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Brussels, 14 December 2020

EFFAT – EFFE – EFSI – UNI-Europa Joint Statement on Personal and Household Services Workers Require Priority Access to COVID-19 vaccine

*The statement is supported by [IDWF](#) (International Domestic Workers Federation)
and [UNICARE](#) Global*

EFFAT, EFFE, EFSI and UNI Europa are delighted by the announcement that the European Commission is progressing with the acquisition of a large number of doses of an anti-Covid19 vaccine that will then be distributed to Member States¹. The Commission's prioritising of certain groups such as healthcare and long-term care facility workers is important, yet doesn't meet the more comprehensive standards of the World Health Organization (WHO).

For that reason, it is with great concern that we noticed that in the European Commission proposal for a coordinated approach to the distribution of vaccines across EU Member States released on October 15, 2020, there is no explicit mention to homecare and other Personal and Household Services (PHS) workers on the priority groups² to which Member States should ensure easy access to COVID-19 vaccines.

In a letter to UNI Global Union's Christy Hoffman (see attachment), the WHO unequivocally states that homecare workers should be considered 'essential workers' and that the infection prevention control mechanism ought to apply to them. This was also restated in the WHO's updated version on Advice to decision makers on the use of masks for healthy people in community settings³.

There are 6,3 million formal PHS workers in the EU, which amounts to an average of 3.4% of total employment. It is estimated that in addition 3.2 million PHS workers are working informally (undeclared work). They provide care-related services in people's homes such as childcare, care for older people and people with disabilities (approximately 60% of PHS activities) as well as household support services such as cleaning, ironing, home repairs, gardening, etc. (approximately 40% of PHS activities). In other words, PHS workers assist those who are far more at risk to COVID-19 than the general population. PHS work is characterized by work activities in taking place in persons' private households in close proximity to service users, with workers often working in multiple homes, increasing the overall risk for infection exponentially. Consequently, infection prevention protocols are difficult to uphold and to monitor.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, PHS workers have demonstrated their commitment in providing care and support despite often working without adequate personal protective equipment. They face a substantial workload while operating in difficult and stressful situations. Back in April 2020, EFFAT, EFFE, EFSI and UNI-Europa highlighted the dedication of PHS workers to their jobs and called on authorities not to neglect PHS workers' and their clients' health and safety. They must be adequately protected so they can effectively be part of efforts fighting the virus.

Many PHS workers have lost their job as a consequence of the pandemic because of the reasonable users' fear of being infected and the often lack of inclusion in national job retention

¹ <https://twitter.com/vonderleyen/status/1325814283763130368>

² https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/vaccination/docs/2020_strategies_deployment_en.pdf

³ [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak)



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schemes. Prioritising access to COVID-19 vaccines for PHS workers would help them taking their work activity back while ensuring PHS workers' and their users' health and safety.

Therefore, EFFAT, EFFE, EFSI and UNI-Europa call on the European Commission, in accordance with WHO guidance, to specifically mention PHS workers among the priority group lists of “Essential workers outside the health sector” and “workers unable to physically distance” in any future documents setting out Europe’s vaccination strategy. Therefore, we would ask the European Commission to call on Member States to integrate PHS as priority-1 group as part of their national strategies.

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EFFAT is the **European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions**. As a European Trade Union Federation representing 120 national trade unions from 35 European countries, EFFAT defends the interests of more than 22 million workers employed along the food chain. EFFAT is a member of the ETUC and the European regional organisation of the IUF.

EFFE, the **European Federation for Family Employment & Homecare**, represents the interests of national stakeholders including social partners organisations (workers and employers) operating in the field of direct employment. This model is characterised by a contractual work relationship between two private individuals, without any trading or profit-making objective.

EFSI, the **European Federation for Services to Individuals**, is the voice of the Personal and Household Services industry at European level, representing national associations, employers' organisations, PHS providers and companies involved in the development of personal and household services, and currently operating in 21 EU Member States.

UNI-Europa is the **European Trade Union Federation for 7 million service workers**. It speaks for the sectors that constitute the backbone of economic and social life in Europe. Headquartered in the heart of Brussels, UNI Europa represents 272 national trade unions in 50 countries, including: Commerce, Banking Insurance and Central Banks, Gaming, Graphical and Packaging, Hair and Beauty, Information and Communication Technology Services, Media, Entertainment and Arts, Postal Services and Logistics, Private Care and Social Insurance, Industrial Cleaning and Private Security, Professional Sport and Leisure, Professionals/Managers and Temporary Agency Workers.