

Employment in household services



EUROPEAN FOUNDATION
for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

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Foreword

Employment in household services which traditionally constituted unpaid work is now a growing sector in the EU labour market. European Commission documents emphasise the importance of strengthening this sector in order to meet the increasing demand generated mainly by demographic and labour market developments, together with social and cultural changes such as changes in family structure, increasing female employment and ageing populations. However, concerns have been raised about the quality of employment and working conditions in this sector, as well as the scale of work in the black economy and the lack of social protection for workers.

This report investigates and analyses how the creation of employment in household services is contributing to combating unemployment and social exclusion. This is examined in the context of how such employment is linked to the promotion of equal opportunities and the reconciliation of work with the family and community life of women and men.

The field is new and has been difficult to investigate due to a lack of data and previous research; for this reason the report concentrates on the development of the sector in five main areas: childcare, eldercare, domestic cleaning, home maintenance and catering, with particular emphasis on the first three.

National studies have mapped out the situation in eight countries – Germany, Austria, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the UK. They include the results of national level surveys, studies carried out in two localities in each country, the identification of examples of good practice and interviews with a number of workers in the domestic cleaning, childcare and the care of the elderly sectors.

The present European synthesis report aims:

- to identify common (as well as specific) trends emerging from the national reports in relation to the current situation in the household services sector, the numbers and quality of the jobs created and the public policy measures implemented so far;
- to identify key issues to be tackled by policy actors, at both European and national levels;
- to identify general strategies and specific recommendations for the various stakeholders.

This report was evaluated in November 2000 by representatives of the European Foundation's Administrative Board, involving employers (Bernard Le Marchand and Ann Gibbons), trade unions (Beatrice Hertogs), the European Commission (Ruth Paserman and Vittorio Campanelli) and the Committee of Experts (Michaela Moritz). It was warmly welcomed and the author was congratulated for its completeness and clarity, particularly as regards the conclusions and recommendations.

The concept of household services has not been easy to define at EU level in a way that adequately embraces the variety of jobs and services available. The evaluation group highlighted the need for better understanding of national differences for the development of this sector. Major concerns were the role played by the state in financing household services, and why the private sector has developed more in some countries than in others. It was seen as particularly important to address the issue of quantity versus quality of work in household services.

We are pleased to make this report available as a contribution to the promotion of policy initiatives in this sector, particularly as regards the improvement of working conditions and training, in order to provide for better quality services.

Raymond-Pierre Bodin
Director

Eric Verborgh
Deputy Director




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Chapter 1

Introduction

Work and family life: a new balance

This report examines how unpaid work traditionally carried out in the home is being transformed into paid jobs in the household services sector, a trend witnessed to a greater or lesser extent in all industrialised countries. This phenomenon, which has also been referred to as outsourcing or, more recently, ‘de-familialisation’ (Esping-Andersen, 1999), arises from a set of sociocultural and economic changes that have been challenging the welfare systems of European countries for some decades. These changes are mainly attributable to tensions in the ‘old’ way in which women and men divided their time between employment, family responsibilities and community activities, and the ongoing search for a new balance between these spheres of life. The old way, often called the ‘male breadwinner’ model¹, was based on a division of labour between the sexes in which men were largely expected to do paid work, and women unpaid household work. Although both men and women were involved in community activities (where again there was often a gender-based division of labour), these lacked the social importance and economic weight they have acquired in post-industrial societies.

Numerous developments have disturbed this model. Among them, the most commonly cited are:

- the entry into the paid workforce of large numbers of women;
- the ageing of the population, due to improvements in health and lower birth rates;

¹ A classification of welfare regimes on the basis of their assumptions about male and female roles suggested a distinction between a ‘weak male breadwinner’ situation, e.g. the Nordic countries; ‘strong male breadwinner’ situation, e.g. Germany and Ireland; and ‘modified male breadwinner’ situation, e.g. France and the UK (Lewis, J., 1992).

- changes in family and household types, with increases in the number of ‘atypical’ families (compared with the traditional model of a couple with children) and single person households.

(The above three main factors have been well documented in statistics and the literature.)

- In the labour force, of more than 30 million jobs created in the European Community Member States since 1961, 25 million have been taken by women, mainly in the services sector (European Commission, 1999a). Despite this increase in women in the labour force, the EU employment rate of women has remained lower than that of men (50% compared to 71% in 1996) while women’s unemployment rate is higher than men’s (13% compared to 9%).
- Demographic changes have been important: the average age of the EU population is expected to increase from 36 years in 1995 to 45 years in 2025 (an average increase of one year every three years), and the proportion of over-60s in the population is increasing, as is the proportion of over-80s within the over-60s group.
- Finally, with regard to family and household types, there has been an increase in single-person households (27.5% of all households in 1995), with a significant proportion of persons over 65; an increase in single-parent households (in 1993, around 10% of the total); and an increase in households with two or more adults without children (45.5% of the total in 1995) (Barnes, 1997).

One of the immediate effects of these trends is the relatively rapid change in the way women allocate their time. A recent analysis of ‘time budget’ surveys carried out in Denmark, France, Italy and Sweden showed that the average time spent on housework by non-employed women is 5 hours and 15 minutes a day, while the figure for women working full-time is 2 hours and 55 minutes per day. By contrast, the average time devoted to housework by men working full-time differs only slightly according to whether they live with employed or non-employed women: 58 minutes in the former case, 47 minutes in the latter (Bonke and Koch-Weser, 1999). At the same time, these data show that a major factor enabling women to enter the labour market has been the opportunity to reduce the time spent on housework.

All these trends are, of course, related to the greater influence and expanded role of women in contemporary societies. Underlying the demographic and economic statistics are the effects of widespread social action by women arising at least in part from the collective action of the women’s movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Other sociocultural trends, especially those linked to the so-called ‘cognitive revolution’ in advanced industrialised countries, also play an important part in transforming the work once performed within the family into household services. They include:

- more individualised lifestyles and patterns of consumption, leading to greater diversification;
- higher expectations about quality of life, with more attention given to service and product quality, as well as a growing emphasis on the need to reconcile work with family life and with social and community activities;
- the development of new forms of collective action aimed at alleviating social problems within localities (volunteerism, self-help, the third sector, social economy, non-profit organisations, etc.).



In some countries these processes are more advanced than in others, while there are also differences among countries as to the type of processes adopted. However, what is clearly needed everywhere as a result of these developments is a reorganisation of the way household work is performed. For families and households (understood to include single-person and 'atypical' families and households), there are currently three possible solutions: a greater sharing of household and caregiving responsibilities between men and women; more use of household technologies and ready-to-use products; and transferring domestic tasks to non-family members by using household services (Gershuny, 1978).

Of the three options, the first is as yet rarely practised and requires long-term cultural change. Suffice it to say that in some European countries (e.g. Spain, Ireland, Italy) the percentage of women performing unpaid childcare work in 1994 was still double that of men, and that it was even higher among full-time workers in most Member States; the same held true for unpaid care of elderly, sick and disabled people.² The second option, the use of technology and ready-to-use products, is more suited to the replacement of some household tasks (e.g. food preparation and cleaning) than to others (e.g. caregiving). Finally, the third option – the use of household services – seems feasible but depends greatly on their cost and on households' ability to pay for them.

Of course, there is a fourth way: a member of the household (usually female) can either refrain from employment or can limit him/herself to part-time work. This seems to have happened in some European countries in response to the failure to provide childcare services. 'Housework' is in fact the reason most often given by European women for not working full-time in their main job³, and although it is increasingly inappropriate to see part-time jobs as a marginal aspect of the labour market, part-time employment is restrictive for those workers who have not freely chosen it.

This fourth option may have ceased to be socially acceptable – not to mention a realistic prospect, given the impetus behind women's entry to the workforce. First, it would compromise the chance of guaranteeing women and men more equal access to the jobs market; and secondly, failure to create a new balance between employment, family and community activities compatible with ongoing social changes could have damaging effects on both welfare systems (in terms of the consequences of the falling birthrate, fuelled by the lack of childcare services) and the economy (in terms of the loss of qualified female human resources).

For these and other reasons the European Union has included the reconciliation of work and family life among its policy objectives. Reconciliation is mentioned as one of the main tools for achieving equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market in the European Employment Strategy⁴ and is also considered a key element in the modernisation of social

² Data from the European Community Household Panel Survey, 1994, cited in: European Foundation (Yeandle, Gore, and Herrington), 1999.

³ In the European Community Household Panel Survey, 1995, women working less than 30 hours a week in their main job were categorised according to their reasons, which emerged as follows: 'housework': 41%; 'cannot find a full-time job': 16%; 'work not considered part-time': 14%; 'do not want to work more hours': 13%; 'illness or disability': 3%; 'other reasons': 8%. Note that housework was cited by only 4% of men (Eurostat, 1999).

⁴ The Fourth Pillar of the European Employment Strategy, 'Strengthening the policies for equal opportunities,' includes four guidelines: gender mainstreaming, tackling gender gaps, reconciling work and family life, facilitating re-entry into the labour market (European Commission, 2000e).

protection (European Commission, 1999b). Quality household services (especially childcare services) are considered one of the principal tools needed to promote reconciliation (European Council, 1992). In the last Report on Social Protection in Europe 1999, the ‘evident need’ is mentioned of ‘an extension in the availability of childcare facilities as well as for support arrangements to help women caring for disabled or frail elderly family members’, and the issue of the quality of care services is also raised (European Commission 2000c). It is now recognised that if services are unsatisfactory, both social pressure and personal loyalty may result in women leaving work, while an infrastructure of good care services is one factor in promoting female employment (European Commission, 1999a). The reconciliation of work with family life was also the main thrust of 16% of the projects funded under the Medium-Term Action Programme on Equal Opportunities. In particular, the ‘Family and Work’ network has made a substantial contribution to the debate on these issues by conducting research and disseminating information.⁵

Moreover, ensuring quality services in fields like childcare or eldercare is also a way of combating social exclusion by supporting two vulnerable target groups: children and the elderly (European Council, 2000). Although issues related to care in EU policy are mainly subsumed under the gender equality issue, the EU expresses a range of concerns about the growing population of older people vis-à-vis the potential decline in traditional sources of care (European Commission, 1999a).

