

# TAILORED GUIDANCES: PROFESSIONALISATION OF PHS WORKERS

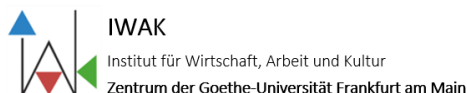
---

**ALPHS**  
Advancing Personal and Household Services



# Partners

---



This document reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



This project is funded by the European Union. (Ad-PHS - VS/2018/0344)

Professionalisation of PHS workers is crucial for EU countries:

- To create declared jobs which support both vulnerable populations (elderly, disabled) and work/ life balance;
- To recognise millions of PHS workers, and defend their dignity and integrity, by providing them decent work and basic social rights;
- To develop PHS workers' skills allowing them to provide high-quality services to households;
- To recognise, at European level, occupations and corresponding qualifications that meet households' needs.



# KEY DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONCEPTS

## DEFINITIONS

### 1 - Professionalisation

Throughout this document, workers' **professionalisation** is defined as a means to acquiring or ensuring recognition of their professional skills and including them in a professional career path: learning a trade, acquiring new skills to ensure the continued development of their employability, changing jobs and developing professionally. In PHS, professionalisation will include both initial and vocational training.

### 2 - Professional profile

A **professional profile** (or occupational profiles) consists of an explanation of the occupation in the form of a description, a scope note and a definition. Furthermore, it lists the knowledge, skills and competences that experts consider relevant. It is in fact the set of all competencies to describe a specific job or organisational role. A professional profile can also be described as the set of behaviours required from employees in their organisational role. The European Commission, via its European Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) portal, structures hierarchical relationships between occupations with corresponding professional profiles.<sup>1</sup>

### 3 - Professional qualifications

They are qualifications attested by evidence of formal qualifications, an attestation of competence and/or professional experience.<sup>2</sup> The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a common European reference framework that has been developed to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems. It is conceived as an important tool to support the cross-border mobility of learners and workers and lifelong learning across Europe.

## KEY CONCEPTS

In 2020, it was estimated that PHS **accounted for 6,3 million formal jobs in the EU**, representing 3,4% of total employment.<sup>3</sup> The PHS sector is expected to grow in coming decades, mainly due to the aging of the European population and the increase in women's' participation in the labour market.

On 1 January 2019, people aged 65 years old and over represented 20,3% of the European population,<sup>4</sup> with significant differences depending on the countries (22% in Italy and Greece, 21% in Germany, and 13% in Ireland). Eurostat population projections show that the proportion of elderly persons will significantly increase: in 2035, they will represent almost one-quarter of the population in Belgium (24%), Portugal (25%), Sweden (24%), and even more in Italy (29%) and in Germany (30%). Furthermore, the relative proportion of very elderly persons in the whole population is progressing more quickly than any other segment of the European Union's population. It is thus expected that the share of elderly persons over 80 years old in the EU-28 will double or more between 2015 and 2080, rising from 5.4% to 12.7%.

The elderly live more and more frequently alone, as living with relatives tends to be less frequent, due to the death of the spouse, the trend for less cohabitation between generations and the increasing geographical distance between adult children and their families.

---

<sup>1</sup> Each occupation concept contains one preferred term and any number of non-preferred terms and hidden terms in each of the ESCO languages.

<sup>2</sup> Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32005L0036>

<sup>3</sup> Lebrun (2020)

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, Structure and ageing of the population, August 2020.

The two sides of PHS, care and non-care, show differences, similarities, and complementarities. Traditionally in Europe, care-related services are considered under the umbrella of social policies, and therefore, funded by public bodies. However, household-related services are covered by employment policies aimed at creating new formal jobs, reducing undeclared work and increasing female labour market participation through the reduction of unpaid activities.

Despite these two different legal frameworks, the same service (e.g. home cleaning) can be considered part of the overall care provided to a dependent person, or it can be delivered to non-dependent people with other socio-economic perspectives. Considering the difficulties in distinguishing between care and non-care activities, the status of the recipient is therefore important and may contribute to defining the nature of the service.



**ADDED VALUE OF  
PROFESSIONALIZATION  
IN THE PHS**

## **1 - Quality**

Professionalization guarantees a higher quality of service and clearly define the tasks performed during both care and non-care activities.

PHS workers have to acquire both technical skills (such as knowledge of basic hygiene rules, use of specific products and avoidance of dangerous chemical reactions, competencies for the care of vulnerable persons, professional self-awareness and prevention of occupational hazards) and interpersonal skills (such as discretion, confidence, autonomy and adaptation to the user's needs).

