

A solution for a more social Europe

Home, family employment and home care in the European Union

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Home employment refers to a large range of activities which contribute to the well-being of families and persons in their home: child-care, caring for the elderly and the disabled, housekeeping, educational support, DIY, gardening, computer assistance, etc. In the sector of home employment between private individuals, a household finds an external response to its needs by employing a person at home, with the right skills matched with these needs.

It is therefore a contractual work relationship between two private individuals, without any trading or profit-making objective.

The European White Paper intends to define, specify and promote the specific characteristics of this employment model, which provides answers to various economic, social and societal stakes in Europe.

Home employment is mostly a response to private households' needs.

Through these individual solutions, they provide a citizen response to major collective issues: supporting population's ageing, supporting women participation to the labour market and birth rates, creating declared jobs, developing social rights, recognising new skills for domestic workers and integrating migrants decently.

The European White Paper makes proposals and focuses on the stakes of the home employment sector between private individuals, as described above,

On March 6th, the European Federation for Family Employment and Home care (EFFE) presented the European White Paper on 'Home, family employment and home care in the European Union' at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels.

The EU Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mariya Gabriel, was one of the speakers, together with some members of the European Parliament and the president of the Committee.

The White Paper is the result of over two years of cooperation with civil society organisations and EU institutions. It intends to promote the sector of private home employment at a European scale and displays concrete paths for its further development with 10 specific proposals.

The complete European White Paper, Call for Action and Executive Summary are available at: goo.gl/BgyKkB.

and not to be confused with other organised sectors, such as the sector of social welfare services or home-care service providers already identified.

EFFE's aim is to ensure recognition of a European sector of home employment between private individuals, in which citizens define their needs and create their own solutions, choosing their employees freely, and creating jobs that generate social rights without gaining profit from them, as long as these jobs are declared. This sector offers virtuous solutions to meet social and economic challenges: depending on whether state investment in supporting these jobs exceeds or equals the social contributions paid by the household employers, declared work becomes less expensive than undeclared work, for a reduced or neutral cost for public finances.

In Europe, the home employment sector statistics are quite poor, implying difficulties in measuring its importance and compromising its visibility. Several statistics are incorrect or very incomplete, and the share of informal employment is not identified.

Precisely because a lot of domestic worker's jobs are carried out in the undeclared economy, the home employment sector has a strong growth potential. A large part of household services is still performed by undeclared workers: e.g. this share is estimated at more than 45% in Germany, more than 40% in Italy, between 28% and 40% in the Netherlands [1]. Without changing the structure of the not-intermediated relationship between the beneficiary and the employee, constituted by a direct relationship without intermediary, the simple switch of these activities into the formal economy would significantly increase the number of jobs of the sector, with a social protection for workers who had been deprived from it so far as though they contribute to national wealth productions... This transfer may only be massively deployed thanks to digital employment platforms: with online, simplified and adequate methods, families can easily meet, recruit and declare their future employees.

In France, the share of undeclared work in the home employment sector is currently estimated at less than 20% by DARES (Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics, Labour Ministry) against 50% in 1996. The model of good practices, carried by social partners and public authorities for more than 20 years, now allows France to be at the top of the most advanced countries in terms of securing the employment relationship between private individuals at home. Thus, by reducing the cost of employment through tax-credit mechanisms and decreased social contributions and by simplifying the procedures to declare a domestic worker, public authorities have contributed both to transforming a large part of the undeclared activity into declared jobs, and to democratising access to the sector for all [2], by giving citizens their share of initiative.

The European White Paper thus aims at explaining how the home employment sector in Europe can participate in the production of wealth in the Member States and become a major contributor to public policies resulting from the European Pillar of Social Rights. This text, signed by the European institutions and Heads of State and the EU government on 17th November 2017 and driven by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, is non-

binding. It also discloses a range of 20 common principles for genuine European social convergence.