Household services as a means of job creation

Another reason why European policy makers are increasingly interested in the development of household services is that the personal and social services are seen to have increasing potential for creating new jobs. This arises both from the growth in demand (related to the trends described above) and from other factors related to labour market change. In particular, the labour-intensive nature of household services and the need for proximity between those who provide and those who use these services make it harder (except in the case of immigrant workers) to substitute local workers with the cheaper labour found elsewhere in the global market (Reich, 1992). Thus, this sector is relatively protected from the negative effects of globalisation on employment, while at the same time it responds to emerging local needs. As this report shows, the employment potential of household services differs from country to country, depending on a broad set of political, economic and social variables (e.g. the structure of the labour market, the importance of the public sector in providing services, the regulations governing parental leave, etc.). What can be stated is that such potential does exist in most EU Member States.

Having discovered this window of opportunity, European policy makers began to include job creation in the household services sector (and more generally, in ‘services for everyday life’) in their employment strategies. This development occurred mainly after the publication of the

⁵ A recent issue of the ‘New Ways’ newsletter was devoted to the question of family services and employment (European Commission, 1999e).

European Commission's White Paper, *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment*, and more specifically in the context of Local Development and Employment Initiatives (LDEIs).⁶ In the White Paper, services for everyday life – along with services for improving the living and working environment, leisure services and environmental services – are one of the four major sectors where the effort to encourage new jobs is to be focused. In the European Strategy to Promote Local Development and Employment Initiatives (1995), home help services and childcare are two of the 19 labour-intensive employment fields identified. Most Member States adopted specific measures to implement the LDEIs strategy, for example, by adjusting tax regimes and introducing financial incentives. In addition, structural funds were utilised to promote the development of innovative actions in the 'new services' (European Foundation, 1999). Progress made in the implementation of the LDEI strategy has been reviewed in two reports (European Commission, 1996; European Commission, 1998a). More recently, a Commission publication entitled *Acting Locally for Employment. A Local Dimension for the European Employment Strategy* (European Commission, 2000a) summarised developments which have led Member States and the EU to turn increasingly to the local level for jobs growth, and have raised a number of questions as to how the various players at local level can assist the job creation/job maintenance process. In the conclusions of the Lisbon Council, the increase in employment in services (including personal services, where there are major shortages) was one of the four key areas that the Council and the Commission were invited to address (European Council, 2000).

Other EU programmes have viewed household services as an economic sector capable of developing to create new jobs. They include the *Third System and Employment* programme, among others. Particularly important from the point of view of equal opportunities issues was the NOW (*New Opportunities for Women*) Community initiative, which has been merged with other initiatives into the *Equal* initiative. Over five years, NOW provided grants to about 1,750 projects aimed at reducing female unemployment and improving the position of those already employed. About half of the projects were aimed at supporting female entrepreneurship through programmes accompanying enterprise creation with training, counselling, guidance, and networking; about 10% of the projects also included financial support schemes. Women's businesses tend to be small and mainly operate in the services sector. The projects clearly identify growth areas, such as personal services, tourism and ecologically-oriented markets. Tourism, agri-tourism, hotels, catering and the protection of cultural heritage are the most targeted areas; but next come childcare and neighbourhood services. Within the NOW initiative, special attention was paid to the problems encountered by women because of their tendency to choose particular business sectors. For instance, difficulties were highlighted in accessing bank credit for projects involving neighbourhood services and services for the care of children and other dependants (European Commission, 1997a).

⁶ Within the European Employment Strategy, a clear commitment to supporting the development of services (local and business) is formulated in Guideline 12: 'If the European Union wants to deal successfully with the employment challenge, all possible sources of jobs and new technologies and innovations must be exploited effectively. To that end the Member States will promote measures to exploit fully the possibilities offered by job creation at the local level, in the social economy, in the area of environmental technologies and in new activities linked to needs not yet satisfied by the market, and seek to reduce any obstacles in the way of such measures.'

Aside from Community initiatives, the European Social Fund – the European-level financing instrument for human resource development projects – deals, under Objective 3, with the issue of supporting women: combating long-term unemployment, facilitating the integration into working life of young people and those at risk of exclusion from the labour market, and promoting equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market. Household services, especially childcare services, are used above all as a means to support the participation of women in training and employment projects, especially those who re-enter the labour market after long absence due to family commitments, as well as single parents and other categories of people who are at risk from work/family conflicts.

Quality of employment

The need to prevent social exclusion by promoting not only employment but also better quality employment was recently restated as a primary concern of the European Union (European Council, 2000). This concern has implications for household services, since this is a sector where low-skilled, poorly-paid and low-status jobs are likely to be created unless appropriate action is taken through policy and workplace measures.

A current economic explanation for this is that household services, like other fields in the tertiary sector, are subject to the so-called ‘Baumol cost disease’, that is, to a growing gap with respect to other sectors of the economy because it is impossible to make significant improvements in productivity using technological innovation (Baumol, 1997). Moreover, the possibility of substituting paid work with unpaid work contributes to keeping wages low. Given this situation, either the cost of labour (which constitutes the major part of the total cost of household services) remains at relatively low levels, or, if household services follow the general dynamics of the marketplace, they tend to become so expensive that they are priced out of the market unless they attract government subsidies. The former model is prevalent in the United States, Australia and Canada, while the latter is more characteristic of continental Europe and the Nordic countries. This offers some explanation as to why more social and community services are offered commercially in the former than in the latter.⁷

There are non-economic factors, too, that will keep the status of employment in this sector low unless action is taken. Prominent here is the resemblance of household services to activities that were previously unpaid and thus considered ‘non-work’. Public policy thus has an important role to play in governing the relationship between job creation and the quality of jobs in household services, not just in relation to pay, but also in relation to other aspects of professions in this sector. Commitments to social protection demand that acceptable working conditions and minimum protection of the basic rights of workers must be guaranteed, while preserving the quality of services. The extent of undeclared work in the sector presents a very obvious difficulty here (European Commission, 1998b).

⁷ ‘Social and community services’ provided by the private sector in 1994 constituted 12.2% of all jobs in the U.S., but only 1.4% in Denmark and 3.2% in France (OECD, cited by Esping-Andersen, 1999).



From an equal opportunities perspective, it is also important to know to what extent those who work to provide services designed to alleviate the burden of household and caregiving responsibilities are themselves experiencing tension between work and family life – with the paradoxical result that improving the situation for some translates into more problems for others. Compatibility between work, family and community life must be included among those elements that make up the quality of jobs created in the household services sector.

Gender segregation

The high proportion of women in the sector raises some difficult equal opportunities issues. Indeed, if the work women once did without being paid is now done for pay (but still predominantly by women), it is legitimate to ask to what extent household services are really a factor in balancing the division of household and caregiving responsibilities between the sexes.

Desegregation of the labour market is a major objective of European employment policies (European Commission, 1997b). This objective is being pursued in Member States through the diversification of education, training and occupational choices, support for positive action and the elimination of barriers to women's employment (European Commission 2000d). However, it is still far from a reality. It is therefore especially important to measure how far jobs in household services are dominated by women; whether there are signs, however weak, of diminishing segregation, and what obstacles and opportunities exist for attracting more men to these jobs. This is, of course, consistent with the EU directives which recommend greater male involvement in childcare, both as fathers and as professional carers (European Council, 1992).

Volunteer and community activities

A focus on finding a new balance for men and women in family, employment and community life prompts one further concern: that the professionalisation of household work may drain energy and time away from community and voluntary activities, which are seen as essential for social cohesion. Against this is the opposite concern, namely, that at a time when creating jobs is a priority, volunteer workers constitute 'unfair' competition with respect to paid workers, especially in fields such as care of the elderly and childcare. The possible tensions in household services between volunteer and informal work, on the one hand, and paid work, on the other, is therefore another area worthy of attention.

Objectives of the study

In the light of these considerations, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions conducted a research project with the following objectives:

- to analyse the nature and scale of employment in household services, which traditionally constituted unpaid work;
- to document the characteristics of those who are employed in household services and their working conditions;

- to identify measures in the workplace and in public policy that promote the reconciliation of employment with family and community activities for women and men (and in particular for those who work in household services).

The results of the research are summarised in this report.

What constitutes household services?

For the purposes of this study⁸, household services are defined as all those services provided by public or private organisations, or by the third sector, which substitute paid work (in the form of a job or self-employment) for work which was formerly performed unwaged within the household. Therefore, all services provided inside and outside the home of the user are included, as long as they maintain and support members of a private household.⁹ For the purposes of acting upon the findings of the study, five major sub-sectors of household services, corresponding to key functions in households, were specifically identified:

- childcare
- care of the elderly
- domestic cleaning (of the house, linen, clothes, etc.)
- catering
- domestic maintenance and gardening.

Under this definition, which was further refined during the course of the research, the services listed below were excluded.

- Those involving skilled work traditionally provided not by family members but by skilled workers (for example, by plumbers, electricians, TV technicians, etc.).
- Residential care, since defining households as users would be problematic (for example, the users of retirement homes or children's homes are the resident elderly people and children, and their families' contact with the services can be non-existent or rare). Residential care was, however, taken into consideration when – frequently using the same workers – facilities provided both residential and semi-residential day or home help services, as in the case of some facilities for the elderly.
- Services for children which form part of formal and obligatory educational systems, e.g. as provided by schools.

While collecting data in the field, moreover, it became clear that some of these sub-sectors (such as domestic cleaning and the care of the elderly, in the case of home help) tend to overlap with regard to the organisations and type of professionals that provide them. The sub-sectors have

⁸ In particular, on the basis of the preliminary analysis that led to the drafting of the Background Paper of the project (European Foundation, 1999).

