

Brussels the 8th of March 2023

Declaration of EFFE in the context of the International Women's Day

Achieving a gender-equal Europe by 2025 is one of the major goals of the European Commission. Its main existing tool is the EU Gender Equality Strategy, which establishes a number of key objectives, such as challenging gender stereotypes; closing gender gaps in the labour market, addressing the gender pay and pension gaps, achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics, or closing the gender care gap.

Although this roadmap seeks to quickly and structurally transform the European society on its gender equality levels, the European Care Strategy, released in September of 2022, highlighted that an important level of disparities between women and men regarding the exercise of formal care still exist nowadays, as European women represent to this day around 90% of the formal care workforce and 76% of unpaid care activity in the EU, and that 7.7 million of them are out of employment because of care responsibilities. These responsibilities are nowadays fulfilled by women through informal and unpaid care. Therefore, it has consequences on women access to the labour market after maternity leave for instance, and work-life balance. Personal and household services (PHS) structuration and development is a way to improve this access because it gives a suitable solution to care needs in Europe.

EFFE supports the freedom of choice for women to decide to have recourse or not to home care services and through it, the access for all to multiple models of caregiving. By guaranteeing that all type of barriers, especially of economic order, are eliminated, public authorities are contributing to the EU's key objective of accessibility. Promoting the access to personal and household services, contributes to the improvement of European women's overall living conditions, on aspects such as economic emancipation and "mental load" relief.

Therefore, supporting the development of the personal and household services sector is essential!

We are talking about a widely feminized sector: 92% of its workers in Europe are women, which are facing the lack of recognition and structuration of these jobs or the higher probability to be in a situation of economic precarity and poor working conditions.

PHS workers are crucial to meet EU countries care need. A majority of them are migrant women workers: 60% of national PHS workers in Spain ; or 75% of national PHS workers in Italy.

We must pay particular attention to migrant women of the PHS sector and create a professional framework that protects them and create decent jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic both reinforced the essential role of the care sector and exacerbated the precarity of migrant carers.

In the framework of the European year of skills, recognizing their essential role in providing care in the European Union is a first step to fight against undeclared work and prevent labour exploitation. Access to trainings and professionalization in the home care sector is very often undermined and undervalued which has a clear impact on the vision society has on these jobs but also how workers feel about their jobs.

Recognizing that the domestic & homecare workforce, mostly feminine, is facing difficult working conditions and that domestic & care workers are the ones facing the most precarious and exploitative conditions is equally essential as recognition. It has also an impact on users and contributes to unfair and unsustainable social protection systems.

To improve women's working conditions and recognition in the PHS sector EFFE strives for the creation of representative social dialogue to better strengthen sectoral social dialogue at both EU and national level.

Along with the European Commission's will to tackle this issue, EFFE is committed to better recognize the domestic and home care sector to avoid the creation in Europe of « second-class workforce », who would be mostly women, but in the contrary allow them to have access to rewarding declared jobs with decent working conditions.