

- an employment rate of 60% of the working age population with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2),
- an employment rate of 75% of the working age population with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4).

In this regard, EFSI stresses the relevance of the PHS sector as it provides quality non-relocatable jobs for people with low or no qualification that are usually on the fringes of the labour market. Thus in Sweden, 2 out of 3 workers entering the sector were formerly unemployed. In Belgium and France respectively, 43% and 22% of PHS workers were looking for a job before joining the sector.

2. Promote women's participation to the labour market thanks to a better access to childcare facilities

Women's participation to the labour market is linked to the distribution of families responsibilities. Because women are more often involved in childcare, parenthood is more likely to have an impact on their employment rates than for men, especially when care services are lacking or are too expensive. This is why EFSI calls on the EU to set the objective of an employment rate of women at 72% by 2020 and calls on Member States to respect their commitment taken in 2002 in Barcelona to ensure that 33% of children under 3 years of age and 90% of children aged between three and mandatory school age are enrolled in childcare facilities. They should implement measures ensuring the availability, accessibility and affordability of childcare facilities for every family. EFSI stresses that for every 100 additional women at work, 10 jobs are created thus representing an important growth potential throughout Europe (*Universitat Pompeu Fabra*).

3. Adopt a comprehensive work-life balance strategy

In the last decades, we have been witnessing a change in family structures, with an increased employment rate of women, an ageing population and a higher number of single parent families. These changes result in greater difficulties for the citizens to cope with everyday life tasks and family responsibilities. Thus a growing demand among EU citizens for a better work-life balance has emerged. This is why EFSI calls on the European leaders to adopt a comprehensive work-life balance strategy and to commit that at least 50% of Europeans workers have access to measures ensuring a better balance between professional and private lives by 2020. This strategy should target both men and women be they parents or carers of elderly or

dependents, because all workers (regardless the size of the organisation they work for) must be fully integrated. The strategy should promote a reorganization of working time arrangements as well as the development of personal and household services. This includes measures to make the formal provision of PHS more affordable as well as direct support of companies to their employees (on-site childcare facilities, support in finding and organizing services, or the award of benefits facilitating access to PHS).

4. Tackle the issue of undeclared work in the PHS sector

Across Europe, undeclared work dominates the personal and household services sector. From the latest Eurobarometer survey we can conclude that approximately 7 million Europeans purchase home cleaning services on the undeclared market, 2.3 million buy home babysitting services and another 1.4 million purchase assistance services for a dependent or elderly relative. These projections may underestimate the real situation. EFSI stresses that besides the job creation potential in PHS mentioned earlier, numerous undeclared jobs could be brought out of the shadows. The prevalence of undeclared economy in the sector is extremely damaging to the State, the workers and the users. This is why EFSI calls on the European Commission and the European Parliament to tackle the issue through a sector specific approach including compliance oriented measures such as administrative simplification, tax-incentives targeted at buyers and service vouchers. This process has to be made in close cooperation with the social partners. Such an approach could be included in the work plan of the future European Platform on undeclared work. In addition, the European Union should commit to reduce by 50% undeclared work by 2020.

5. Implement the right fiscal and regulatory framework

The contribution of personal and household services to job creation and sustainable growth requires several prerequisites such as an adequate fiscal and regulatory framework. The prevalence of undeclared work, the sector high labour content and the collective benefits generated are many reasons justifying the implementation of public policies supporting PHS. These measures should promote a wide and fair solvency of the demand among providers, guarantee users' freedom of choice, and structure a quality supply of services. They can take the form of in-cash benefits, tax deduction and exemption schemes, VAT reduced rates or services vouchers. This is why, EFSI calls on European leaders to ensure that EU texts do not constitute an obstacle to the implementation at national level of an adequate fiscal and regulatory framework. In addition, EFSI stresses that current austerity measures should not prevent Member States to follow this direction and, in this regard, the European Union should help them to carefully analyse the benefits and drawbacks of such policies as well as estimate their earn-back effects (i.e. job creation, formalisation of undeclared work, increased female employment rate, etc.). Finally, EFSI would like to stress the impact on the sector's development of fiscal framework instabilities and uncertainties about the sustainability of public action. The lack of long-term commitment of public authorities has a direct impact on working conditions and the quality of PHS.

