

Position Paper of the European Federation for Family Employment & Home Care

Recognizing the role and contribution of Personal and Household Services for a more human-centered approach to long-term care

On January 14, 2020, the European Commission presented first reflections on building a strong social Europe for just transitions¹. Among other initiatives, the communication announced a report on demographic changes and a **Green Paper on ageing**, which aims at launching a wide debate on long-term impacts on care.

Whilst ageing is too often considered through an economic prism, the Covid-19 pandemic has underlined the need to develop a more human-centred approach to the long-term care of Europe's ageing population. In fact, risks and uncertainties about the virus have threatened the equal enjoyment of human rights by older person and sometimes led to their discrimination. Emergency measures such as lockdowns have indeed increased social isolation or loneliness and curtailed their access to social and health care services. In particular, the crisis has highlighted the necessity to address major issues related to long-term care, namely the low quality of services, the limited access, and unaffordability of services, which are compounded by low public investments².

Demographic trends emphasize the necessity to shape a long-term vision for well-performing and resilient care systems that guarantee equal rights to older people. According to the latest studies, the share of people aged by 65 years or older should represent 30,3% of the EU population by 2070, compared to 20,3% in 2019³.

Considering these figures, the demand for qualified labour force is expected to rise along with the demand for social, health and long-term care services. In this context, we believe the recognition and support of the **personal and household services (PHS) sector** is essential to the provision of the accessible and affordable care services needed for older people to live autonomously and independently in the long-term.

The 8 million declared PHS workers⁴ (EU 28) — have already shown their crucial role during the crisis⁵. Nevertheless, the PHS sector is neither sufficiently recognised nor supported by public authorities. This often leads to the use of undeclared work, which can have devastating consequences for rights and protection of PHS workers and negatively impact the quality of care our elders benefit from.

In addition, despite home and care workers being able to provide quality and skilled support at a lower cost for Member States' social security systems, only 18,1% of people aged by 75 or

¹ European Commission. (January 14, 2020). *Commission presents first reflections on building a strong social Europe for just transitions*. Retrieved December 9th, 2020 from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9524>.

² Age Platform. (September 10, 2020). *Back to business as unusual: With COVID-19, the Green Paper on Ageing must consider ageism & human rights*. Retrieved December 9th, 2020 from <https://www.age-platform.eu/special-briefing/back-business-unusual-covid-19-green-paper-ageing-must-consider-ageism-human-rights>.

³ Eurostat. (August 2020). *Population structure and ageing*. Retrieved December 9th, 2020 from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing#Past_and_future_population_ageing_trends_in_the_EU-27.

⁴ "PHS" defines a work performed by an individual for any household, including support of the household outside of the premises of the household, taking care of household members or performing tasks that other households are usually able to do themselves, excluding services that can only be performed by specifically qualified care or non-care professionals.

⁵ European Commission. (2012). *Personal and Household Services*. Retrieved December 9th, 2020 from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1427&langId=en>.

older in the EU-27 reported using PHS in 2014⁶, with a higher share for older women (20,8%) than for older men (13,9%)(6). EFFE therefore calls on the European Commission to:

- As part of the Green Paper on Ageing, commit to the recognition and development of the PHS sector, including the direct employment model⁷, in order to implement the 18th principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), stating that everyone has the right to affordable and accessible long-term care services of good quality, in particular home-care and community-based services⁸.
- Engage with the PHS sector and all other relevant stakeholders to develop an ambitious Care Plan to ensure that European citizens have access to high-quality and affordable care models.

Ensuring social linkage in the post-COVID society

The 25th article of the Charter of fundamental rights of the EU focuses on the rights of the elderly and claims that the EU recognises and respects the rights of the elderly to lead a life of **dignity and independence** and to participate in social and cultural life⁹. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has threatened the equal enjoyment of human rights by older people, because they are at higher risk of serious complication. The measures implemented by Member States have had a strong impact on older people's life, especially women¹⁰, that were both living alone or in residential care, since they were more subject to **isolation**. Isolation can sometimes lead to mental **health disorders** such as depression, anxiety, and stress¹¹. PHS workers provide European households with affordable solutions to isolation and can therefore help avoid these disorders. EFFE therefore calls on the Commission to:

- **Include PHS workers in all future pandemic management plans** to ensure they have access to the training and materials needed (including personal protective equipment) to continue to support older people in times of health crisis
- **Avoid staff shortages or financial constraints for PHS workers** in all future pandemic plans by encouraging national authorities to consider temporary flexibility regarding services requirements and guarantee the full payment of home care services.

