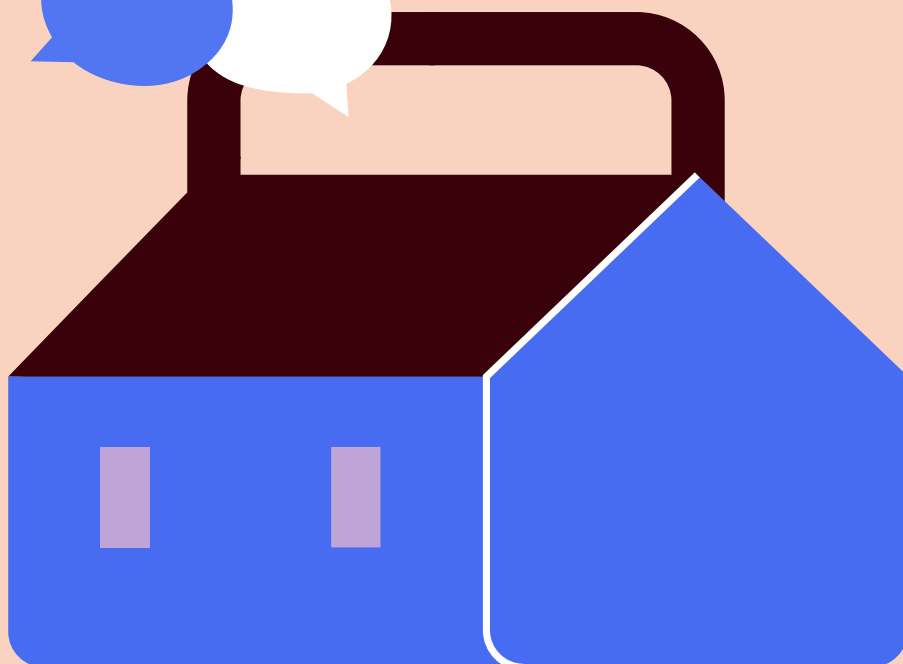
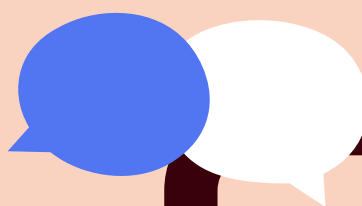


Capacity Building Toolkit for PHS Employers and Businesses Organisation



EUROPEAN FEDERATION
FOR FAMILY EMPLOYMENT
AND HOME CARE



European Federation
for Services to Individuals

Introduction	3
01. Capacity Building	4
1.1. Employers' Organisations	5
1.2. Definition of Capacity Building	5
02. Understanding social dialogue	7
2.1. Definition and Importance of Social Dialogue	8
03. Challenges Faced by Employer's Organisations of the PHS Sector	11
3.1. Capacity Building General Challenges	12
3.2. Capacity Building Challenges concerning Social Dialogue in the PHS Sector	13
04. Toolkit	15
4.1. Good Governance	16
4.2. Advocacy	16
4.3. Communication	17
4.4. Membership Development	18
4.5. Services	18
Conclusion	20
Tools to Develop Capacity Building for PHS SEOs	21
Glossary	23
Bibliography	24

Introduction

The [PHSDialogue Project](#) lays the foundation for an EU Sectoral Social Dialogue and strengthens collective bargaining capacity for the **Personal and Household Services Sector (PHS)** at the European level.

At the EU level, the concept of “domestic and home care workers” has often been approached through the wider concept of “Personal and Household Services (PHS) workers.” According to the most recent ESPAN report published by the European Commission on Domestic Workers, providing support services to households includes care activities (e.g. childcare or long-term care (LTC) for older people and people with disabilities) and non-care activities (e.g. cleaning, cooking, home repairs, gardening).¹

The survey conducted by **EFFE (European Federation for Family Employment and Homecare)** and **EFSI (European Federation for Services to Individuals)** shows that the majority of PHS activities were caring for the elderly, caring for people with disabilities, childcare, cleaning, and ironing.²

Different employment models characterise the PHS, which can be delivered **through service providers** (indirect employment model, where a service provider (for profit/not for profit) acts as an intermediary between the domestic worker and the household), or **user-employers** (direct employment model, the household directly hires the worker). It can also include other forms of work, such as self-employment (a person operating independently, offering services directly to clients), temporary employment, or platform work.³ Even though the models of employment differ (user employers bearing or not the administrative and legal responsibilities of hiring the worker), both face common challenges, such as an atypical workplace of a private household, which leads to unique complexities.

The Work Package 4 of the PHSDialogue Project aims to identify the most effective strategies for strengthening the capacity of PHS sector employers, user-employers, and business organisations at national and EU levels. In this context the present toolkit has been developed by **EFFE and EFSI**, with direct input from their members.