6. Enhance working conditions as well as industrial relations in the PHS sector

At present in too many EU countries, the PHS sector is characterised by low working conditions, low social protection and absence of collective agreements. However, because of the social dimension and the interpersonal links created between PHS workers and beneficiaries (elderly, children and families), these are quality jobs. This is why EFSI considers it essential to develop and reinforce the quality of employment by giving these jobs professional status, with regular employment contracts, paid leaves and social protection equivalent with workers' general status, training and career progression. Thus, EFSI invites all EU Member States to ratify the ILO Convention 189 on Decent work for domestic workers. The European Commission should offer its help to Member States encountering difficulties in the ratification process and favour the exchange of best practices. In this regard, the expertise of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions would be of great help and interest. In addition, the grouping at national level of employers in federations and workers in trade unions should be a priority. Without it, the efforts to legitimate PHS jobs as well as to improve working conditions and jobs' attractiveness will be in vain. Thus, EFSI calls on the European Commission to promote workers' and employers' organisation through notably the funding of EU and national projects.

7. Encourage the professionalization of the personal and household services sector

Personal and household services' jobs require various technical skills (such as hygiene rules, using products, taking care of a vulnerable person, elimination of occupational hazards, etc.) and interpersonal skills (such as discretion, confidence, autonomy, adaptation to users' needs, etc.). However, these competencies are currently suffering from a lack of recognition in our societies and it is generally admitted that PHS jobs are naturally destined to women and does not require any training. EFSI therefore calls on the European leaders to foster the professionalization of personal and household services through an exchange of best practices and financial support to training notably thanks to the European Social Fund. Professionalization in the sector should consist of a targeted initial training and continuing training of employees. Continuing training is of particular importance since it helps to fight against workers' isolation especially as many of them are working in private homes. Finally, EFSI believes that professionalization encourages the structuring of the sector, ensures that a greater value is attached to work and that workers are recognised whilst making the benefit of purchasing these services on the formal market more obvious for users.

8. Adopt a European quality framework in personal and household services

Not only EFSI is concerned with providing sufficient PHS to meet European citizens' needs, but is also concerned about the level of quality of the services provided. The quality of PHS services in EU Member States is crucial for developing EU economic competitiveness and for fighting undeclared work. This is why, EFSI calls on the European Commission and EU Member States to adopt a quality framework in personal and household services with the aim to improve accessibility and quality of PHS via a holistic approach of the sector. It should set out a new coherent vision, identify and analyse success criteria of effective policies to develop guidance for national policy makers. EFSI stresses that this European quality framework should include among the relevant criteria: access, governance and funding, working conditions and workforce's qualification as well as evaluation and monitoring systems which are in the best interest of PHS providers and users.

9. Create a prize for business innovation in personal and household services

Innovation is key and it is a necessary prerequisite to the formal development of personal and household services. This is why, in order to foster innovation notably in the fields of accessibility, services' design, use of new technologies or the development of new work organisations, the European Commission should create a prize for business innovation in personal and household services. This prize should invite Europeans entrepreneurs to come up with new solutions and give them the chance to develop a great idea, to bring legitimacy to their work, and last but not least, to make their solution accessible to more people.

10. Improve EU statistics on personal and household services

At present, the personal and household services' sector suffers from a lack of recognition of its social and economic contribution to our societies. This is partly due to the difficulty to measure its size and its extent, which in turns prevents any comparison of the situation in EU countries on the basis of homogenous and reliable data. The PHS sector is characterized by different employment models (through bilateral or triangular relationships) and covers a broad range of different services that in some cases can be provided by a single organisation. With the current statistical categories, its appraisal is particularly difficult when workers are employed by an organisation (triangular relationships) and some services are excluded from statistics (such as gardening) or mixed up with other activities (as it is the case for housework in private households and cleaning in offices and factories). This is why, EFSI calls on the European leaders to improve the current European statistical categories (NACE codes) in order to ensure a better statistical overview and recognition of the PHS sector.

European Federation for Services to Individuals (EFSI)

Avenue du Port, 86 C, box 302, 1000 Brussels

Tel : +32 2 204 08 73 - info@efsi-europe.eu

Website : www.efsi-europe.eu