⁹ We are aware that sometimes the term 'household services' is used to refer to a more restricted set of services, namely, those provided in the home, while the term 'community services' or 'services for everyday life' are sometimes preferred for certain outside services, like childcare facilities. We preferred to preserve the functional definition, precisely to underscore the link with the process of externalising the work of households.

therefore not been used as rigid categories, neither in the national studies nor in the present report. Fluidity of jobs, services and tasks is in any case a typical characteristic of emerging employment sectors.

Even though the study's main focus is the creation of 'regular' jobs, we decided not to entirely exclude 'undeclared' work, because of its extent and competitiveness, which make it an essential reference point for anyone trying to create jobs in household services. Moreover, the very dichotomy between 'declared' and 'undeclared' work is problematic: its extent varies depending on the criteria used to define it (for example, jobs not reported to the public authorities, or jobs that do not appear in official statistics).¹⁰ In addition, in many countries people with some marginal part-time jobs earn so little money that they are not required to report the income for tax purposes, but this does not mean their work is 'illegal'. It has been observed that the work traditionally performed by women is very hard to categorise using classifications devised by government authorities, such as declared/undeclared, formal/informal, paid/unpaid, etc. (Hakim, 1996).

Structure of the report

This report is the result of an effort to analyse and synthesise information from eight national reports and from additional documentation and literature. The purpose was to identify the current situation and the trends, actors, policies, best practices, obstacles and aids that would be of help in understanding potential developments in employment in household services, in a manner consistent with the search for a new balance for men and women between employment, family and community activities.

The report is divided into eight chapters (including this one).

Chapter 2 presents the main information and issues associated with creating employment in household services, viewed mainly in terms of the quantity and type of new jobs created. In this context, we also examine the main problems that policy makers in the different countries face in transforming potential demand for services into real demand.

Chapter 3 looks at the main policies adopted at national level and shows how the development of household services is concretely affected by the presence and action of various national, regional and local actors from the public, private and third sectors.

Chapter 4 focuses on the characteristics of workers in household services – their sex, age, ethnicity, nationality – addressing in particular the predominance of women in the field.

¹⁰ In the European Commission Communication on undeclared work, the latter is defined as 'any paid activities that are lawful as regards their nature but not declared to the public authorities, taking into account differences in the regulatory system of Member States' (European Commission, 1998b).

Chapter 5 sets out positive and negative aspects of household services based on workers' experiences, and concludes with a number of questions and observations about possible strategies to improve the quality of work, including upgrading the sector's 'professionalisation' without slowing the growth in jobs.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the potential for workers to reconcile employment with family and community activities. We identify a number of areas where there is a risk of conflict between work and family life, and possible measures to promote a reconciliation in this sector.

Chapter 7 identifies a number of differences in the approach of the different countries to the household services' issue.

Finally, Chapter 8 offers some conclusions and recommendations for policy makers on ways of including household services in the European agenda. It discusses what the various actors can do to develop employment in this sector in a way consistent with equal opportunities policies, the struggle against social exclusion and the strengthening of social protection.



Chapter 2

From unpaid work to employment in household services

This chapter provides an overview of the process of outsourcing domestic and caregiving work which has led to the creation of employment in household services. This process is viewed mainly in terms of the quantity and type of new jobs created. The chapter also examines the main obstacles policy makers in the different countries encounter in transforming the unmet needs for services into real demand.

Outsourcing household work

In recent years the tendency to outsource household work has led to the creation of new jobs. The focus of this study has been mainly on trends over the last 10-20 years. To determine more precisely the period in which the outsourcing of cleaning, eldercare, childcare, food preparation and domestic maintenance occurred would require a different analysis from the one undertaken here; and indeed if this outsourcing includes developments such as the production of canned and frozen foods, then it goes back a long time. In general terms, however, it is clear that most of these functions were still being performed in the home in the 1950s (European Foundation, 1999). It was mainly after World War II that welfare systems began to give support to some aspects of household work (in particular, childcare and eldercare), although differences between systems developed immediately – especially between the Nordic countries (where there was important public spending on childcare and eldercare almost from the beginning) and the rest of Europe.

In most of the rest of Europe, childcare services were first developed as a form of social service to address the problems of the poorest and most disadvantaged families, including teenage mothers and women ‘forced’ to get a job, whereas in ‘normal’ families women with small

children would stay at home to take care of them. This expectation persisted until fairly recently in most European countries. In a few countries, new childcare services linked to the spread of new educational theories emphasising their importance for the socialisation of children developed in the 1960s; however, these services were rarely designed to provide support for working women (for example, in the hours they were open).

Homecare for elderly people who are not fully independent is a relatively recent trend, except, again, in Nordic countries, although in some countries the provision of care for the elderly in residential facilities – ranging from retirement homes for the self-sufficient to long-term nursing homes or even geriatric wards in hospitals for those with serious health problems – is very well established.

Lastly, we should note that in affluent families in many countries domestic cleaning was already performed by non-family members; in fact, recent decades have actually seen a reduction in live-in positions and domestic positions that entail a regular, daily presence for long hours, while the employment of household help for a limited number of hours per week has spread. The most recent development here has been the more widespread use of household services by families for whom it has become a necessity, as all their adult members are occupied in gainful employment.

Public policies have influenced – and continue to influence – the development of household services in many different ways through welfare measures, regulation of the job market, the promotion of equal opportunity, family support and so on. A major way of taking action is through funding and organising childcare and eldercare services. A recent survey of literature and the work from the European Network on Childcare provide information on the supply of such services in the early 1990s in European countries (European Commission, 1999a).

As far as eldercare is concerned, considerable national differences in the level of provision of public residential and home help services for the elderly were found, with the Nordic countries and the southern European countries at opposite ends of the spectrum. There was no obvious ‘substitution’ effect between residential and home-help services, but a distinction can be made between countries with low provision of residential or home-help services, e.g. Italy, Portugal and Spain; countries with average or above-average provision of residential services but little provision of home-help services, e.g. Austria, Germany and Ireland; countries with average levels of provision of both services, e.g. Belgium, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom, with the Netherlands being highest in residential care; and countries with high levels of provision of both types of services, e.g. Denmark, Finland and Norway (European Commission, 1999a).

In the field of childcare, the level of state-funded provision for children under the age of three was generally low, except for the three Nordic Member States, Belgium and France. In the early 1990s, the percentage of children aged 0-3 covered was between 1-3% in Spain, Greece, Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom; 6-8% in Italy and the Netherlands; 12% in Portugal; approximately 20% in Belgium, France and Finland; 33% in Sweden; and 50% in Denmark. Public services’ coverage for children aged 3-6 was almost complete (over 90%) in Belgium,



France, Italy and Spain (age 4 and older). It was high (over 70%) in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Austria; average in Greece (64%); and low in Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Portugal (approximately 50%).¹¹

Growing demand for household services

Despite the important role played by the public, private and voluntary sectors in providing household services, most of the European population still has needs for household services which are unmet, at least insofar as eldercare, childcare and domestic cleaning are concerned. For example:

- In France, approximately 4.1 million families have unmet needs for domestic help.
- In Germany, approximately 60% of women with children are employed and both spouses work in over half of all families; yet in 1992, in West Germany, only 31% of children aged 3-4 and 70% of children aged 4-7 had access to day-care centres.
- In the Netherlands, there is great demand for domestic help, especially in families where both spouses work: according to a 1995 survey, one family in three needs more help at home, especially with cleaning, washing and ironing clothes.
- In Italy, just over 7% of families have domestic help. Of those who do not (4,388,549 families, or 21.5% of Italian families), all the adults are employed full-time outside the home; 11% of families do not have domestic help but need it; and 4.2% need it very much;
- In Portugal, waiting lists revealed that only one-third of the demand for eldercare services is satisfied, and the demand is growing. Similarly, only one-tenth of the demand for childcare services is satisfied – an increase of 6.3% between 1990 and 1996.
- In Finland, up to half of the demand for home help remains currently unsatisfied.
- In the United Kingdom, home care services have for a number of years failed to keep pace with the growth of the older population, and employment agencies felt it was not possible to meet demand for home care services from the available workforce.

In those countries where the provision of household services is highest there does not seem to be growing demand for all services. For example, in some countries (e.g. Finland and Sweden) childcare services' provision is now considered adequate to meet demand, while in many others (for example, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal and Spain) there is still considerable scope for expansion. The level of demand for eldercare services also varies. In some countries (e.g. the Netherlands, where there is a strong tradition of residential care) services are considered sufficiently extensive and consolidated so that significant further demand is not expected, while in others (Italy, for example) the current level of services is well below demand. Moreover, we should note that potential clients of care services for the elderly include not only individuals who are not self-sufficient or who need care, but increasingly, the elderly who are healthy and educated and above all, who have economic resources.

¹¹ European Network on Childcare, 1995, cited in: European Foundation, 1999.

In response to this large unmet demand, estimates of the number of potential jobs that could be created in household services have been made in the various countries. Those collected from key informants and policy documents for this study included: 15,000 home help jobs in Finland; 20,000 jobs in home services in Denmark; 200,000 jobs in personal services in Germany; 477,000 jobs in community services in France; and 12,000 jobs in services for the elderly in Portugal.

Obstacles to jobs growth

In order to balance supply and demand for potential jobs, however, governments have to deal with a number of obstacles, in particular the need to transform latent demand into demand backed by purchasing power. Below we set out the main obstacles identified in the eight national reports, indicating the countries in whose report each obstacle was cited. (This does not mean, however, that the obstacle is not also present in other countries).

Economic/financial obstacles

- competition from the informal sector due to the high cost of labour (all countries);
- the insufficient purchasing power of a sizeable income-bracket of families (e.g. in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Portugal);
- the limited demand for some services (e.g. gardening, eldercare – the Netherlands);
- a labour shortage in general where unemployment is low or connected to the low wage rates or other working conditions in household services (e.g. the United Kingdom and the Netherlands).