This toolkit seeks to help **PHS Employers and Business Members Organisations (EBMO) / Sectoral Employer Organisations (SEOs)** to participate in the decision-making process defining employment relationships, and to pursue efficiency (industrial competitiveness) and equity (social justice and quality of work and employment).

Strengthening collective bargaining capacity **requires developing capacity building of bodies representing PHS stakeholders**, such as enhancing skills, and resources so these organisations provide high-quality, dependable, and efficient services.

The toolkit targets well-established and new **PHS Employer’s Organisations** to:

- Understand the importance of being an employer organisation in PHS.
- Better identify PHS SEOs capacity-building needs at the national level.
- Comprehend the best ways in which PHS SEOs capacity can be reinforced.
- Provide PHS SEOs with practical advice and tools to review their approaches to various aspects of their operations and to build and run their organisations more strategically, effectively, and efficiently.

Therefore, the toolkit aims to reinforce social partners’ abilities and power to engage in an institutional context for a stable, organised, and sustainable PHS sector.

1 Ghailani, D., Marlier, E., Baptista, I., Deruelle, T., Duri, I., Guio, A.-C., Kominou, K., Perista, P. and Spasova, S. (2024). Access for domestic workers to labour and social protection: An analysis of policies in 34 European countries. European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN), Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p.7, pp. 40–42.

2 EFFE, EFSI (August 2024), Survey on PHS Employer’s Capacity Building.

3 European Commission (July 2015), The Thematic Review on Personal and Household Services, p.9.

01

Capacity Building

1.1. Employers' Organisations

Employers' organisations play a key role in nearly all countries in the world, for the most part cooperating well with Trade Unions and Governments. Employers' Organisations contribute to development in their countries, not only in the labour market, but also in civil society, including by strengthening democracy, economic efficiency, and social equity. In countries in transition, employers' organisations play an essential role during the changeover to a market economy from a previously planned economic system. In many countries, the employer side is made up of sectoral employers' organisations (SEOs) which together form a cross-sector "umbrella" confederation of employers. The SEOs are often the backbone of the confederations and influence their affairs in the interest of all employers in the country.

The industrial relations arrangements in countries with well-developed social dialogue differ from each other, as do their welfare regimes and social models, however, they also share some common features. Post World War II, industrial systems and their contributions to economic growth and publicly funded social protection have relied on key institutional foundations. These include coordinated wage-setting at the sector level, ensuring some degree of wage solidarity, and tripartite policy agreements involving workers, employers, and governments. The successes of social dialogue and high bargaining coverage rates in European countries are linked to the existence of sectoral employers' organisations.⁴

In principle, there are three kinds of SEOs: "Pure" employers' organisations, dealing with social affairs, employer-employee relations, and collective representation in relation to Trade Unions and the State, mainly collective bargaining; Trade organisations without a mandate to become involved in employers' affairs, dealing with trade matters related to the sector, taxes, customs, environment, products, standards; "Mixed" organisations covering the whole span of the abovementioned matters.

1.2. Definition of Capacity Building

The European Commission's definition of "capacity building" states that it is a process for developing organisational, financial, and personnel capacities of Trade Unions and Employer Organisations and enhancing their contribution to governance on both national and regional levels. Action to enhance their capacity for social dialogue could consist of information sharing, and trainings on participation, and negotiation mechanisms, strengthening the role of social partners in shaping working conditions and the functioning of the labour market.⁵

The definition of "capacity building" by Eurofound is more centred on the element of social dialogue, as it entails the enhancement of social partners' skills, abilities, and powers to engage effectively at different levels in social dialogue, collective bargaining, regulating the employment relationship, and influencing public policymaking via advocacy.⁶

Indeed, the general objectives of capacity-building initiatives are meant to increase and improve the SEO's financial, legal, analytical, institutional, and political capacities to do their daily work at any level, whether at EU, national, regional, or sectoral level. These initiatives help social partners to improve their membership basis, their human and administrative capacities, promote their process-oriented competences and support their organisational development. As part of this, it is also expected to develop social dialogue, and engage in collective bargaining, which will contribute to the regulation of employment relationships.⁷

4 ILO (2011), The effective employer's organisation, Building a strong and efficient sectoral employer's organisation, International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation, pp. 8–11.

5 European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion (2008), Industrial relations in Europe, Publications Office.

6 Eurofound (2020), Capacity building for effective social dialogue in the European Union, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

7 Eurofound (2017), National Capacity-Building initiatives for social partners: Experiences in five EU Member States, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/2017/national-capacity-building-initiatives-social-partners-experiences-five-eu-member>, pp. 7–8.

Furthermore, capacity building can bring a better balance between the role of the State and that of social partners, facilitating adaptation to evolving labour markets. For example, the more proactive and strong social partners are, the better they can be in their involvement in the European Semester process to design and implement structural reforms as explained in the country-specific recommendations.

According to Eurofound, attempts to close structural gaps within the national systems of industrial relations should be supported to arrive at a more effective social dialogue at the national level, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and autonomy of the social partners.⁸

8 Eurofound (2020), Capacity building for effective social dialogue in the European Union, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, pp. 46–47.