It helps users to understand that the worker produces a better service than self-production. Professionalization therefore leads to better quality or more production and therefore is an essential element in improving wages.

## **2 - Safety**

Professionalization guarantees more safety in the service provided:

- Learning the right movements to avoid falls and using the right products,
- Avoid professional burnout, and limit families' demands, in a sector where the boundary between professional life and personal life can be hard to be identified.

## **3 - Recognition**

Professionalisation is essential for PHS workers. It leads to their recognition, by defending their dignity and integrity, by providing them decent work and social rights. The recognition, at European level, that we are talking about real professions with economic social & societal added value.





**CASE  
STUDIES**



### **FRANCE:**

Iperia<sup>5</sup> is the French expert platform for the professionalisation of the direct employment sector, whose mission is to create and develop a training offer and professionalisation tools for three types of workers: assistants to dependent people, childminders (both belonging to the care sector) and household employees (non-care).

Recently, Iperia created a training programme for professionals on the specificities of home support for people with disabilities.

In France, 430,000 dependents, because of their age or disability, choose to hire directly the care worker who accompanies them daily. Since the law of 2005, for the people directly concerned, living at home in good conditions is undoubtedly easier and less risky than before. Professional care workers themselves expressed their need for professionalisation in the help and support of the disability, which requires special skills for care workers working at home. Securing and adapting services involves training professionals in the specificities of home care for people with disabilities. The current professional certification is for Nursing Assistants, Child Care Assistants and Life Assistants, but they do not fully cover the necessary skills.

Therefore, the creation of a disability specialisation (Specialisation Handicap) associated with both titles is an appropriate response.

The specialisation to care (for people with disabilities) supports assistance that is specialised for this population, to accompany the person with a disability in their life project. The training course, consisting of three blocks of skills, has a duration of 174 hours.

It is based on a level 3 certification according to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and promotes the acquisition of fundamental knowledge in the home care of children or adults with disabilities by taking into account the specificities of the relationship in the relationship with a disabled person.

The activity and skills frameworks related to the 'Handicap' training exclude medical care, to focus on 'how to take care', meaning how to look after the immediate environment of the disabled person in and contribute to his/her well-being.

In France, the training offer depends on the employment model: workers hired through direct employment or service providers. It has also been observed that most of the time, in the household of a dependent (aging or disabled) person, a single worker performs all tasks related to both care and non-care activities (lifting the person, general care, cleaning, meal preparation etc.) therefore an integrated approach was preferred. Workers can therefore access short courses (modules on care or non-care activities) or qualified training in which they learn from both care and non-care activities to be able to intervene effectively in this specific kind of household. This approach comes from a pragmatic look at user needs.

### **Service providers:**

- Diplomas or qualifications or a minimum of 3 years' experience are required for PHS workers who operate within a PHS organisation and provide services to vulnerable people (elderly or disabled people and children under the age of 3). Specific diplomas are also required for managers. Therefore, many PHS organisations have launched substantial training programmes, using various methods: 'classic' physical courses, one-to-one training, tutorials, e-learning, etc. This training range from basic skills (level 1 of the EQF) up to Master degrees (level 7 of the EQF). These training programmes are provided in-house or by external training organisations.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.iperia.eu/>

- Even though no diploma or qualification is required for other PHS jobs such as house cleaning, gardening or childminding for children of 3 and above, many PHS organisations train their employees in order to provide higher-quality services thanks to better skilled employees.
- PHS organisations are invited to sign the NOVA national charter, managed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Signatories are granted access to various tools meant to support them in their initiatives to improve service quality.
- Alternatively, PHS organisations can choose to apply standards specifically developed for PHS. To date, four standards exist in the sector: NF Services 'Personal Services at Home', Qualicert 'Services to individuals', Qualisap and Cap'Handéo-SAP. By adopting them, PHS organisations agree on a voluntary basis to comply with high quality requirements and are subject to regular scrutiny.

Actors in the national professional branch of PHS companies are actively involved in the development of PHS workers' professionalisation. They are working towards an integrated offer of services, advocating greater collaboration among the various occupations intervening at home in order to make these jobs more attractive. Each year, approximately 3,000 new workers are qualified thanks to the dual training system.

#### **Direct employment:**

Social dialogue has enabled the creation of a conventional employer contribution, in addition to the legal contribution, paid by every household employer, and dedicated to the vocational training of employees in the sector. With this fund, the direct employment sector has been able to implement a professionalisation policy, with a sectoral diploma and a large choice of continuing training modules, accessible from the first hour worked in a family. Maternal assistants (childminders) must be approved before they can look after children. For this, they have to follow prior training of 120 hours.