Cultural obstacles

- households' orientation towards self-supply (the self-service economy – all countries);
- the lack of full social legitimisation for the procurement of household services, and performing one's own household tasks as part of gender identity (all countries);
- a sense of domestic privacy (e.g. Finland);
- the aversion of consumers to any blatant commercialisation of household services (e.g. Austria);
- an aversion to providing families with household services, which are considered to involve low-skilled work and to be a legacy of the master-servant relationships of the past (e.g. Germany);
- a reluctance to accept new systems and arrangements by people accustomed to receiving services from the state system, in countries with traditionally high public sector provision (e.g. Finland).

Political and administrative obstacles

- a lack of tax incentives (e.g. Portugal, Italy and Austria);
- inadequate subsidising of household services through tax incentives and wage compensation (e.g. Germany);



- tax counter-incentives (e.g. the de-taxation of expenses for residential care and not for domiciliary care – Portugal);
- trade regulations (e.g. Austria);
- the few incentives available for business creation, or the eligibility constraints in accessing them, e.g. having to work a minimum number of days a year in order to be considered an entrepreneur eligible for a tax break (e.g. the Netherlands);
- the bureaucratic obstacles to starting one's own business (e.g. Finland);
- the labour market and sociopolitical incentives for women to stay at home, e.g. home care or childcare allowances and parental leave extensions (e.g. Austria and France);
- the risk of the unsustainability of public subsidy measures in the long run (e.g. France);
- the regulations on residence/work permits for immigrant workers (e.g. Austria).

Organisational obstacles

- entrepreneurs' limited capacity to identify marketing opportunities and to match labour and supply (e.g. Finland);
- the gap between a well-established third sector/public system and the private market (e.g. Italy);
- the high costs (for workers and providers) of the geographical mobility required for the domiciliary provision of services (e.g. France and Germany);
- the insufficient experience of managers of enterprises (e.g. Finland);
- the inability of workers to respond flexibly to the numerous requirements arising from the work (e.g. Germany);
- the early stage of development of the 'product' in many enterprises (e.g. Finland);
- entrepreneurs' unwillingness to invest and take risks (e.g. Finland);
- the low formation rate of small and medium enterprises in particular localities (e.g. the United Kingdom).

Professional obstacles

- the lack of professional definition of work that falls somewhere between highly-skilled and unskilled in certain countries, such as that of childminders registered with the authorities (e.g. Italy);
- the shortage of labour due to the unattractiveness of the jobs (e.g. the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Germany);
- the fact that demand for care of the elderly is in part satisfied by voluntary work (e.g. the Netherlands);
- insufficient training capacity (e.g. the United Kingdom).

Trends in employment

Mapping the current situation and recognising recent trends in the number of jobs in household services is extremely difficult for a number of reasons.

- The statistical sources (e.g. labour force survey or census of economic activities; social security agencies, etc.) differ in each country, using different concepts and definitions of occupations, which makes it very difficult either to give a picture of employment in household services or to compare employment levels in the EU Member States.
- In some sectors, such as cleaning, it is impossible to distinguish between individuals and organisations which provide services to families and those who serve enterprises.
- Not all countries have detailed data on individual occupations in household services, making it impossible to systematically maintain distinctions between the sub-sectors identified in this study.
- Some occupations (like domestic help) by definition include more than one function.

With this caveat, we offer the information it was possible to obtain on the eight countries with national reports, as well as some additional data from other countries. Wherever possible, preference was given to data from labour force surveys.

The following table shows the changes in the numbers of jobs in the occupations and for the periods for which data were available in each country; the direction of the employment trend (negative, positive or stable) and the average annual change, in percentages.

Table 1 Employment trends in household services

Country	Trend	Job	Number of jobs	Period	Average annual change (%)
Germany*	increase	childcare workers	+204%	1961-1987	+8
	increase	eldercare workers	+75,000	1980-1999	Not available
	increase	employees in private households	from 36,051 to 39,825	1997-1999	+5
	increase	housekeepers	from 203,563 to 206,080	1998-1999	+1
	increase	hotel, restaurant, and catering service workers	from 342,000 to 404,000	1995-1999	+5
France	increase	childcare day centre staff	from 248,400 to 411,000	1985-1993	+8
	increase	childminders and family care assistants	from 188,244 to 222,000	1982-1998	+1
	increase	domestic service workers	from 330,000 to 522,364	1982-1998	+4
	decrease	laundry and dry cleaning staff	from 19,622 to 18,178	1990-1996	-1
	increase	catering workers	from 321,487 to 387,519	1990-1996	+3
Italy	increase	skilled jobs in services to private households	from 36,282 to 60,728	1991-1996	+13
	increase	workers in social cooperatives	from 2,300 to 4,800	1994-1996	+54

From unpaid work to employment in household services

Country	Trend	Job	Number of jobs	Period	Average annual change (%)
	decrease	laundry and dry cleaning staff	from 44,989 to 42,536	1991-1996	-1
	increase	food services workers	from 292,235 to 313,134	1991-1996	+1
Netherlands	increase	childcare day centre staff	from 22,543 to 27,534	1992-1997	+4
	increase	domiciliary care workers (full-time)	from 100,500 to 104,700	1993-1996	+1
	stable	domiciliary care workers (full-time equivalent)	from 49,000 to 48,900	1993-1996	-
	increase	registered workers employed by households	from 28,000 to 42,000	1987-1997	+5
Austria	increase	childcare day centre staff	from 22,543 to 27,534	1992-1997	+4
	increase	welfare and social workers	from 12,800 to 26,200	1992-1997	+21
	increase	housekeepers and maids	from 41,900 to 44,100	1992-1997	+1
	decrease	laundry and dry cleaning staff	from 4,700 to 4,300	1995-1999	-2
	increase	cooks and kitchen assistants	from 69,500 to 71,500	1992-1997	+1
Portugal	increase	domestic services and other cleaning staff	from 210,000 to 263,000	1987-1997	+3
	increase	childminders, home helps and allied workers	from 30,200 to 89,100	1991-1998	+28
	increase	laundry and dry cleaning staff	from 2,917 to 4,280	1991-1997	+8
	increase	cooks, waiting staff and other restaurant services workers	from 142,200 to 190,100	1991-1998	+5
Finland	decrease	workers in childcare centres	from 57,186 to 45,628	1990-1993	-7
	decrease	public home help assistants	from 12,697 to 12,086	1990-1993	-2
	increase	entrepreneurs in the social sector	from 64 to 204	1990-1993	+73
United Kingdom	increase	nursery nurses	from 70,400 to 109,500	1992-1998	+8
	increase	registered childminders	from 74,600 to 94,700	1988-1998	+3
	increase	playgroup leaders	from 21,700 to 25,300	1992-1998	+2
	increase	food services workers	from 1,160,100 to 1,241,330	1992-1998	+1
	increase	care assistants and attendants	from 298,580 to 505,080	1992-1998	+12

* As yet, there has been no employment survey in Germany on household or personal services. These numbers refer only to employment covered by social security.

Source: National Reports

The diversity of occupational classifications and of the periods for which figures are available suggests caution in reading these data. However, it is evident that employment trends in household services have been positive for most of the recorded occupations. A significant number of new jobs have been created in the eight countries covered by this study. The case of Finland suggests that the general trend can be the result of losses in particular sectors (often the public sector) and gains in other sectors (often the private or third sector), especially in countries where state-run welfare services are strong. The example of domiciliary care in the Netherlands suggests that a greater number of jobs does not automatically mean more full-time equivalent jobs. The sub-sectors are examined in more detail below.

Childcare and eldercare

The data collected (which mostly refer to changes in the nineties and sometimes going back to the eighties) provide evidence of employment growth in the caregiving occupations in all countries. Where there was no increase, it is often in countries and in sub-sectors where the provision of the services involved was already high.

In some countries, caregiving professions in childcare and eldercare are treated together in national statistics, so it is not possible to distinguish between these two sub-sectors. This is the case in Italy and to some extent in Portugal. However, in these two countries an increase in their number is clearly visible when all care workers are added together:

- In Italy, workers in skilled jobs in the household services field increased by 24,446 between 1991 and 1996; and in the social cooperatives alone (dedicated to care and educational services), the number of staff trebled between 1994 and 1998 (from 38,000 to 108,000 workers).
- In Portugal, childminders, home helps and allied workers increased by 58,900 between 1991 and 1998.

In the other countries the childcare and eldercare sub-sectors can be analysed separately.

As far as childcare is concerned, employment seems to be growing in every country except Finland (and perhaps also in other Nordic countries), where needs were already well provided for. This is not necessarily to be expected, given the drop in birthrates in all countries, and seems to be a direct result of women's increased participation in the workforce.

Childcare workers fall into two main categories: those who work in their own home (childminders) or at the user's home (nannies, family care assistants), and those who work in separate premises.

With regard to the second group, the staff of childcare day centres increased in Austria by 4,991 between 1992 and 1997; in the Netherlands, by 13,100 between 1990 and 1996; in France (OECD, 1997), by 163,000 between 1985 and 1993. In Portugal, employees in infant schools were 9,886 in 1993, while in 1997 there were 11,913 pre-school education staff. In the United Kingdom, nursery nurses increased by 39,100 between 1992 and 1998, while playgroup leaders



increased by 3,600. On the other hand, in Finland, contracts in childcare centres (which are almost exclusively public) decreased by 11,558 between 1990 and 1993 (during a recession) and did not increase subsequently.

There was also a large increase in the first group, home-based childcare workers, in a number of countries. For example, the number of childminders and family care assistants increased in France by 33,756 between 1982 and 1998, and by 20,100 in the United Kingdom between 1988 and 1998.¹²

The trend towards employment growth in childcare was also confirmed in the 16 locality studies. The type of services where the greatest potential exists varies.