02

Understanding Social Dialogue

2.1. Definition and Importance of Social Dialogue

Considering that this toolkit is rooted in the PHSDialogue Project, it is crucial to look at capacity building from the perspective of developing social dialogue. Fostering social dialogue in the PHS sector is a key objective of the project and is recognised as a key driver to developing the sector. Furthermore, according to EFFE and EFSI's Survey on Employer's Capacity Building, social dialogue and collective bargaining are the top priorities for PHS SEOs in the coming years.⁹

Effective social dialogue at all levels fosters economic efficiency, global competitiveness, and investment appeal. It promotes good employment practices and should be integral to employment relationships across sectors. Social dialogue also supports democratic governance through collective bargaining and conflict resolution, while advancing social equity by promoting fair welfare distribution. It has a direct added value for workers, leading to better recognition, social protection, raised wages, and conflict solutions. Therefore, we can say that social dialogue is a way to achieve a balanced relationship that involves a link of subordination towards the employer, and with which employees can express their views.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) describes social dialogue broadly, encompassing all negotiations, consultations, and exchanges of information between government, employers, and workers on shared economic concerns. Social dialogue varies widely among countries in terms of structure, laws, and the scope of collective bargaining. It can involve both government and social partners (tripartite) or just employers and workers (bipartite). Even in bipartite cases, it is influenced by state policies, taxes, and welfare systems.¹⁰

Key principles of social dialogue include transparency, inclusiveness, respect for labour rights, mutual respect, and the willingness to compromise.

Common features in countries with well-developed social dialogue include:



Tripartite discussions with public authorities on policy and regulatory issues via councils, committees, or working groups, sometimes involving Sectoral Employers' Organisations (SEOs) directly or through broader employers' associations.



Bipartite consultations between SEOs and Trade Unions on social and safety issues.



Negotiation of collective agreements.

The different types of social dialogue can vary in formal and informal dialogue, collective bargaining, consultation, and joint decision-making processes.

The SEOs' role in negotiations depends on the national legal framework, particularly regarding the enforceability and binding nature of the collective agreements. SEOs must also consider the unwritten norms, values, and attitudes within the labour market before beginning consultations or negotiations with Trade Unions.

The key question is how and to what extent the SEO can address and channel members' needs through social dialogue. In countries where social dialogue is developing or not yet established, SEOs have a unique opportunity to lead and influence stakeholders, particularly the Government and Trade Unions, and to impulse the creation of targeted public policies.

9 EFFE, EFSI (August 2024), Survey on PHS Employer's Capacity Building.

10 ILO (2011), The effective employer's organisation, Building a strong and efficient sectoral employer's organisation, International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation, pp. 81-82.

SEOs must recognise that Employers prefer decentralised decision-making in both business and employment matters, while Trade Unions often push for centralised regulation, typical in sectoral or cross-sectoral agreements. As collective agreements are the outcomes of bargaining, SEOs must secure agreements that deliver value to their members and communicate their benefits. It is important to reflect on how to negotiate collective agreements to meet their needs.

In countries with emerging social dialogue, employers have identified several benefits of sector agreements, including:



Setting standard wages and employment conditions, helping manage employee relations and external labour competition.



Providing a basis for budget planning.



Enabling structured participation in social dialogue.

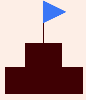
Collective bargaining topics vary by country, though wages and employment conditions are common. These agreements are usually binding for the members or act as recommendations, often with peace clauses to ensure labour peace during the contract period. Initial agreements often set a precedent for subsequent contracts.

In many countries, collective bargaining also addresses social issues like insurance, sick pay, and pensions, usually at the cross-sectoral level to complement legislation. In systems with advanced social dialogue, agreements may also cover redundancy pay, training funds, and other support for displaced workers.

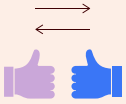
SEO participation in collective bargaining requires skilled, professional negotiators. Internal training and sharing past negotiation experiences are essential, as SEO expertise relies on both technical knowledge and practical experience with previous resolutions. Adequate staffing is necessary, including negotiation leaders and specialists in economics, sector data, public affairs, statistics, wage policies, labour law, and working conditions.

It has to be defined if the SEO has the authority to negotiate and make agreements on behalf of its members. This mandate may be permanent (e.g. set by the constitution) or granted on a case-by-case basis by the SEO's board. Often, there is also a consideration of whether the umbrella employers' organisation will manage top-level negotiations before sector-specific talks.

During negotiations, continuous team communication is essential for updates, analysis, and planning. Keeping the delegation fully informed and involved is crucial, as is strong cooperation between the team leader and the delegation. Negotiation approaches can be:



Positional Bargaining: Focuses on defending one's own demands, often treating the other side as an adversary. Winning is prioritised over understanding the opponent's concerns, and concessions are viewed as weaknesses. This aggressive stance leads to prolonged negotiations, especially in the initial "transport distance" phase. Parties lacking trust, preparation, or experience often adopt this approach.