Social dialogue has enabled the following:

- For workers: the possibility to access 58 hours of training each year from the first hour worked, without seniority conditions or minimum weekly working time.
- Easy registration for training for private employers and workers. The training does not depend on the work contract but the worker him/herself.
- A zero cost for the workers and a depreciated cost for the employers based on their monthly social contributions, which includes payment of the cost of the training, payment of salary throughout the training, and a fixed contribution to living costs (hotel, travel, catering). This last measure allows workers to assert their rights without worrying about the issue of their replacement, which constitutes a central obstacle to starting training in the sector.
- Financial support for the driving licence and hours of driving.

Alongside the creation of a dedicated professionalisation framework, a suitable training offer adapted to the reality of the sector has been set up to enhance the attractiveness of the sector and allow the recognition of the skills needed by PHS workers.

## SWEDEN

For long-term care, licences, prices and compliance are set and monitored by municipalities, even for private providers. The user satisfaction survey conducted annually by the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) is the most widely used instrument for measuring quality in Swedish long-term care. Besides, two standards on *'Quality of care, service, nursing, and rehabilitation for elderly people with extensive needs in ordinary and residential care facilities'* have been implemented since 2015 by the Swedish Institute for Standards. In recent years, some municipalities have developed training programmes for employed care workers, but there are no minimum standards for training. Over 75% of care workers have at least one year of formal training.

On the non-care side, some private companies registered with Almega, the employers' representative association taking part in the collective agreement, have chosen to train their workers themselves in basic homework tasks or to rely on the training offer of SRY (Servicebranschens Yrkesnämnd), a bipartite training body launched by the social partners in 1985.

## BELGIUM

In the Belgian service voucher scheme, the sectoral collective bargaining agreement foresees that all service voucher companies must train their employees for at least 12 hours or 2 days per year (calculated on the basis of FTE workers). This compulsory training is partly funded by the Regional and Sectoral Training Funds.

The Sectoral Training Fund (Fonds de Formation Sectoriel Titres-Services/Sectoraal Vormingsfonds Dienstencheques) was created in 2009 by the social partners. It contributes to the development of a training policy for all workers and companies belonging to Joint Committee 322.01. As such, it ensures that training demands in the sector are met and facilitates training efforts of all stakeholders.

In addition to regional funding, the Sectoral Training Fund covers the training costs of new service voucher workers for between 9 and 18 hours. Furthermore, the Sectoral Training Fund is carrying out several projects such as a Sustainability Fund which aims to raise awareness on manageable and feasible work in PHS and whose first campaign (in 2019) focused on the provision of suitable equipment. Another project is building a digital learning platform entitled 'My Perfect Day'. It aims to provide new training tools for service voucher workers and is also meant to be an information platform to potential service voucher workers.

## GERMANY

In Germany, there are no real public policies to support PHS, and therefore undeclared work still predominates. This is the reason why the German Competence Centre 'Professionalisation and Quality Assurance of Household Services' (PQHS) is currently conducting a general reflection on how a professionalisation policy could be applied in the PHS sector.

The main objective is to continue and further develop the projects that are successfully under way.

- In 2020, the competence centre will initiate the further development of the framework curriculum for the qualification of specialists in household-related services. To this end, various experts will be involved. Experience gained so far with the curriculum in practice will provide the main impetus. With the framework curriculum of the dgh (German Society for Home Economics), an important contribution to a uniform and recognised training basis for specialists in household-related services was made in the first funding phases of the competence centre.
- The competence centre is currently planning to develop strategies with various stakeholders on the supply side of household services. On this basis, a nationwide action programme is to be developed in the medium term.
- The pilot project 'Securing skilled workers through the professionalisation of household services', which has been carried out at two different locations in Germany since March 2017, and is scheduled to run until June 2021 and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, continues to deliver important results. Its objective is to adapt public labour market policies to the supply and demand of household services and, therefore, to develop a framework curriculum for the qualification of specialists in the area, which should lead to a uniform and recognised training basis for specialists. With such new recognized training basis, the competence centre will promote the national introduction of vouchers for household services. The balancing of this model is another projected working focus. This will be used, for example, to develop criteria for companies that are eligible to participate in a national voucher model.