- In Rome, the current rise in employment in childcare services is linked on the one hand to the expansion of the network of municipal nurseries for children aged 0-3, and on the other, to the introduction of new types of services with different opening hours and educational programmes. In municipal nurseries, 140 new teachers were recruited in December 1998 and more jobs should be created in the further 27 nurseries to be opened in the next four years. The introduction of new types of services has not yet led to the creation of any significant number of new jobs, but is likely to do so as projects that have recently received funding are implemented.
- In Linz, where there is already full provision of care places for children aged 3-6, the City has no plans for further expansion, and efforts will instead concentrate on quality improvements. As regards the expansion of care institutions for children under three years old, the City of Linz is awaiting the results of the consultations about childcare vouchers. There has been sustained demand for places in playgroups which cannot always be satisfied because of a shortage of capacity; hence there is jobs potential here too.
- In Berlin-Friedrichshain, the level of childcare provision is so high that if parents so wish every child can be looked after in a crèche or nursery school. However, there is a growing unmet demand for childminders and for services with flexible and extended opening hours from parents (especially lone parents) whose work hours are not compatible with the existing kindergarten hours.

One sector in the various countries in which demand for services is growing, and where there is jobs expansion potential, is out-of-school clubs for children of elementary school age. These services exist to a differing degree in different localities, even within the same city. For example, the Friedrichshain district in Berlin has only three, while Wedding already has 33, mostly managed by the third sector. In the localities of Purmerend and Zaanstad in the Netherlands, too, there is a large unsatisfied demand for childcare, and the greatest problem seems to be with the care of children over four, for whom there is far too little out-of-school care.

Out-of-school services are in great demand for secondary school children as well. For example, in the city of Leeds there are 106 out-of-school clubs, registered to take 2,223 children. Approximately a third of these operate throughout the year, the rest being term-time only. Only

¹² Registered childminders.

four of them cater for children of secondary school age, with just 126 places for those up to 14 years of age. This is an area of considerable expansion at the present time, due to both increasing demand and the availability of government funding.

As for eldercare, this study is primarily concerned with non-residential care provided at home or in day care centres. Employment in this type of service seems to have grown in the last 10-15 years in the majority of countries.

- In the United Kingdom, the number of care assistants and attendants increased by 206,500 between 1992 and 1998.
- In France, part of the large number of new jobs created between 1991 and 1997 in household services (about 190,000 jobs) involved home help and domestic employees, whose services are used to a great extent by the elderly.
- In the Netherlands, domiciliary care jobs increased by 4,200 between 1993 and 1996; forecasts for the next two years speak of 'reasonable' employment prospects for the low skilled and 'moderate' prospects for the highly skilled.
- In Germany, jobs in eldercare increased by 75,000 between 1980 (with the introduction of statutory care insurance) and 1998.
- In Austria, welfare and social workers (which include home helps and other workers providing care to the elderly) increased by 13,400 between 1992 and 1997.
- In Portugal, although it is not possible to tease out from the statistics workers caring for the elderly from other care workers, indirect evidence of employment growth comes from an increase in the facilities providing home care and day care for the elderly in both the localities studied, along with an increase in residential care homes.
- Conversely, in Italy, where there are similar difficulties in ascertaining the number of new jobs, employment growth is not as evident. It seems that employment in publicly-funded home care services grew only where local authorities adopted expansion plans for these services, as in the case of Florence, but not in Rome. A survey of home care and nursing businesses in the 'Yellow Pages' showed just a slight increase in Rome and no increase in Florence between 1995 and 1999, and key informants felt that there was ongoing growth in the undeclared work of home helps, an aspect which cannot be measured.

On the other hand, the employment trend is negative in some countries, if one measures it in terms of full-time equivalent jobs. For instance, in the Netherlands, where part-time work is common, full-time equivalent jobs in domiciliary care dropped slightly (from 49,000 to 48,900) between 1993 and 1996. This is also the case if we examine particular segments or sectors.

- In Germany, the nursing and care segments of the job market seem to be saturated.
- In Finland, as in other Nordic countries where home help services have been well developed for a long time, there was a drop in contracts for public home help assistants (which decreased by 611) during the 1990-93 economic recession. However, in the same period, the number of private enterprises operating in the social sector grew from 64 to 204. More recently, 608 new jobs were created in 1998 and 1999 under the enterprise support scheme of the domestic work subsidy (see Chapter 3).



Finally, in assessing employment growth, we must take into account some overlap between care for the elderly and domestic cleaning, which is performed both by domestic helps (here included in the cleaning sector) and home helps (here included in eldercare).

Domestic cleaning

Analysing employment trends is even more complex for the domestic cleaning sector, where undeclared work is widespread. In countries for which estimates are available, 50% to 80% of domestic workers have undeclared jobs.

- In Austria, some studies report that 70% of jobs in household services are undeclared; others put the number of illegal employees in Austrian households at somewhere between 60,000 and 300,000, with only 5,000 individuals registered with the authorities.
- In France, a 1997 study found that there were five undeclared workers for every declared worker in household services.
- In Germany, over half of household services workers – over 2 million people – worked in the underground economy.
- In Italy, the ratio between persons employed regularly and irregularly is estimated to be one to three.

Not all work that is undeclared to the authorities and paid ‘cash-in-hand’ is illegal. For example, in a number of countries (such as the Netherlands), there are minimum thresholds below which income need not be declared for tax or social security purposes, and many women work in domestic cleaning for just a few hours a week.

When undeclared work is included (as it is possible to do when the source is a labour force survey rather than social security statistics), domestic work has increased in most countries.

- In Austria, for example, the number of housekeepers and maids increased by 2,200 between 1992 and 1997.
- In the Netherlands, the number of registered workers employed by private households increased by 14,000 between 1987 and 1997.
- In Portugal, workers in domestic services and other cleaning staff increased by 53,000 between 1991 and 1998.
- In Germany, housekeepers increased by 2,517 between 1998 and 1999.
- In France, persons employed in household services increased by 192,000 between 1982 and 1998.

In the United Kingdom and Italy, it is difficult to find reliable information because statistics do not distinguish between domestic and industrial cleaning staff. However, market research agencies and others operating in this field recorded a growing demand in the sector. In Finland, however, just 608 new jobs – a much lower number than expected – were created in 1998 and 1999 as a result of a new subsidy scheme (see Chapter 3).

In some countries where effective measures were adopted to combat undeclared work (as in Germany and Italy) declared work, as measured by social security statistics, has declined, while

in countries like France, where such measures are enforced, jobs and ‘regular’ jobs have grown at the same time.

The number of persons employed in laundry and ironing services has declined in several countries.

- In Italy in 1996, there were 2,453 fewer workers in laundries and dry cleaners than in 1991, and 6,956 fewer than in 1981.
- In Austria, their number decreased by 400 between 1995 and 1999.
- In France, they decreased by 1,444 between 1991 and 1996 (and had already dropped by 4,896 between 1981 and 1991).

Conversely, the trend is positive in Portugal, where the number of workers employed in laundries and dry cleaning increased by 1,363 between 1992 and 1997. This type of business, among other things, is also the object of local employment initiatives funded under the National Employment Plan.

In some countries, many ‘traditional’ laundry and dry cleaning services run by small local firms have been replaced by self-service laundrettes – often operated by national franchises. Although this offers some advantages to new small entrepreneurs who wish to start a new business, and although it guarantees certain quality standards to users, this type of business does not create large-scale employment opportunities.

Gardening and domestic maintenance

Along with cleaning, there are other occupations associated with domestic maintenance that traditionally were male occupations. Data on these jobs are still scarce and difficult to obtain from the statistics.

In general, the demand for these services is growing, producing the potential for new jobs growth. There is considerable variation between countries: in those with a strong artisanal tradition, including small repair businesses, certain types of services are in decline, linked to a wider crisis in artisanal work. At the same time, small repairs and domestic maintenance services are increasingly being offered by non-artisanal providers, for example by multifunctional agencies, a new and growing type of provider, and by corporations through franchising. The informal sector, however, continues to play a significant role.

One example of an agency providing home maintenance services is *Momo-Auftragsbueros* in the district of Berlin-Mitte. This one-woman firm founded in 1998 is a network that not only offers a range of household and home repairs but also provides skilled technical services (PC problems) and social assistance (household help, care of the elderly, cultural services). The costs of this agency work are borne by the suppliers (10% commission on the volume of the order). Another example is the *Quadrifoglio* agency in Rome, founded by three women. Every year the company selects 400-500 people to offer various services (home helps, nannies, waiting staff, cooks,



drivers, plumbers, carpenters, blacksmiths, gardeners, electricians, party organisers, etc.). In the Netherlands, *Thuiszorg Zaanstreek/Waterland*, a public agency active in the field of childcare and eldercare, joined forces with the firm Klussenier B.V. to set up an odd jobs and gardening service. The latter firm (the name means ‘Odd Jobs Inc.’) stands for quality and a fast and professional service. It gives a warranty on the work it does. The service includes the following types of work: kitchen installation, locksmithing, house painting, plumbing, carpentry/joinery, gardening and odd jobs for private households. An incentive for the development of such businesses has recently been offered in Finland, with tax reductions for families and direct subsidies to enterprises to perform home maintenance, small repairs and gardening for private households.

Food services

Employment in food services has grown in every country. In Italy, the number of jobs in this sub-sector increased by 20,899 between 1991 and 1996; in Portugal by 47,900 between 1991 and 1998; in Austria by 2,000 between 1992 and 1997; in France by 66,032 between 1991 and 1996; and in the United Kingdom by 81,230 between 1992 and 1998. These data usually include all employment in the catering sector. However, in some countries, like Italy, where employment statistics on various types of food services are available, the increase seems to have occurred in the most innovative of these rather than in traditional restaurants.

Employment growth in this sub-sector is related to the upward trend in eating out (documented by several market surveys), and the decrease in the time available to working household members to cook meals at home. This growing demand is met by take-away restaurants and food shops, an increased and diversified supply of ready meals, and the expansion of enterprises that run canteens (although this expansion may have occurred as a result of the contracting out of services that were previously run by employers).

