

Social protection for PHS workers: the case of France

Summary

This note provides an overview of the social protection system for the personal and household services (PHS) sector in France, with a particular focus on the direct employment model. In France, PHS workers are covered by mandatory social protection and complementary pension schemes, which are managed by the IRCCEM Group, a Social Protection Group (GPS). IRCCEM is a non-profit joint organization governed equally by representatives of trade unions and employer organizations, reflecting the sector's unique characteristics where employers are typically private individuals rather than professional entities. The note examines the structure of social protection in France, the role of Social Protection Groups, and the specific case of IRCCEM in providing mandatory supplementary pension, provident insurance, and additional social protection services for PHS workers, their employers, and retirees.

Social protection in France

The French social protection system is structured around four main levels:

- 1) **Social security** (Sécurité sociale) provides basic coverage for illness, work accidents and occupational diseases; pensions; family-related benefits (including disability and housing); and support for independent living for elderly people or for people with disabilities. It is operated by the state.
- 2) **Complementary health insurance** offers additional coverage. Some schemes are mandatory, others are optional.
- 3) **Unemployment Insurance** managed by a dedicated public institution, Unédic.
- 4) **Complementary schemes** provide additional coverage for risks already insured by the state. Some are mandatory, (e.g. supplementary pension schemes for employees, managed by Social Protection Groups - GPS), while others are optional (health, provident funds, etc.) and can be operated by GPS or private/complementary insurance companies.

Moreover, collective agreements are negotiated within each professional sector. They adapt Labour Code provisions to the specificities of the sector. In addition to the traditional negotiations on sectorial minimum wages, collective agreements cover multiple aspects, such as training, working conditions and complementary social protection.

Social Protection Group (GPS)

A Social Protection Group (GPS) brings together several organisations jointly managed by social partners representing both employees and employers. This joint governance model ensures balanced representation.

Part of GPS activities is devoted to managing the compulsory supplementary pension scheme for employees (called “AGIRC-ARRCO”).

Another part of the GPS activity consists of offering social protection schemes (health, retirement, provident funds, etc.) through affiliated provident institutions, mutual insurance companies or insurance providers.

IRCEM Group, a Social Protection Group dedicated to PHS sector

In France, the National Collective Agreement for User-Employers and Household Employment has governed the sector for several decades, with its most recent update in 2022. This agreement applies to all 1.2 million domestic workers directly employed by 3.3 million user-employers, ensuring comprehensive coverage under the sector’s collective framework. Workers of the sector benefit from mandatory provident insurance and mandatory supplementary pension coverage (AGIRC-ARRCO).

Since 1973, the IRCEM Group, has been the Social Protection Group specifically dedicated to the PHS sector. The Group aims to protect PHS workers, their employers, and retirees in the sector from the financial consequences of old age, illness, disability, and unemployment.

As a non-profit organisation with joint governance, it is particularly adapted to this sector where employers are not professional entities but private individuals.

Main Missions of the IRCEM Group

- Implement the mandatory supplementary pension scheme (“Agirc-Arrco”).
- Provide mandatory provident insurance for PHS workers.
- Develop support services such as social action, prevention (occupational risks, health), and awareness initiatives.
- Offer additional social protection products in the fields of health, dependency, etc.

Governance

100% of the board members of the IRCEM Group represent the sector’s social partners (representatives of the employers and trade unions).

The Group’s clients are childminders and workers directly employed by user-employers, all of whom fall under the collective agreement negotiated by the sector’s social partners.

100% of the board members represent the sector’s social partners (employer representatives and trade unions).

Clients of IRCCEM include childminders and domestic workers directly employed by user-employers, all of whom fall under the collective agreement negotiated by the sector's social partner

Resources for Further Information

- **IRCCEM Group Official Website:** <https://www.ircem.fr>
- **French Government – Social Protection:** <https://www.service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/N19811>
- **Collective Agreement for Household Employment:** https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/conv_coll/id/KALICONT000005635792
- **AGIRC-ARRCO – Supplementary Pension:** <https://www.agirc-arrco.fr>

