



Domestic Work and EU OSH Policy

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and Occupational Safety and Health***

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Domestic Work – A Multifaceted Phenomenon

- **Increasing importance of the sector in the EU**
 - According to the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS), at least 2.3 million domestic workers in the EU in 2017, representing about 1% of the EU labour force
- **What are the triggering factors?**
 - Aging of the population
 - Increasing rates of female labour participation
 - Preference for home-based care for the elderly and chronically ill

Families are increasingly turning to domestic workers to care for their homes, children, and ageing relatives

Domestic Work – A Multifaceted Phenomenon

- **A highly feminised sector**
 - About 80% of all domestic workers worldwide according to ILO data
 - Nearly 90% in the EU
- **Many domestic workers are migrant workers**
 - According to the LFS 2017, in the EU more than 30% of official domestic workers come from outside the EU, and another 15% from another EU country
 - Real numbers, including informal domestic employment and undocumented migrant domestic workers, can be expected to be much higher

Domestic Work – A Multifaceted Phenomenon

- **One of the sectors with the highest share of informal employment**
 - An estimated 70-80% of the jobs in this sector are undeclared
 - 90% of domestic workers worldwide are not, or only partially, covered by social protection schemes
 - Situation is a bit better in the EU - Member States with the highest rate of official domestic workers (France, Spain and Italy) have a coverage of 70, 65 and 45% respectively

Weaker protection for domestic workers in a number of important areas of social policy such as working time, wages, collective bargaining, labour inspection and complaint mechanisms, maternity protection, written contract, and – last but not least – health and safety

- **Typical workplace hazards**
 - Exposure to harmful cleaning chemicals
 - Ergonomic challenges: injuries or troubles caused by strenuous tasks and actions such as frequent repetitive lifting (e.g. moving clients with limited mobility) or awkward postures, like bending or twisting
 - Verbal and physical abuse
- **Typical occupational illnesses**
 - Allergies and eczema
 - MSDs both acute and chronic
 - Stress, burnout, depression

Work accidents typically occur while cleaning and concern falling down from ladders, stairs or windows

What are we doing to tackle the problem?

- **Framework Directive 89/391/EEC introduces measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work**
- **Applies to all workers ('any person employed by an employer') in all sectors of activity, with the exception of 'domestic servants'**
- **Nonetheless around half of the EU Member States have national OSH provisions covering this sector of activity**
 - **because they have included domestic servants in the definition of 'worker' when transposing the Framework Directive, setting a broader scope of application**
 - **6 Member States have also ratified the ILO Convention 189 which provides for a wide coverage of domestic workers' fundamental rights including OSH**

What are we doing to tackle the problem?

- **Difficulties in implementing OSH measures on domestic work**
 - **The characteristics of the domestic workplace and the need to respect the privacy of households can make it difficult for enforcing authorities to ensure compliance**
 - **The private character of the workplace, with its strong cultural determinants, also impacts on the way domestic work is regarded: contracting families do not tend to see themselves as 'employers', and do not view domestic workers as 'workers' to be protected from risks**

What are we doing to tackle the problem?

- **Results from the ex-post evaluation of the EU OSH *acquis* show that OSH problems in the sector of domestic work require more attention and a better understanding of challenges and possible solutions**
- **Encouraging Members States to ensure a broad coverage of OSH policies in particular as regards domestic workers is one of the priorities identified in the 2017 Commission Communication *Safer and Healthier Work for All – Modernisation of the EU OSH Legislation and Policy (COM(2017) 12)*.**

What are we doing to tackle the problem?

- **Contributions to the EU debate also from**
 - **the European Parliament - Resolution of 28 April 2016 on *Women domestic workers and carers in the EU*, and**
 - **the European Economic and Social Committee - Opinion of 21 January 2016 on *The rights of live-in care workers***
- **Both invite the Commission to take initiatives in this area and call EU Member States for ratification of Convention 189**

- ***A better understanding of challenges and possible solutions***
 - **to take stock of the situation as regards domestic work in the EU;**
 - **to promote an exchange of views, experience and good practice between EU and international partners on the nature, scope and results of their respective OSH policies in this area; and**
 - **to encourage ratification and implementation of international instruments such as the ILO Domestic Workers Convention 189 to better counter the problem**

Thank you for your attention!