Interest Bargaining: Both sides respect each other and aim for mutual benefit. Key elements include respecting the other party's views, adhering to rules and facts, and seeking the benefit of both parties. Each party recognises the other's legitimate concerns, leading to a collaborative approach. Both sides work together toward solutions, using active listening and open-ended questions to foster cooperation.¹¹

In the end, Governments, Employers, and Workers' Representatives play a role in the development of social dialogue.

11 ILO (2011), The effective employer's organisation, Building a strong and efficient sectoral employer's organisation, International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation, pp. 81-90.

03

**Challenges Faced by Employer's
Organisations of the PHS Sector**

The PHS sector has unique characteristics and challenges that impact its development.

Firstly, the sector encompasses various employment relationships. PHS workers may be directly employed by user employers or work through service providers, agencies, or authorised representatives (public, private, for-profit, or non-profit). They may have single or multiple employment contracts, work part-time or full-time, operate as self-employed, or engage in platform work. These diverse arrangements create representation gaps, as identified by one-third of EU Member States. New forms of work and labour force changes complicate employer representation, limiting the mandate of employer associations in collective bargaining and hindering social dialogue.¹²

Secondly, undeclared work poses major challenges. It reduces employer representation, participation, and contribution to SEOs, which limits their power to advocate for sectoral improvements. It undermines social dialogue, as Employer Organisations struggle to negotiate with Trade Unions and policymakers when a significant portion of the workforce operates outside the formal framework. Policymakers may also deprioritise reforms in a largely informal sector, making it harder to push for legal frameworks and incentives that encourage compliance. Undeclared work distorts the market and creates unfair competition, as informal employers avoid taxes and social contributions, while compliant employers bear the full regulatory burden. It hinders professionalisation efforts, as without a formal workforce, implementing capacity-building initiatives such as training programs, certification schemes, and quality standards becomes challenging.

Thirdly, PHS workers are employed in private households, often in isolation, making it difficult to monitor working conditions and enforce labour rights. This poses challenges in addressing the specific concerns of this sector, especially regarding workplace safety and risk prevention. The concept of private households is central to the PHS sector, as it means that PHS work takes place within the private sphere and property of individuals, which is generally protected from labour inspections to respect privacy and property rights. This reinforces the importance of finding alternative ways to ensure compliance with all, and the significant role of collective bargaining agreements to set the conditions of work. In addition, PHS workers are particularly vulnerable, given that 90% of the workers are women, most of them are above 50 years old, and migrants, who may face language barriers, precarious contracts, and difficulties in asserting their rights.¹³

These challenges reinforce the need for stronger policies, formalisation incentives, and capacity building together with social dialogue, for a more sustainable and professionalised PHS sector.

3.1. Capacity Building General Challenges

- **Lack of capacity-building initiatives:** The lack of structured programs, resources, and strategies for Sectoral Employer Organisations (SEOs) weakens their ability to represent employers, engage in social dialogue, and support sector development. Many SEOs struggle with governance, lacking clear decision-making processes, transparency, and leadership development. Without proper training and resources, they face challenges in advocating for beneficial policies, engaging with policymakers, and shaping labour regulations. Limited capacity-building also hinders their communication with members and the public, reducing their influence.
- **Lack of Social Dialogue:** Rights to participate in social dialogue at the EU level should be better promoted, introducing the right of association, and Trade Unions to be able to initiate proceedings on behalf of their members. The participation of the national social partners in decision-making at national, and sectoral levels should be present to strengthen collective bargaining and the capacity of social partners. Campaigns on the use of and need for collective bargaining, and more state support on the role of social partners are crucial for SEOs.
- **The dominant role of the State and the lack of autonomy of the social partners:** Several reports highlight concerns about the growing dominance of centralisation by expanding its involvement at the national level, particularly in wage bargaining.

12 Eurofound (2020), Capacity building for effective social dialogue in the European Union, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 30.

13 Jarrow Insights (2024). Personal & Household Services Employment Monitor. Towards a sustainable and equitable future for care and help at home, London.

- **Representation gaps:** In some sectors, employers attribute their limited representation to a lack of structure and resources, which in turn leads to the deprioritisation of social dialogue and collective bargaining.
- **Lack of trust between Social Partners:** In some cases, workers hesitate to join Trade Unions, while the fragmentation and limited representativeness of social partners further hinder effective collaboration. The absence of sectoral collective bargaining, coupled with low interest in negotiating collective agreements, weakens their ability to build capacity. These challenges create a cycle of mistrust between social partners, making it difficult to establish a strong and coordinated approach to social dialogue and sectoral development.