## ITALY

In Italy, Ebincolf is the National Bilateral Agency of Employers and Family Workers and was created in December 2002 by the national federations of the most representative employers and workers' organisations in the domestic work sector, which signed the national collective agreement on domestic work.

The authority has the following functions: to establish an observatory and assess the employment situation of domestic workers; to calculate the average standard earnings; to assess the level of implementation of the national collective agreement in different regions and areas as well as regulations on migrant workers; to check the welfare and social situation of domestic workers and their training needs (every year Ebincolf funds several training programmes for domestic workers); and to provide analyses and proposals on occupational safety.

In this regard, Ebincolf has published five documents on occupational safety in the domestic sector: on household cleaning and hygiene; on risk prevention related to power supply in households; on risk prevention related to gas supply in households; on risk prevention related to activities which require climbing ladders and stools; and on risk prevention related to heavy lifting.

Furthermore, through Ebincolf the social partners are working on a new certification (Certicolf) complying with the UNI technical standards.

## EUROPEAN PROJECTS

The **atHOME**<sup>6</sup> European project led by the 'Pour la Solidarité' think tank dealt with the working conditions of carers for the elderly, and beyond that, ways of allowing the elderly to stay as long as possible in their homes in good conditions. To ensure this support, training tools for carers are a crucial parameter. The atHOME project was coordinated by the French Red Cross with the help of Spanish, Portuguese and Belgian partners and is part of the Erasmus+ programme which provides access to training tools for home helpers.

The project has just launched two interesting tools for home helpers in the long-term care sector:

- a mobile app to record work schedules and medical information regarding the care of dependent people;
- a professionalisation program organised around 12 skills for caregivers.

The European **PRODOME**<sup>7</sup> project aimed to develop the professionalisation of domestic workers in Europe mainly by developing a training programme adapted to the current needs of domestic workers. In the project pairs made up of a social partner representing the household employers (France and Italy) or their employees (Spain) and a member of the professionalisation area endeavoured to build up a certification reference for the domestic worker profile.

This training used the "blended learning" format and was tested in 2019 in two pilot countries: Spain and Italy. Both transversal (such as IT or "green" skills applied to the household) and specific competences were included.

Funded by the Erasmus+ programme, this project, which ended on October 2019, drew a picture of the situation of domestic workers in Europe: they are mainly invisible workers, mostly women, with sometimes no access to social rights, and working without social welfare. There are large disparities between countries. The project also made the link between committed public policies supporting declared work and the promotion and recognition of the domestic work sector.

Among the project deliverables, the PRODOME training kit for these workers, freely accessible in four languages, and based on nine modules and a practical experience, was created to adapt to the profile and needs of domestic workers. The training enables students to offer targeted services responding to specific needs. Before publication, the training was tested in Italy and Spain.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pourlasolidarite.eu/fr/news/home-pls-sengage-pour-lamelioration-de-laide-domicile>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.prodome.eu/>



---

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

### **1 - Improve Quality service provision**

In the case of early childhood care, developing PHS workers' skills showed a guarantee of well-being and security. For elderly care, specific, technical and relational skills lead to preventing as much as possible, slowing down, and then accompanying a loss of autonomy at home: making a home safe, respecting the habits and privacy of the person while caring for him/her, stimulating and assisting the elderly persons without doing the task for them, observing and constantly adapting the support to match the evolution in abilities, etc.

### **2 - Attractiveness of the industry**

With demographic change, professionalization is a lever of attractiveness to face the risk of skills & labour shortage whereas the future challenges require to be able to rely on a much larger number of professionals, particularly to be able to accompany dependency at home.

Specific to home care, which as we know is a growing industry with a rising demand, we must look at training that is tailored to home care but also provides a large variety of transferable skills. A 2015 report by the European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO) looked explicitly at EU member states, and recommended that during times of increased unemployment (such as we are facing post COVID-19), training should comprise a mix of generic and vocation skills that target low and long-term unemployed adults. Taking the example of computer skills and digitalisation, it may not be apparent at first glance why a home care worker might need them. However, if they can support their end-users with such activities as online banking or online tax declarations, home care workers are of more help. Home care workers will also be able to engage with work procurement and worker networks, which take place online. Digitalisation is just one example of a generic skill that will significantly benefit home care workers.

Training and certification empower women to develop careers and pathways in the PHS sector. It can also become a lever of attractivity for men to take up PHS professions.

It can also become a lever of attractivity and Integration for migrant populations.

### **3 - Better Recognition**

The economic and social value of PHS jobs seems clear, but workers' professional skills have to be developed to ensure social recognition and quality services for the households needing them.