There is also a socially-oriented segment of the food services sub-sector, delivering ‘meals-on-wheels’ services to elderly people or others who may have difficulty in preparing their own meals. These services are often run by municipalities or contracted out to the third sector as part of social welfare provision. The employment of volunteers in ‘meals-on-wheels’ services is not infrequent. In Vienna, these services have declined in recent years because of the growth in commercial undertakings supplying deep-frozen and ready meals. Very similar to ‘meals-on-wheels’ are shopping services that collect goods from stores and deliver them to the home of the client. These services are organised by supermarkets but sometimes also by specialised companies which have elderly people as their main target and which work in collaboration with domiciliary care services (such an organisation was found, for example, in the city of Tampere, in Finland).

Findings and key questions on jobs growth in household services

In concluding this chapter, a number of findings and key issues regarding jobs growth in household services can be highlighted.

- There is a substantial unmet need for household services in all countries, albeit with national differences as to the extent of this need and the type of services required.
- The demand for household services has already resulted in the development of a significant number of paid jobs. Childcare and food services are nearly everywhere the two sub-sectors in which employment growth is most evident. In several countries there is also a less marked but nonetheless perceptible increase in eldercare and domestic cleaning. The situation as regards domestic maintenance is not easy to ascertain and probably varies from country to country.
- Undeclared work is a significant phenomenon in most countries. For example, where data were available, it accounted for between 50% and 80% of domestic work.
- Difficulties in expanding household services involve both demand and supply factors and include a number of economic, financial, cultural, political, administrative and professional obstacles. In particular, the problem of transforming latent demand into demand backed by purchasing power has both financial aspects – which measures to support demand are trying to address – as well as cultural aspects, linked to the social legitimisation of the use of such services by families and by women.



Chapter 3	Actors and policies involved
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This chapter shows how the development of household services is affected by the presence and action of various national, regional and local actors from the public, private and third sectors. It focuses on the most recent developments in the role these three sectors play in promoting employment in household services.

The role of public, private and third sector actors

The expansion of employment in household services, described in the preceding chapter, is influenced not only by social, cultural and market trends, but also by the actions of specific actors, namely, organisations in the public, private and third sector. The impact of these three sectors varies according to their stage of development in each country and other recent changes. Thus, we see both differences and similarities, often arising from European-level policies. In the sections below we supply information from the national reports on the role of public organisations, private enterprise and the third sector in stimulating the development of household services in recent years.

The role of national, regional and local governments

In most countries, public authorities have introduced policies at national level that have created favourable conditions for the development of household services or particular sub-sectors of household services. A total of 24 such measures were identified in the eight national reports: they can be categorised as being mainly worker oriented (2), user oriented (14) or employer/entrepreneur oriented (9).¹³

¹³ The various reports dealt with and classified policies in different ways. Here we refer to coherent efforts implemented systematically at national level by public agencies in collaboration with private and non-profit entities. Countries where policies are reported as absent may nonetheless have local or regional experiments under way, or may achieve similar effects by other means.

Table 2 Main national policies which have influenced the development of household services

Worker-oriented policies	D	F	I	NL	A	P	FIN	UK
1. Promoting the employment in household services of groups with low employability (the unemployed previously employed, women, aged women, immigrant workers).	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Regulating the remuneration and qualifications of HS workers.		X			X			X
User-oriented policies								
3. Stimulating public/private partnerships (NPOs) for the provision of services.	X	X	X		X		X	X
4. Planning an expansion of eldercare.		X	X		X		X	X
5. Planning an expansion of childcare.		X	X	X	X	X		X
6. Providing more care in the community than in residential settings (de-institutionalisation)		X	X	X	X	X		X
7. Setting quality standards.	X	X	X		X			X
8. Stimulating the provision of flexible and client-focused services.		X	X					X
9. Tax credit schemes for families (means-tested).		X						X
10. Tax credit schemes for families (privileging low-income groups, the self-employed and workers not covered by a collective agreement).		X		X				X
11. Tax credit schemes for families (not means-tested).	X	X					X	
12. Home care allowance for parents of children under school age and/or for relatives of dependent people.	X	X			X		X	X
13. Subsidising the costs of services (all or in part) purchased from 'approved' providers (organisations or self-employed workers).		X		X			X	X
14. Simplifying compliance with social security obligations for individual employers.	X	X						
15. From direct provision of services to payments to families to purchase services (service vouchers, dependence benefits).		X					X	X
16. Providing adequate information on the existing services.		X						X

Employer/entrepreneur-oriented policies	D	F	I	NL	A	P	FIN	UK
17. Supporting the establishment of organisations which provide household services through start-up grants.		X	X	X		X		X
18. Supporting the establishment of organisations which provide household services through lower VAT rates and other tax advantages. ¹⁴		X		X				
19. Special measures to boost the creation of women's enterprises.		X	X		X	X	X	X
20. Tax credit schemes for employers who purchase/establish childcare services.		X					X	X
21. Reviewing the regulations governing public tenders in order to reward quality and not just cost-containment.		X	X					X
22. Training in entrepreneurship and management for potential entrepreneurs.			X		X	X	X	X
23. Reducing administrative and overhead costs for providers by simplifying official approval procedures.		X			X			
24. Promoting the establishment of service agencies.	X							X
25. Involving management and labour in the provision of funding for household services (TES).		X						

Source: National Reports

Worker-oriented measures concern actual or potential workers in the sector. European policies on employment, equal opportunities, social protection and social exclusion have all featured in bringing household services onto the policy makers' agenda. However, it is employment policies which have been the driving force, having higher priority and more extensive funding in every country. The French report noted that the new public policy objectives of integration and job stimulation, in addition to social welfare policies, were largely responsible for the 'universalisation' of household services as an issue. Indeed, the table above shows that the only policy consistently implemented in every country is the promotion of employment in this sector for groups with low levels of employability (the unemployed previously employed; women and aged women; and immigrants). It is worth observing here that the development of household services through policies to combat the social exclusion of unskilled workers may have a negative effect both on the status and image of the occupations involved, and on the quality of services, all the more so since only a few countries have made systematic efforts to raise the professional status of household service occupations by creating qualifications and regulating pay levels.

¹⁴ The experimental lowering of VAT for labour-intensive services was already undertaken by the European Commission in October 1999.

A second set of measures adopted by national governments can be described as being *user oriented*. In several countries efforts have been made to make the supply of childcare and eldercare services more responsive to growing demand, both from the quantitative and qualitative points of view. This has been done by expanding services where there is high demand, and by stimulating the establishment of public/private partnerships. Efforts to improve quality seem to have been less systematic and rather uneven. Many countries have seen a shift from residential to community care. A few governments have also promoted quality, setting standards (or encouraging providers to establish them) and providing more flexible, client-focused services. Interestingly, some governments are also recognising that ‘normal’ households require access to services which were previously supplied only to disadvantaged groups. Here more generous funding for developing employment policy has enabled governments to experiment with providing services for groups not otherwise covered by welfare measures. An example of this new development is the Ajuda Network project implemented in the Portuguese region of Alentejo within the framework of the National Employment Plan. The Ajuda (‘help’) network, created by government decree, includes a training component for providers of household services, to be provided in the home or in establishments for children and the elderly, and gives trainees the opportunity to obtain support for creating their own company and providing mobile services. Faced with a list of ageing clients who previously had to seek support from their neighbourhood network, the official services are empowered to grant the financial support necessary for trainees to set up an activity. An innovative feature of this programme is that domiciliary care for the elderly is no longer considered merely a social service for financially underprivileged people. The authorities have become aware that families with financial resources also have nowhere to go to obtain such care. It is therefore envisaged that there will be a schedule of social security co-funding, proportionate to the financial resources of the families and people concerned, so that the service can be provided to everyone.

Other measures adopted indirectly promote the expansion of household services by supporting demand. Tax incentives for families who spend money on household services, both means-tested and non means-tested, were adopted in most of the countries studied (with the exception of Austria, Portugal and Italy).¹⁵ In response to the recommendations of the Local Development and Employment Strategy, some countries tried operating the service voucher system (sometimes at national level; sometimes at regional or local level), while in other Member States such measures are still under consideration.

It should be emphasised that even where financial incentives are used to boost demand, the results in terms of job creation can vary, as the cases below show.

Finland

In October 1997, an experiment was begun to subsidise domestic work in the form of lower taxes for clients and partial coverage of the cost of the work for enterprises. Originally, it was

¹⁵ In Italy a limited de-taxation measure has been put in place for care of the disabled.



anticipated that 10,000-12,000 new jobs could be created. However, with the help of the enterprise support model, only 208 full-time new jobs were created in 1998 and fewer than 400 in 1999. About 24,000 households used the services provided by the experiment, which supported the enterprises directly. The tax incentive model was used by 22,000 families. The subsidy was used much less than expected: at April 1999, only 17 million FIM had been used out of the 200 million allocated for the programme's first two years. Moreover, the system has mostly been used by the families for small repairs, household maintenance and gardening, and less for cleaning or other personal services. As a result, the subsidy is now likely to be terminated. One reason for its failure was the embryonic stage of development of the private sector. There is also some question as to the real extent of demand for the service.

Germany

Some years ago the so-called 'maid's concession' was implemented. This allowed families employing domestic workers to deduct from their taxes the cost of up to 18,000 DEM, but the measure did not produce the predicted 100,000 new jobs in the sector. In fact only 1,200 additional individuals were employed by families, because the tax break was advantageous only to high-income families, and this type of work was considered unattractive. Household cheques were another failed experiment, introduced to reduce the level of undeclared work in the domestic sector. Instead of the 500,000 jobs promised, only 4,500 cheques were used in 1997. This is because household cheques were only designed to guarantee social security benefits, and do not allow workers to receive a net wage comparable to their earnings through undeclared work, especially in the case of individuals who work for more than one family. A new system of service vouchers which offer families greater financial incentives is currently under consideration.

