



Happy New Year from the PHS Social Partners – Let's build Social Dialogue in the PHS sectors at all levels

January 18, 2023

The social partners in Personal and Household Services - **EFFAT, EFFE, EFSI and UNI Europa** - wish you a happy new year full of good health and success.

Last year was a big year for us as Social Partners in Personal and Household Services (PHS), which employs nearly 5 per cent of the total EU workforce.

By mutually recognising each other as Social Partners in the PHS sectors and adopting a common strategy for the two following years, we have thrived for greater recognition of the PHS sectors

We were at the front and centre of the advocacy activities around the EU Care Strategy, and gave a strong voice to the PHS sectors, its workforce, high-road employers and stakeholders. Under the sponsorship of MEP Sirpa PIETIKÄINEN and in the presence of MEPs from the different political groups, we held a conference in the European Parliament titled "European Care Strategy: what opportunities for PHS sectors?". The event was a great success counting the participation of various representatives from five governments.

We also published a [joint call](#) for the European Commission to promote the full recognition of the PHS sectors and workers so that their contributions and needs are adequately considered.

As part of our commitment to building Social Partners capacity and improving social dialogue at EU and national level, we have applied for a joint EU project to foster Social Dialogue in the PHS Sectors for which we expect a response in February. This project will help us improve working conditions and standards through collective bargaining as well as support PHS employers and workers to achieve fair and safe workplaces.

As Social Partners, we highlighted the predominance of Undeclared Work in the PHS sectors. In March 2022, we were invited to contribute to an online seminar organised by the ELA/European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work in the care and Personal and Household Services sector. As a follow-up of the seminar, EFFAT, EFFE, EFSI and UNI Europa published a set of [joint recommendations](#) calling Member States, the European Labour Authority and the European Commission to implement concrete actions that will contribute to the reduction of undeclared work in PHS.

Kristjan Bragason, EFFAT's General Secretary, reminds that *"Domestic workers are among the most vulnerable workers in Europe, yet so important. Lacking recognition, they remain undervalued, and excluded from basic rights as any other worker. Social dialogue is crucial for the recognition of their rights, both in Europe and at national level. Domestic work is work and domestic workers cannot wait any longer"*.



Marie Beatrice Levaux, EFFE's President, calls for *“A year 2023 full of synergies between social partners. I am confident in our reciprocal capacities to understand each other in order to put the domestic and home care sector at the heart of EU social policies”*.

For **Herwig Muyldermans**, EFSI's President, *“Substantial progress has been made over the past year and we welcome this. EFSI is deeply committed to pursue a structured and stronger dialogue at EU level in order to help the sector get the recognition it deserve and face the many challenges it faces for the benefits of workers and users alike”*.

UNI Europa Regional Secretary **Oliver Roethig** states that *“Tackling undeclared work, labour exploitation and low coverage of collective bargaining: our joint work in 2022 showed that the challenges that homecare and PHS workers are facing can only be addressed by collective bargaining and strong Social Dialogue at all levels. As European Social Partners in PHS, we strongly reaffirm our commitment towards increased recognition for the PHS workers and sectors in the years to come”*.

With our new strategy in place for next year, we as PHS Social Partners will keep promoting actions to achieve the related objectives of our work program for 2023, and address any further relevant challenges through solid sectoral advocacy. In particular, we will feed into the **2023 EU Year of Skills**.

Our joint work has paved the way towards increased value, recognition, and professionalisation of an ever-growing and demanded sector which – while employing a vast number of almost 10 million workers – features some of the most precarious working conditions in Europe.

Finally, it is with sadness that we share the passing of Myrtle Witbooi, President of the International Domestic Workers Federation.

While we mourn her, we celebrate her inspirational legacy of a lifelong fighter, activist and trade union leader that did so much for the recognition of domestic workers worldwide.

Kristjan Bragason,
General Secretary

Marie Béatrice Levaux,
President

Herwig Muyldermans,
President

Oliver Roethig,
Regional Secretary