3.2. Capacity Building Challenges concerning Social Dialogue in the PHS Sector

- **Weakness of Social Partners:** Without strong institutions, such as Employer Organisations and Unions, capacity-building efforts in social dialogue are restrained. For Employers, there can be challenges in organising as SEOs, especially when there are no policies and laws supporting social dialogue and the sector's different models of employment. It is also particularly hard for PHS workers to unionise, if there is no organised platform for workers to voice their concerns, negotiate better terms, or even gain education on their rights. Many do not know to whom to reach, sometimes they face language barriers, and do not know their rights. Therefore, strengthening institutional structures is crucial for enhancing workers' capacity to engage in meaningful dialogue.
- **Fragmentation of actors and landscape:** Policies supporting the PHS sector vary from one Member State to another, which have clear impacts on the power imbalance between employers and workers, and the capacity building of PHS SEOs. Some countries have a legal framework for all PHS employment models, others do not recognise user employers. Some set up social vouchers or tax incentives systems to foster declaration, and strengthen working conditions through collective agreements, others rely mostly on undeclared work and have no policy support. In addition, PHS employers have identified that the division between "for-profit" and "non-profit" PHS organisations hinders sector-wide engagement, limiting opportunities for overall improvement. Half of the Member States report that fragmentation of actors is a serious barrier to capacity building (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain).¹⁴
- **Lack of social partners' autonomy:** Governments in many countries either fail to recognise the significance of social dialogue in the PHS sector or lack the political will to implement policies that support this form of dialogue. In some cases, undeclared work makes it harder for government bodies to regulate and support social dialogue. In some Member States, there has been an increasing state intervention in collective bargaining, which might impact the autonomy and willingness of the Social Partners to negotiate.
- **Lack of Collective Bargaining:** The lack of collective bargaining, driven by the factors mentioned above, also hampers the capacity building of Employers' Organisations. Collective bargaining enables them to develop negotiation skills, establish industry standards, improve labour relations, and strengthen their influence in policymaking, all of which enhance their ability to support and voice their members' interests effectively. It should be noted that joint agreements can be negotiated without a collective bargaining agreement, which allows for the creation of legal mechanisms without necessarily being covered. This can begin to cover certain segments: salaries, professionalisation, social protection. The collective bargaining agreement can come at a later stage.
- **The Specific Dimension of PHS Employers:** For most PHS SEOs, the persistence of undeclared work and the absence of a system that ensures affordable, accessible, and high-quality services remain significant challenges, hindering the development of PHS Employers. PHS Employers also identify an imbalance between the policies developed to support workers in comparison to the ones for employers, when supporting Employer's Organisations is crucial for improving working conditions, quality, and accessibility of services, fostering sector-wide development. In the model of service providers, there are often limited resources, a focus on immediate needs, and there might not be

¹⁴ Eurofound (2020), Capacity building for effective social dialogue in the European Union, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 23.

sufficient investment in capacity-building efforts, difficulty in aligning diverse priorities, and limited support for initiatives like collective bargaining, weakening the Employer Organisation's ability to grow cohesively. In the model of user-employer, as families are employing a person without pursuing a profit-making objective, the employer is a private household and non-professional. This setting makes it harder for User Employers to be involved in capacity building and social dialogue. In certain cases, the user can remain the employer, but hires an intermediary, a third party, to deal with administrative and human resources tasks.

Responses to the presented challenges include reinforcing the autonomy of the social partners; increasing membership, representativeness, and capacity to negotiate; strengthening bipartite social dialogue and collective bargaining; strengthening skills and human resources; building trust among the social partners; and better promotion of social dialogue.¹⁵

The next chapter will present the full toolkit to enhance the capacity of employers, strengthen them, and allow them to enhance their responses to the challenges presented.

15 Eurofound (2020), Capacity building for effective social dialogue in the European Union, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, pp. 48–51.

04

Toolkit

4.1. Good Governance

Good governance is essential for making an SEO's mission a reality, forming the foundation of any organisation, whether governmental, corporate, or union-based. Core governance requirements for SEOs include regulatory compliance, transparent and inclusive membership criteria, and measures to prevent conflicts of interest. Specific rules like competition law compliance are especially relevant for SEOs.

Achieving good governance involves establishing democratic decision-making processes, maintaining checks and balances, ensuring transparency, and preventing undue influence. Membership eligibility varies by region and sector, but SEO statutes should define who qualifies, typically restricting membership to employers engaged in specific economic activities.

To protect SEO integrity, members and collaborators should follow:

- The SEO's objectives, statutes, and activities must be lawful and constructive.
- The organisational structure should focus on functional committees and task forces.
- Pricing and marketing activities are prohibited.
- The CEO, advised by legal counsel, ensures compliance with relevant laws and SEO policies.

Members are the ultimate authority and beneficiaries of the SEO's actions, usually represented through a General Assembly that elects the Board. The Assembly's responsibilities include setting rules for Board appointments and potential removal processes.