Social Europe remains an evolving concept. There is no common social policy within the European Union. The fields of employment and unemployment, the issues related to working conditions, vocational training, professional equality between women and men, social protection or social relationships in firms, do not fall under the EU's responsibility but rather under national policies. The EU can only set minimum rules that States are bound to respect (e.g. in terms of working time). For example, the European Commission has chosen to translate certain orientations of the Pillar into European law by proposing several texts related to working time, employment contracts and access to social protection or parental leave. The White Paper takes into account this coordination between different levels to develop its 10 proposals:

1. Highlight the economic weight and social stakes of home employment between citizens

One of the essential stages in the process of recognition of the home employment sector between citizens in Europe is the demonstration, in relation to the European institutions and decision-makers, of its economic weight, its social and societal stakes, its prospects in terms of employment in particular for less-integrated workers, its role for reinforcing a social Europe, along with its contribution to local development and the of local solidarity on the territories. It is also a question of being able to assess and qualify the problems with which the sector is faced (simplification, professionalization and financial viability). This demonstration requires having precise and sufficiently coordinated data, which is not currently the case.

- Include the concept of "domestic worker" in the statistical classifications and reorient these on the basis of the workers' jobs and not only on the basis of the economic activity as is currently the case. One of the reasons for the lack of consideration of the sector is a clear statistical difference whether on a European level or a national level of different Member States.
- Create an ad hoc working group in partnership with the national statistics organisations and Eurostat to revise and correct current errors.
- Create a European observatory of home employment sector to gather reliable data, specific to the sector, that would complete data established by agencies such as Eurostat and Eurofound, share and provide detailed information on the sector of home employment and on related mechanisms. The aim would also be to assess the impact of the public policies drawn up by the Member States to ensure economic viability of the demand for household services, simplify the formalities for declaring an employee and professionalise household jobs.

2. Encourage a constructive European social dialogue on the family employment sector

It is essential to create adequate conditions to build up a social dialogue in the sector on both national and European levels. The local organisation and

structuring of home employment must lead to a massive reduction in undeclared work.

- To develop and structure employer and worker organisations of the sector to encourage social dialogue and collective negotiations and to ensure individual rights in a collective context. The aim is indeed to regulate working relationships between workers and employers and to enable all people to be self-aware of their status. There are still major differences in the representation both of employees and of employers and this situation is harmful to a quality development of the sector. It is essential that public authorities identify the actors for building up future public policies collectively and efficiently.

3. Identify the specific characteristics of home employment in the definition of the regulations on social protection

The European Commission must encourage Member States to take on the issue. Indeed, legal mechanisms are essentially thought up for firms and are not adapted to home employment and the relationship between private employer and domestic worker. The specific characteristics of home employment must be taken into account in the recommendations from the Commission and in the national regulations in terms of social protection which are currently deemed as too unequal.

4. Fight efficiently against undeclared work in the sector of home employment

- Creation of a social-tax incentive for Member States. Among the reasons for not declaring employment, the financial cost remains a decisive factor for the households. On the one hand, workers seek to increase their income; while on the other hand, employers want to find the right balance for their family budget. This should enable workers and employers to transfer their activities to a lawful context, beyond repressive ill-adapted mechanisms, which do not motivate families to declare the employer, and are almost impossible to implement for the authorities.
- Implement a simplified digital platform for encouraging the declaration, have a better understanding of the factors of the sector and of the public policies in favour of the sector through adapted statistics for facilitating assessment.

5. Consider health and safety at work for domestic workers

The sector of home employment is, by nature, a sector in which the workers perform their activity in an isolated way. In this respect, aspects of health and safety at work are seldom taken into account, in particular in terms of accident prevention policies at work and risk situations, as the activity of the employee is performed within a private home.

- To have a better understanding of risk prevention in the home, when the employer's home is also the workers' workplace and when the professional risk

factors for the workers may also be factors of domestic risks for the employer. Thus, the Commission must encourage Member States to ensure broad coverage of the public policies for health and safety at work and, through sharing good practices, to give more consideration to the sector.

- On this issue, EUROFOUND, the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions could complete a complementary study and draw up a list of the national studies available on the subject. This approach could be completed by combined work with the ILO, considering the lines related to the Convention no. 189 on domestic workers.
- Finally, actions, especially for prevention, should be undertaken with the support of the European Agency for Health and Safety at work (EU-OSHA).