The Netherlands

In the context of the 'Melkert Plan', a programme was implemented to subsidise the wages of declared domestic cleaners so that they could compete with informal and undeclared workers. A subsidy of not more than 19,000 NLG was granted for every long-term unemployed individual hired by a private cleaning company. The government paid the difference between the cost of declared and undeclared cleaning ladies. The employer company could use the subsidy to pay the social security contributions of its workers, so that they were provided with health insurance; paid time off and a pension fund. The government thus paid a subsidy rather than unemployment benefits. In 1997, only 250 of the expected 5,000 jobs were covered. In 1998, changes were made to the scheme and it now functions better. Cleaning companies, however, have more trouble finding workers than customers: one obstacle was the requirement that workers be registered as unemployed for at least a year, while many women who would like to work are not listed on employment rolls. The Melkert Plan also created subsidised jobs in home help services and childcare. In the former, research shows that many of the Melkert jobs (2,608 planned) were actually replacing regular jobs. Only a limited number of them were converted into regular employment. In childcare, the scheme was adopted later: at the end of 1998, 1,700 individuals held Melkert jobs in childcare.

France

The *Chèque Emploi Service* (CES) was established in 1993 to simplify the process of hiring and paying a domestic worker and making social security contributions. The worker's salary cannot be less than the national minimum wage, plus a 10% indemnity for paid leave. The *Titre Emploi Service* (TES) created in 1996 allows work councils, regional and local authorities and welfare associations to guarantee financial assistance to their own staff members who hire someone to provide domestic or household services in their homes. Modelled on the restaurant ticket system, the TES service vouchers are issued by an authorised organisation and are purchased by another organisation which can top up their value before making them available to employees who use them to purchase household services from an approved provider. This and other measures to support demand – such as tax incentives for families, the childcare home care allowance (*Allocation de garde d'enfant à domicile*, or AGED), and family assistance for the employment of a registered childminder (*Aide à la famille pour l'emploi d'une assistante maternelle agréée*, or AFEAMA) – resulted in an increase of 190,000 jobs in family-related services between 1991 and 1997.

Data on the creation of new jobs through the establishment of service cheques or other systems subsidising demand are available also for European countries not covered by this study (European Commission, 1996):

- in Denmark, the introduction in 1994 of subsidies to enterprises that provide household services induced 4,500 enterprises to provide such services, resulting in 2,500 persons being employed full time;
- in Belgium, cheques from local employment bureaux led to the creation of jobs for 24,000 long-term unemployed people, mainly in the domestic work sector.

Finally, a third set of measures promoted by national public actors was targeted at *employers and entrepreneurs*. Here the most widespread initiatives are those that support new businesses through start-up grants, those that seek to boost female entrepreneurship, and those that provide training for potential entrepreneurs. However, among the various types of provider organisations that are being established in household services, service agencies received different treatment from one state to another.

Some countries gave support to existing providers, for example by lowering VAT rates, by reducing administrative and overhead costs for providers through simplified official approval procedures, and by improving regulations governing public tenders. Less widespread were initiatives targeted at employers as potential funders of household services for their employees. Only a few countries facilitated the purchasing or establishment of childcare services by employers through credit schemes, and systematic efforts to involve both management and labour in the mobilisation of financial resources for household services were made only in France (through the *Titre Emploi Service* scheme mentioned above).

In addition to national governments, regional and local authorities also made significant contributions to the development of household services. The success of national policies is



greatly affected by the actions of regional and local actors. Moreover, some initiatives (such as service vouchers) are often piloted at local and regional level prior to national implementation. In some countries (such as Italy, Austria and Finland), the regions and provinces have broad decision-making powers in the planning and implementation of labour policies, job training policies and social services. European structural funds, which play a key role in promoting experiments in employment creation in household services, mainly support regional and local actions. In the near future local partnerships will become the main recipients of structural funds.

In addition, it emerged from the studies of localities conducted as part of this survey that some features of local economies affect the development of jobs in household services. In some localities, for example, low unemployment rates (e.g. in the Netherlands), low female activity rates (e.g. in Sheffield in the United Kingdom) or low business start-up rates (e.g. Sheffield) slowed down the expansion of services (e.g. Leeds in the United Kingdom, or Purmerend and Zaanstad in the Netherlands). Conversely, demand for services can be increased by local demographic factors which produce potential new customers for services, or where there are many persons working at jobs with particularly long or unusual hours (e.g. call centres in Leeds, United Kingdom). Finally, a well-organised third sector helps to facilitate supply (e.g. in Florence, Italy).

In the locality studies, regional and provincial authorities were found to influence the development of services in various ways:

- by planning the expansion of childcare and/or eldercare services (e.g. Italy, Austria, the Netherlands);
- by providing basic and/or quality accreditation of service providers (e.g. France), or, generally, monitoring the provision of services (e.g. Portugal and Italy);
- by establishing job qualifications and training for operators (e.g. Austria and Italy);
- by establishing regional variations in policies supporting demand for household services, which sometimes mean the difference between success and failure of the policies (for example, in Finland, the provinces choose between subsidies based on tax breaks or direct subsidies);
- by promoting public/private partnerships to combat social exclusion at local level (e.g. in Germany, France and Italy);
- by implementing regional employment plans (e.g. in Portugal);
- by implementing policies to combat undeclared work (e.g. in Germany).

Local branches of national and regional governments were also found to play a role in the implementation of policies to develop household services. Among these are local employment offices, which, while they may answer to central or regional authorities, often have a great deal of autonomy. These offices can have a more or less active role, from routine training and placement, to the administration of special programmes to support the re-entry into the workforce of the unemployed receiving unemployment benefits, to participation in structured local partnerships and pilot projects, as in the case of the HomeService project in Vienna.

HomeService (Vienna, Austria)

An initiative of the public employment services

HomeService was developed in 1997/98 as a pilot project of the welfare organisation Sozial Global and has been promoted since the start of 1999 as a joint initiative. The project is being promoted by the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (WAFF) and the Public Employment Service (AMS) of Vienna as part of the National Action Plan for Employment (NAP), with funds from the Federal Government, the City of Vienna and the European Social Fund (ESF).

The service agency organisational form of HomeService is an advantage, since service agencies are better equipped to counter the risks of the spread of marginal working conditions in the household services sector than are existing service voucher models. Services 'in and around the house' are offered: cleaning, washing and ironing, shopping, child minding, pet care, gardening, care of indoor plants, house and flat-sitting, running errands, keeping company. The aim is to create jobs in the field of household-related services and thereby to facilitate the return of unemployed persons (particularly women with caring duties and older persons) to working life.

The various personal development and qualifications facilities on offer are a further specific feature of this initiative. Jobs with HomeService cannot be dismissed as 'McJobs' because of the job security, social protection and socioeducational back-up provided, and the respect with which employees are treated by the project management. The employment effect is generally considered positive.

Organised employment with HomeService is displacing the offer of services on the informal market. On the other hand, it will not displace regular employment among the welfare organisations, since HomeService, in the range of services it offers, is opening up a new market strictly demarcated from the area covered by social services.

In the first years of its existence, HomeService has taken on more than 1000 customers. An evaluation of HomeService carried out in 1998 noted positive labour market policy aspects; even so, HomeService jobs can only be safeguarded by continued public funding.

Local authorities also play a major role. In the locality studies, cases were found of local governments that:

- play a role in planning the expansion of services, at least as regards childcare and eldercare;
- disseminate information on existing services to users (e.g. in the United Kingdom); and direct demand to approved providers (e.g. in Finland);
- set standards and rules for government-funded services offered by private providers, which can have a significant impact, for example in the case of overly restrictive standards;
- manage the system of transfers to families and individuals receiving public assistance, and are pioneers in experiments with service vouchers (in Finland, for example, municipalities decided independently whether or not to adopt them);
- back third sector projects on occasion with their own financial resources, as well as entering into service purchase agreements of a more 'traditional' type with third sector providers (as, for example, in Italy);
- still directly run a significant share of childcare and eldercare services.

Of course, one of the most important contributions local authorities make to the development of household services is the promotion of public/private partnerships. The partnership approach entails cooperation between the three sectors on an equal level and differs from the simple contracting-out of services in use in many countries. The latter is sometimes based on 'selective' or preferential arrangements with a few existing service providers, to the detriment of the emergence of new enterprises and organisations. In some countries this has created a gulf between the third sector organisations that are consolidated and integrated with the public system, and the myriad small enterprises and self-employed workers that often operate in the informal sector and were not taken into consideration in planning for the supply of services. Creating a level playing field in the social services 'market' is no easy task, and sometimes the attitudes of local authorities have a counterproductive effect (Perkins, Allen, 1997).

In this study, however, several successful examples were found of projects where, with local authorities playing a leading role, actors from all sectors worked closely to promote household services. These examples show that a structured collaboration between the public, private and third sector at local level facilitates the tailoring of services to local needs, the rational use of existing resources, the promotion of a better awareness of household services so demand is met, and the monitoring of the effects of national policies at local level. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in the United Kingdom (an example of which is given below) is a case in point.

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership Plan (Leeds, UK)

A local partnership to rationalise and expand childcare services.

The National Childcare Strategy has given further support to the City Council's existing Under-8s Service. This service directly manages nursery classes in schools (for children aged 3-4); runs 36 Early Years Centres (for children aged 3-6 months to 5 years); and runs out-of-school holiday clubs for children under 9 years. It also has responsibility for registering and inspecting all caregiving and educational facilities for children under 8 (including private nurseries, out-of-school clubs and childminders). An interesting aspect is that the service also provides childcare consulting services to private nurseries and companies.

For example, it has a contract with BT Mobile to advise company personnel on existing services in the city, vacancies for children with childminders, out-of-school clubs and so on. Employees of the Under 8s service make all the necessary enquiries and check references on behalf of the staff of BT Mobile.

The service also runs holiday play schemes tailored to companies' specific needs. It also provides so-called 'toybox services': parents who move to Leeds are provided with assistance to find childcare and the like, such as schools, riding lessons, nannies, baby-sitters and so on by consulting a list of service providers, who are subject to periodic checks. In the future, the service plans to work more in partnership with other providers and groups.