The Board, representative of the SEO's membership, provides oversight, guides management, and ensures statutory compliance. It is responsible for major decisions, such as strategic planning, budget approval, and CEO/President appointments. It is also relevant that the Board has regional representativeness, as the sector characteristics and challenges vary throughout the country.

The Secretariat, led by the CEO/President, supports the SEO's infrastructure, manages internal and external networks, maintains records, and oversees finances in line with local regulations.

To reinforce national credibility, SEOs often join umbrella Employers' Organisations, amplifying the employers' collective voice in policymaking and enhancing their influence at the national level.¹⁶

4.2. Advocacy

SEO's advocacy and lobbying activities aim to shape laws, regulations, and public policies that impact their sector. Effective advocacy includes presenting members' concerns as a unified voice, engaging regularly with decision-makers, maintaining communication channels with the government, and addressing both proactive and reactive issues. This approach helps stabilise regulatory frameworks, monitor policy administration, and ensure fair application of laws.

Effective advocacy enhances the SEO's profile, drawing members and increasing revenue, which, in turn, strengthens lobbying efforts. Key components of a strong advocacy strategy are clear priorities, research, and an understanding of governmental processes. Advocacy arguments should be political (addressing decision-making contexts), economic (explaining costs and benefits), and technical (targeted at administrative experts). For example, PHS SEOs base their arguments on evidence demonstrating that public policies supporting the sector have a significant economic and societal impact. These policies help reduce undeclared work, improve working conditions, enhance sector recognition, and generate economic benefits for the State. Their advocacy efforts are directed at ministers responsible for Social Affairs and Finance, Social Partners, and civil society.

Campaigns must identify targets precisely and use tailored tactics, recognising key players and points of influence. Insider advocacy includes meetings with policymakers and participation in governmental task forces, while outsider advocacy involves media engagement and coalition-building. The objective

¹⁶ ILO (2011), The effective employer's organisation, Building a strong and efficient sectoral employer's organisation, International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation, pp. 51-62.

is to give decision-makers access to clear information on the sector's reality, invitations to targeted events, bilateral meetings, information about the SEOs, access to key data, and position papers.

A flexible advocacy plan should specify responsibilities, coordinate actions, and allow for tactical shifts as issues evolve. Over time, SEOs should become an integral part of the policy process, with policymakers seeking their input proactively. Effective SEOs' actions include:

- Informing officials about the SEO's work and inviting them to events.
- Ensuring representation in relevant government advisory bodies.
- Providing policymakers with high-quality briefs on key issues.

Regular updates to members on advocacy efforts and progress are crucial for engagement and support. This communication builds commitment and mobilises members to contribute to advocacy objectives.¹⁷ PHS SEOs keep their members informed about key developments affecting the sector by sharing news, position papers, articles, and research on topics such as public support, working conditions, and undeclared work rates. This ensures continuous engagement and awareness. Many of these documents are also used externally to enhance visibility and strengthen relationships with relevant stakeholders.

4.3. Communication

A multi-level approach to communications is essential for SEOs in the PHS sector. This tactic ensures that all relevant audiences within the sector are effectively reached. Communication activities can be divided into two key audience groups:

- The SEOs members – acting as an internal audience.
- The external stakeholders – including policymakers and social partners.

This toolkit provides key recommendations for communication activities designed to engage these two main audience groups.

The toolkit does not provide an exhaustive list, and it should not be treated as a checklist. The SEOs' communication activities should align with its overall strategy.

Communication activities targeting SEOs' members are necessary to develop an effective voice for the sector.

It is key to ensure the proper functioning of the organisation, communication with members through regular emails, policy briefs, and consistent monitoring of sector-related news to keep members well informed. The organisation of online or in-person meetings through the creation of internal working groups facilitates knowledge sharing and has been shown to strengthen communication among members and the SEO itself.

For PHS SEOs, these communication tools focus on providing clear information on social and financial policies, on workers' rights (insurance, leave, professional training, retirement, occupational health), and on legal developments impacting the sector.

It is also relevant for the SEOs' audience to see the regular publication of news articles on the SEOs' website, highlighting key milestones and events to enhance the visibility and work of the SEOs.

Communications activities to raise awareness and advocate for the sector targeting policymakers and relevant stakeholders can be developed through social media, information campaigns, and public events addressing key sector issues. For example, these campaigns can be designed to raise awareness of the reality of the PHS sector and the benefits of declared work and help to build its recognition as a key sector for our society.

¹⁷ ILO (2011), *The effective employer's organisation, Building a strong and efficient sectoral employer's organisation*, International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation, pp. 51-62.

Keeping a close communication with policymakers and gaining power of influence is key for SEOs, for this, it is important to have an updated database of contacts, respond to all invitations for targeted events, share updated information on the SEOs, and give policymakers access to key data and position papers.

The SEOs can organise consultations with key stakeholders to establish a common position on current issues and publish joint statements outlining the sector's vision. Online surveys are also a relevant tool to gain insights into the sector realities which will then feed into the communication activities targeted to policymakers and stakeholders.