6. Include the stakes of the home employment sector in the funding of the cohesion policy

- The stakes of the sector must count as priorities and be better pinpointed in the funding of the Cohesion Policy. The "thematic / specific objectives" are defined by the European Commission and then broken down (or not) by the management authorities (State or Region) in their Operational Programmes. The stakes are therefore two-fold: ensure that the home employment sector (and the related issues) is well-covered by the TO/SO proposed by the Commission, and ensure that the management authorities then take them up locally and choose to devolve a part of their budget to this type of action rather than to others.
- A part of the vocational training could be financed by European Funds such as the European Social Fund (ESF). Although the ESF currently allows to fund a part of vocational training, here it would be a question of targeting the persons who are the furthest away from employment and who could benefit from training and qualification actions of employees of the sector, in particular migrants.
- Experiments on a regional / local level could be carried out in order to fund cross-sector projects related to home employment.
- Moreover, when defining their regional innovation schemes, European regions could develop a more inclusive and pluralistic vision, in particular through social innovation. In this respect, it would be relevant to allow the funding of research in social sciences in order to provide a better response to the sector's stakes in the forthcoming period. Finally, in light of objective no. 4, Structural Funds could be used to fund the integration of migrants at a local scale. This indication is included in the Commission's proposals for post-2020 ESF+ fund program.

7. Create favourable conditions for increasing professional skills of the employees of the sector

The professionalization of domestic workers sector must be part of the new strategy in terms of skills for

Europe, adopted by the Commission on 10th June 2016. Ten actions have been launched so that the citizens of the European Union may acquire skills and benefit from appropriate training and support. The workers of the sector must, as others, be able to take advantage of them.

- Joint and/or conventional agreements for a better professionalization and increased consideration of the jobs of the sector and to enable professional evolution. It appears clear that where collective negotiations exist, the employment conditions are better defined and structured, of benefit both to the employers through the quality of the services offered, and to the workers through their working conditions and vocational training.
- A study on the qualifications of the sector and the recognition of equivalences between European countries should be carried out. The sector must be able to refer to the European agency on training and qualifications, the CEDEFOP, to promote studies on the sector's jobs and their evolutions over the next ten years, both in the care jobs and in the non-care jobs. A European project, such as PRODOME, which unites France, Italy and Spain around a shared certification potentially for all European countries and for domestic workers, is an initiative to be encouraged.
- In the end, the social dialogue must enable the creation of a universal skills account. Although the integration in society through work is a central concern in European social policies, there are still too few concrete actions and tools to reach achievement. Ensuring the recognition of the professional skills acquired through home employment by the creation of a universal skills account would favour social integration of the less-qualified populations. This would also contribute to accompanying employers in their recruitment and would encourage intra-community exchanges.

8. Accompany digital inclusion and the development of collaborative platforms

- Digital inclusion constitutes a challenge with many potential opportunities, for the sector. It should permit to simplify, for all actors (State, local authorities, organisations, workers and users), the implementation of the declaration system and the social-tax incentive, the distribution of information regarding the quality of the jobs and services, the deployment of the universal skills account and so on.
- Digital deployments also enable the development of collaborative platforms which facilitate the intermediation between workers and users, as long as the mechanisms are supervised.

9. Reinforce exchanges of good practices in Europe

- Another idea would be to schedule contacts and seminars for exchanging practices with countries committed to organising the home employment sector. Although good practices cannot always be applicable in full in the Member States, exchanges would be particularly useful with Germany, Italy, Sweden, Spain, Cyprus, Portugal, etc.
- The organisation of the social dialogue will enable the social partners to study the good practices in the Member States and to take them on in order to share them and help the countries to build up or reinforce their conventional or legal context.

10. Recognise the status of household employers and domestic workers

- This recognition will contribute both to encouraging a dynamic impulse in the Member States and on a European level and to ensuring the recognition and development of this activity sector. It will lead to define it in order to ensure better supervision of it and to accompany its development in the best possible conditions.

[1] European Commission, *Developing personal and household services in the EU. A focus on house work activities*, 2013.

[2] Other examples: in Germany, the implementation of mini-jobs has simplified the declaration of household employees for private individuals and enabled them to benefit from a reduced tax rate. In Austria, a legalisation campaign has managed in two years to reduce undeclared work with the elderly by 80% (the campaign targeted the long-term care of the elderly).

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