The professionalisation of PHS workers in Europe both contributes to matching the service provided with the ever-evolving needs of families and is the means of ensuring society's recognition that the qualities needed fall within the scope of professional skills. Recognition of emotional labour is also key to improving the image of home care workers. These workers do a significant amount of emotional and relational work with end-users that is often taken for granted. Home care workers have day-to-day interactions with end-users and have a relationship that many end-users may not even share with their own families. It is also important to note that death and grieving are often part of the job, and that these workers are not given the appropriate recognition or time to deal with loss. Recognising their work also requires the formal recognition that this work is difficult and requires emotional skills that are explicit.

### **4 - Health & Standards**

Toxicity of cleaning products, musculoskeletal disorders due to the daily carrying of children or moving dependent elderly persons, housework, along with the emotional commitment which is necessary in many relationships of care and assistance. To meet with the expectations of households and individuals, and also to learn to protect oneself and prevent occupational illness or accidents, PHS workers have to develop professional specific skills.



## 5 -Human Capital

Developing PHS workers' skills is therefore the most effective way to ensure the development of real jobs with high human added value, and the best way for people to realize that these jobs deserve wages, social welfare and professional recognition particularly regarding to the fact that it is a sector where undeclared work prevails.

Professionalization allows to fight against the isolation of caregivers: between 10% and 25% of European citizens take on a role as an informal carer, with proportions that may vary considerably from one country to another. Owing to the definitions used and the measures established, these workers are often unrecognised.

Informal (or family) carers are distinguished from domestic workers. Eurocarers offers a clear definition to identify them: "Informal carers are persons who provide care (usually unpaid) to someone with a chronic illness, disability or other long-lasting health or care need, outside of a professional or formal framework". Informal carers or voluntary carers are generally women, often older. In the EU-28, 18% of women do not work due to their activity as a carer. In France, this rate is among the lowest (9%), but it is 25% in Spain, 22% in Italy and 15% in Germany.<sup>8</sup>

Isolation is however not just for informal workers; home care workers in general suffer from isolation. They work in isolated work environments and have very little contact with other home care workers. In 2016 the French national solidarity fund for autonomy (CNSA) created the 'Life assistant relays'. This is a professionalisation programme (a course of 5 sessions of 3 hours each), based on the exchange of professional practices between peers, under the guidance of a facilitator. It allows life assistants to become aware of the professional nature of their activity, to possibly initiate the recognition of their prior learning, to open the way to other training programmes and to build a professional network.

Recognising the skills that caregivers acquire during their experience as voluntary carers and giving them access to training enabling them to perform their role in better conditions.

Putting in place the mechanisms which, while recognising the importance of their help, do not lock them into their role as caregivers.

---

<sup>8</sup> Eurocarers, carers and access to training: general survey of the EU countries, Report drawn up in relation to the TRACK Project: <https://eurocarers.org/track-2/>

**Public authorities need to take urgent action to support the added value of these jobs to face the forthcoming demographic and societal challenges.**



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. ENSURE PHS WORKERS RIGHT TO ACCESS PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS** that would allow them to build their own career progression based on their desire and life goals, even though it includes access to trainings not directly related to their current occupations (or an occupation belonging to PHS).
- 2. CREATE ADAPTED TRAINING PROGRAMS & SET UP SKILLS CERTIFICATION SCHEMES** which must consider the specificity of private homes, accompany new skills and enhance prior learning validation. Professionalisation should be accessible through different ways of skill acquisition: accelerated training courses (targeted modules), vocational training, recognition of prior learning etc.). special attention must be paid to particularly vulnerables workers such as migrants documented or undocumented.
- 3. STRENGTHEN SOCIAL DIALOGUE:** Promote collective agreements for a better professionalisation to increase the consideration of these jobs, to enable professional development. Where collective negotiations exist, the employment conditions are better defined and structured, which benefits both employers/users through the quality of the services offered, and employees through their working conditions and vocational training.
- 4. DEVELOP proactively the CROSS-SECTOR SKILLS** adapted to PHS various stakes:
  - Green skills for cleaning without harming the environment or one's health;
  - Relationship and autonomy skills for understanding the requests, anticipating evolving needs and making appropriate proposals, as the child grows up, as the elderly person loses his/her autonomy, etc.
  - Digital skills for developing employability, for helping an elderly person to complete administrative formalities, for adapting to home automation tools used in the household (smart appliances, e-health).



This project is funded  
by the European Union.  
(Ad-PHS - VS/2018/0344)