To maximise impact, the SEO Secretariat should maintain an up-to-date contact database for all communications. In addition, communication activities should be closely coordinated with public affairs strategies.

4.4. Membership Development

A SEO is a voluntary, membership-based group of companies or user employers representing common interests within a sector. According to the ILO Freedom of Association Convention (1948, No. 87), voluntary membership is essential, allowing Employers' Organisations the freedom to establish, join, and self-govern SEOs. SEOs advocate for members, engage in dialogue with other stakeholders, and participate in collective bargaining. In many countries, SEOs are part of cross-sector umbrella organisations that represent the broader industry.

Types of Memberships/Affiliations:

- **Regular Membership:** Full governance participation and service access. Leaving might require notice (often one year); expulsion occurs for dues arrears or serious violations.
- **Associate Membership:** Limited services and no voting rights, often offered at a reduced fee as a "probation" period before full membership.

A broad membership base is essential for effective lobbying and collective bargaining. SEO recruitment efforts focus on maintaining existing members and attracting new ones, large and small organisations are targeted for a more comprehensive representation of the sector.

Organisations with high union presence are more likely to join SEOs, while non-unionised ones may join, if collective agreements are extended by law to all sector companies, which reinforces how social dialogue is key to the capacity building of SEOs.

To attract new members, SEOs should clearly outline membership benefits, summarised in recruitment materials. Success in recruitment depends on the value and presentation of SEO services to prospective members.¹⁸

4.5. Services

SEOs have specific goals, primarily focused on improving their sector's operating environment through advocacy or collective bargaining. Most SEO services align with these objectives, as members value additional services that support these core functions. To expand services, an SEO should leverage its strengths, which may include:

- **Advocacy:** A strong position with legislators offers influence, access to information, and specialised expertise.
- **Collective Bargaining:** Relations with unions provide knowledge and expertise in employee matters.
- **Membership:** Stable, trusting member relationships enable reliable service expansion.

Typical SEO services include information sharing, networking, consultancy, legal support, economic surveys, and access to funding. To develop a new service, the SEO should form a project team to assess the proposal's feasibility.¹⁹

18 ILO (2011), The effective employer's organisation, Building a strong and efficient sectoral employer's organisation, International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation, pp. 28–31.

19 Ibidem, pp. 91–95.

Services offered by PHS SEOs' include legal and information services, training courses on laws affecting the sector and requirements for the employers and workers, the conditions necessary to comply with, when having a worker in a private household, lobbying at the national level to help develop the regulatory content of the sector, the development of targeted campaigns, representation in consultative commissions, and collaboration with all Social Partners.

Regarding the legal services provided, access to legal consultations that provide employers and workers with all useful information or advice on legal and contractual provisions is crucial. It is also relevant to provide general information and advice on specific issues regarding the sector, as well as allowing debate. These services can also facilitate the resolution of conflicts between Service Providers and Trade Unions, User-Employers, and their employees through social dialogue.

Conclusion

This toolkit, developed within the framework of the EU-funded PHSDialogue Project, serves as a comprehensive resource for strengthening the capacity of Sectoral Employer's Organisations in the Personal and Household Services (PHS) sector. Through the exploration of key concepts, challenges, and best practices, it aims to equip these organisations with the necessary tools to enhance their governance, advocacy, communication, services, and membership development.

Section 1 lays the foundation by defining Capacity Building and its critical role in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of Employers' Organisations. Section 2 introduces Social Dialogue as a fundamental pillar in representing and defending employer interests, emphasising strategies to foster constructive engagement with stakeholders. Section 3 identifies both general and sector-specific gaps in capacity building, highlighting the particular challenges faced by PHS Sector Employer's Organisations in achieving stronger representation and influence. Section 4 provides a practical toolkit with actionable steps to enhance organisational structures and operations, ensuring a strategic approach to governance, advocacy, communication, service provision, and membership growth.

Furthermore, the toolkit showcases a non-exhaustive list of tools, demonstrating how different approaches to capacity building can lead to meaningful improvements in organisational strength and sectoral representation. These examples illustrate that while challenges may vary across different national contexts, tailored strategies based on existing systems that have proven to be successful can yield effective and sustainable outcomes.

In conclusion, strengthening the capacity of Employers' Organisations in the PHS sector is crucial for ensuring their long-term viability, their ability to advocate effectively for their members, influence policymaking, and develop a sustainable PHS sector. By implementing the strategies outlined in this toolkit, these organisations can enhance their influence, foster social dialogue, and contribute to the overall professionalisation and recognition of the PHS sector at both national and European levels.