Supporting the autonomy of older people in the long-term

According to Eurostat, 39,2% of people aged 75 years or older had severe difficulties doing occasional heavy housework during the 12 months preceding the survey in 2014. This survey reveals other difficulties faced by older people in the EU such as managing medication (10.4%), preparing meals (13.8%), bathing and showering (14.3%), taking care of finances and

⁶ Eurostat. (2020). *A look at the lives of the elderly in the EU today*. Retrieved December 9th, 2020 from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/11478057/KS-02-20-655-EN-N.pdf/9b09606c-d4e8-4c33-63d2-3b20d5c19c91>.

⁷ This model is characterized by a contractual work relationship between two private individuals, without intermediary nor any profit/commercial purpose. Based on mutual trust and cooperation between employers and workers, this declared model aims to guarantee workers social rights, in accordance with the cultural approaches of each Member State

⁸ European Commission. (2017). *The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles*. Retrieved December 9th, 2020 from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en.

⁹ EUR-Lex. (October 26th, 2012). *Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union*. Retrieved December 9th, 2020 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012P%2FTXT>.

¹⁰ Women are particularly concerned by isolation, since they have a longer life expectancy than men – see Eurostat. (2020). *A look at the lives of the elderly in the EU today*. Retrieved December 9th, 2020 from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/11478057/KS-02-20-655-EN-N.pdf/9b09606c-d4e8-4c33-63d2-3b20d5c19c91>.

¹¹ 13,1% of older people aged 75 or older in the EU had depressive symptoms in 2014(6) because of the higher risk of living alone or losing personal independence.

everyday administrative tasks (17.1%) or doing light housework (18.6%), with this share rising to more than one fifth for shopping (23.2%)(6).

Considering these figures, PHS could play a crucial role in allowing older people to remain **independent** for a longer time instead of moving to residential care centres. Developing policies aiming at making PHS services and all its models of employment, including direct employment, more affordable and accessible would provide older people with the means to remain independent and to stay at home.

- **Encourage Member States to support older people through the creation of social and fiscal incentives** dedicated to PHS.
- Include the PHS sector in compulsory access targets, similarly to the Barcelona targets adopted in childcare in 2002, to measure progress in access to long-term care.
- **Encourage the development of innovative declarative tools, such as online declarative portals**, to foster access to PHS services, simplify procedures and guarantee social rights and protection to PHS works and employers

Supporting the post-COVID recovery through the Silver Economy

PHS is characterized by undeclared work¹². When no supporting policies are implemented towards PHS, undeclared work represents around 70% of all work relationships. It decreases to 30% when social and fiscal incentives are implemented¹³. Fostering the recognition of PHS workers by Member States would therefore respond to several European objectives. First, it would promote the access to affordable and quality long-term care solutions to European households. It would also bring millions of workers back to the formal market and increase the global employment's rate in the EU. To do so, it is necessary to encourage tax deduction/exemption for users that bring back that lower the final cost of PHS on the formal market to the one paid on the undeclared market. Member States would benefit from supporting measures, since they would have a lower impact on social security systems than residential care.

- **Promote the implementation of tax deduction/exemption to increase the employment rate of the PHS sector in national recovery plans.**

Supporting the right of PHS workers to ensure high-quality of care

Fostering the recognition of PHS workers by Member States would have a positive impact on the quality of the services provided and significantly improve their working conditions. This would provide PHS workers with access to training, which is necessary to guarantee health and safety at work. It is also a necessary step to ensure minimum wages that are in line with specific qualifications.

- Promote the access of PHS workers to adequate lifelong training to foster the development of human-centred competences and skills...**Support the development of new training schemes** dedicated to PHS workers to increase the quality of the services provided.

¹² European Commission. (2016). *European Platform tackling undeclared work, Member States Factsheets and Synthesis Report*. Retrieved December 9, 2020 from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?pager.offset=60&catId=1495&langId=en>

¹³ DGCIS. (2011). *Etude sur les services à la personne dans sept pays européens, Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Industrie*. Retrieved December 9, 2020 from <https://www.entreprises.gouv.fr/etudes-et-statistiques/etudes/services-a-la-personne-dans-sept-pays-europeens-novembre-2011>