Tools to Develop Capacity Building for PHS SEOs

GOOD GOVERNANCE	Common Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory compliance, transparent and inclusive membership criteria, and measures to prevent conflicts of interest. • Join umbrella employers' organisations. • Have a representation of different regions of the country within the board of the SEO. • The organisation must represent employers at both local and national levels and involve the delegates in the decision-making process. • User-employer and service provider organisations in the PHS sector advocate for the public interest, whether as non-profit groups of private individuals or as for-profit entities that complement state-provided social services. 	
	Specificity of User Employers: —	Specificity of Service Providers: —
ADVOCACY	Common Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate collective agreements, promote the relevance of engaging in such, and work closely with social partners. • Take part in consultative commissions for the sector. • Take concrete advocacy actions, such as position papers, responses to public consultations, and bilateral meetings with stakeholders. In the topics of undeclared work, migrant workers, gender equality, accessibility and affordability of services, and social dialogue. • Publication of articles, research reports on the sector and public policies, guides to deal with challenges of the sector, and codes of good practices. • Organisation of meetings, thematic events, and webinars, which bring together relevant policymakers and stakeholders. • Provide regular updates to the members and enhance their engagement in the current national situation of the sector. • Promote dynamic social dialogue that benefits service providers and user employers. 	
	Specificity of User Employers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster the recognition in the Labour law of the specific status of User Employers as well as show its economic role. • Show public authorities the specificity of the employment relationship between a private person and the worker: the employers are families and not firms, the employment relationship does not pursue any profit-making purpose. • Creation of the legal context for performing these jobs, making sure it's adapted to the specific characteristics. 	Specificity of Service Providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is truly relevant to advocate for PHS services to be eligible for reduced VAT rates and Tax incentives. Other topics of relevance are migrant workers, legal pathways, and qualification certification.

COMMUNICATION	Common Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organising awareness campaigns on targeted matters: the negative impacts of undeclared work, increasing the recognition of the sector, and the importance of a public system supporting the sector to enhance accessibility and quality. This also entails targeting the campaigns to the relevant actors, such as decision makers, sectorial associations, all employers, and workers. These campaigns can be organised by the SEOs and in partnership with the government. Updated website, social media pages to ensure SEO visibility and recognition as an active and influential organisation for the sector. Podcasts and Webinars are becoming more common as tools to communicate the work done by the associations. 	
	Specificity of User Employers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Necessary focus on wide spreading key information on User Employers' rights, duties, and national labour laws on PHS. 	Specificity of Service Providers: <p>—</p>
MEMBERSHIP	Common Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly outline membership benefits. Keep visibility through events and social media presence. Promote participation in social dialogue and collective bargaining agreements. Target small, medium, and large organisations for membership to have a more comprehensive view of the sector. 	
	Specificity of User Employers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear and easy membership process for private individuals employing the workers, highlighting the benefits of joining. 	Specificity of Service Providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adherence to ethical standards and commitment to upholding the values and vision of the association.
SERVICES	Common Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal advice on labour matters and collective agreements, as well as assisting members in employment disputes and negotiations. Lobbying at the national level to help develop the regulatory content of the sector. Training courses for employers on collective bargaining, salary setting, pay-roll, and contracts to ensure fair employment relationships in the household. Training courses for the workers to enhance workers' qualifications and ensure high-quality services. Creation of research Observatories with in-depth research and reports on the trends and developments in the sector. Creating local contact points and a territorial network to give local information to all users and user-employers to guarantee of high-quality, local support over the long term. 	
	Specificity of User Employers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific measures to help tackle undeclared work, such as cost simulators, contract generators, and assistance in finding workers. 	Specificity of Service Providers: <p>—</p>

Glossary

- **EBMO – Employers and Business Members Organisations**
- **PHS – Personal and Household Services**
- **SEO – Sectoral Employers’ Organisations** – Associations or groups of employers within a specific industry or sector that represent and advocate for the collective interests of businesses in that field. These organisations engage in activities such as Collective Bargaining, Policy Advocacy, Industry Standards & Training, Networking & Collaboration.
- **Business Organisation** – Any entity formed to conduct business, whether that business is commercial, industrial, or professional, which is engaged in economic activity for profit.
- **Trade Association** – Non-profit organisation founded by businesses within a specific industry or sector, which represents a particular industry’s interests, advocating for favourable regulations and promoting industry-wide standards.
- **Informal Employer** – Individual or organisation that is paying a PHS worker to provide direct or indirect care activities without declaring them.
- **Household** – A household includes either one person living alone or a group of people, not necessarily related, living at the same address with common housekeeping.
- **Home** – The place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household.
- **Service Providers / Indirect Employment** – Employment involving a third-party agency (a for-profit or not-for-profit service provider) that acts as an intermediary between the employee and employer (a household).
- **User Employers / Direct Employment** – Direct contractual relationship between the employee and the employer (a household).
- **Self-Employment** – The self-employed person operates independently, offering services directly to clients.

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ABOUT EFFE

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

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ABOUT EFSI

EFSI, the European Federation for Services to Individuals, is the voice of the Personal and Household Services sector at the 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.

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