The management of childcare in the city is now more balanced and less competitive than it was in the 1990s. During that period, after the introduction of childcare vouchers, many elementary schools opened nursery schools, with the result that many childminders and playgroups found themselves without clients and had to close. With the new approach, there is a greater and more flexible use of existing resources: for example, schools host private playgroups in their facilities, and nursery hours in the schools have been extended to better meet the needs of working parents.

The National Childcare Strategy implemented in the United Kingdom after 1998 requires local authorities to promote the development of childcare services at local level through the establishment of partnerships between public, private and third sector actors. The partnerships make it possible to assess the need for services locally and help bring providers and users into contact.

The example of service platforms created in France shows how useful local partnerships are for an effective implementation of national policies supporting the demand for household services. In fact, the potential users or beneficiaries of such measures do not always become aware of their existence unless an effort is made to involve local opinion leaders and gatekeepers. This was done in the city of Lyon, with a number of awareness-raising actions among work councils.

Qualidom (Lyon, France)

A platform for fostering contact between providers and users and for promoting the development of household services.

In an effort to structure the supply of services more effectively, and in particular to increase the transparency of the range of services available, in France a number of experiments in household service 'platforms' were undertaken. An outstanding example is the Qualidom platform which was established in Lyons in 1996. Since then, Qualidom has structured the range of personal services provided by practically every organisation accredited in the district of Rhône.

The Qualidom initiative was supported from the outset by the public authorities, composed of the Préfecture and the Direction Régionale du Travail et de l'Emploi (Regional Directorate for Labour and Employment). By calling a single telephone number, families can obtain information on services and be directed towards an organisation that can meet their specific needs in their area. The platform also allows accredited organisations to form work groups, for example, to study new developments in the household services sector and develop innovative initiatives in collaboration with local authorities. One such initiative is the campaign launched by Qualidom in 1998 to increase awareness of TES (*Titre Emploi Service*) service vouchers. Organising a number of meetings with representatives of the regional federation of the works council, Qualidom worked to promote the use of the TES as an alternative to the direct hiring of household workers, using CES (*Cheque Emploi Service*) service cheques. The TES system offers better guarantees both to workers (who can receive support from the organisation) and users (who are guaranteed better quality, since the organisations that provide services are subject to government approval).

Local partnerships in some cases allow for the implementation of pilot experiments that can help in reformulating national policies which have proved unsuccessful. In Germany, a number of innovative projects have achieved better results in creating household services jobs than federal legislation. Among them, one of the best known is the Berlin Service Project.

Berlin Service Project (Berlin, Germany)

Creating jobs through service pools.

The Berlin Service project is one of 41 local initiatives supported in the framework of the European Regional Development Fund by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional Policy. It is concerned with services for everyday life.

The aim of the project is to ascertain the overall conditions in four service agencies or service pools, which provide jobs for 62 employees, with a view to improving working conditions in a sector dominated by marginal and undeclared work. The organising group, composed of the Senate administration, the local employment office, the social partners, the social services association Zukunft im Zentrum and other bodies, organised various exchanges of experiences; discussions; studies; and workshops. In the beginning, the group concentrated on the effects of household cheques in Berlin, but it quickly became clear that this is a largely ineffective tool. It was therefore decided to examine the effects of service pools as such, and to clarify certain legal questions and issues related to pay that were raised by the experiment.

Some cases of local partnerships that were found in the locality studies had a clear focus on employment creation for disadvantaged people. Often one problem of such local employment projects is the long-term sustainability of the jobs created. Here, local partnerships can help in finding support and resources in the communities for the continuation of the activities and the preservation of the new employment generated, as the following example from Berlin shows.

District of Wedding Local Partnership (Berlin, Germany)

A favourable environment for local jobs projects in eldercare services.

The district of Wedding is situated in the western part of Berlin and has approximately 170,000 residents. After a number of industrial factories moved away, the area experienced a serious decline in employment, with approximately 25% of local jobs disappearing between 1970 and 1987, and 20.8% of the inhabitants being unemployed in 1998. In 1997, a local partnership was formed, the first of its kind in the city. With the aim of promoting economic and social cohesion, all three economic sectors were called upon to work together to improve living conditions locally.

The goal was to initiate employment schemes for the socially excluded and create jobs designed to improve living and working conditions, leisure activities and the environment. The partnership's goal was to promote participation, initiative and self-help among inhabitants, to find funds wherever possible, and to seek additional financing from, for example, EU development programmes. The partnership currently involves four public agencies, five private bodies and 14 third sector organisations.

One project that has benefited from the partnership is the Senior Citizens' assistance service. This project, established by local authorities in 1994, hired 40 long-term unemployed persons to provide care for the elderly, with the objective of building skills and creating jobs in the personal services sector. The service offers nursing care, personal care, supportive care, hygiene care, and advice and arrangements for supplementary services. After two years of successful operation, the project tried to turn itself into a centre for social services, but the social security office in the district could not offer the required collaboration. Consequently, the partnership is now working to strengthen cooperation with welfare associations, the church and other local institutions that can give the initiative a solid community base.

Private enterprises as funders and providers

Private enterprises play a role in the development of household services at two levels: as employers who may need to create or purchase services for their employees, and as providers. In most Member States the financial burden involved in the cost of household services falls mainly on either the user – through the payment of tariffs and fees – or on the state, through subsidies, de-taxation measures and the direct provision of services at below-market prices. However, in some countries (such as Finland, the United Kingdom and France), employers, including private enterprises, are starting to fill the gap in terms of financial resources.

In Denmark, for example, 4,000 jobs were generated by the services offered by employers to their employees, mainly in sports, entertainment, childcare and, to a lesser extent, in domestic services not performed in the home (ironing, grocery deliveries, dealing with administrative formalities, etc.).

In the Netherlands, the strong growth in the number of childcare facilities, by almost 58% between 1990 and 1996, was also due to the fact that more and more collective agreements are being concluded which require employers to help fund the cost of childcare for their employees.

- In France, the system of service vouchers (*Titre Emploi Service*) is designed so that companies can supplement the value of the vouchers before reselling them to their employees.¹⁶
- In the United Kingdom and Portugal, a small number of enterprises created, purchased or subsidised childcare services for their employees. The services include day nurseries, out-of-school clubs, childminders and holiday play activities (see below).
- In Italy, in the city of Rome, local government is entering into agreements with a number of private enterprises to open nurseries in the workplace.
- In Finland, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, a non-profit organisation that provides household services, has been receiving requests for information from enterprises planning to procure services for their staff in cleaning, childcare, transporting children to school, etc. Moreover, recent legislation allows firms to organise childcare for workers who would otherwise need to stay at home to look after a sick child.

Engel (Finland)

A private company operating in the field of household services.

Engel is one of the major national cleaning, security and real estate agencies. Most of the home help services on offer consist of cleaning, but it is also possible to purchase bathing, shopping, care of clothing and window-cleaning services. The company has service purchase agreements with the City of Helsinki, and the City determines the services purchased, controls the work and also pays for it.

¹⁶ One could object that these are financial resources that would otherwise have been distributed to workers, and that therefore in a sense the resources belong to them; but the same might be said about the 'ultimate' point of origin of public funds, i.e. workers and taxpayers.

Except in the catering sector, the advent of large private for-profit enterprises among household service providers is a relatively recent development, occurring especially in the domestic cleaning area. The interest of large enterprises in this sector seems greater in some countries than in others. Of the countries in our study, in both the United Kingdom and Finland national and multinational cleaning companies – some of which operate as franchises – are beginning to offer their services even to private households (see previous page and below).

Multinational Cleaning Franchises (Leeds, United Kingdom)

When domestic cleaning becomes a business.

In a small city near Leeds there is a franchise branch of a cleaning company. It is one of 33 branches in the United Kingdom of an American international cleaning company that also has branches in other European countries as well as in the Far East. The company's mission statement speaks of 'quality, service and value' and it has received various quality awards, including the status of 'investor in people'. All the chain's branches receive uniforms for the staff and a sufficient number of automobiles for the teams of cleaners, each bearing the company logo. All workers are covered by insurance and are 'fidelity bonded'. The franchisees provide all cleaning materials and pay the running costs of the vehicles.

The quality standards require the staff to work in teams where each individual has a different role, so as to allow 'career advancement that contributes to growth' (of the company). Wages are exclusively commission based. 'Head' cleaners receive a commission of 24% plus 2% for paid holidays; 'assistant' cleaners earn 20% plus 2% on an average rate of 29 GBP plus VAT for 1.5 hours of cleaning by two cleaners.

This means a head cleaner earns approximately five pounds an hour; an assistant cleaner approximately four pounds. According to company executives, all workers earn more than the national minimum wage. The percentage (2%) to cover paid holidays was introduced in compliance with the EU Working Time Directive. The company has increased turnover in the United Kingdom by over 15% in recent years and sees 'enormous potential' for further growth.

In the Netherlands, large cleaning companies would like to enter the domestic cleaning market if they can lower prices (through lower VAT) and are able to find enough workers. In other countries, such as Italy and Germany, big companies are still largely uninterested in this market. One reason why many private companies are not very attracted to the household services market is that they cannot compete with prices in the informal market. Their interest is conditional on special incentives, like lower VAT rates or subsidised jobs.

Unlike large companies, the establishment of small household services businesses seems a widespread trend in the majority of countries. These small businesses are often formed and run by women. As in the Portuguese case described below, many women who have skills and capabilities but have difficulty finding work as employees because of their age, can successfully start and run their own business with initial support from vocational retraining programmes.

Marluz Ironing Business (Cascais, Portugal)

An example of female entrepreneurship.

This domestic services company, which has grown out of a local employment initiative (LEI), provides a good example of a long-term unemployed woman becoming self-employed, setting up her own business and creating other jobs at the same time. It is thus an example of female entrepreneurship.

The woman in question had to undergo a process of vocational retraining. She returned from Brazil at the age of 40 with a degree in languages, and could not get a job. She enrolled at the Cascais *Centro de Emprego* (Job Centre) and began a training course for unemployed over-45s with the aim of becoming self-employed. The course lasted for four months (eight hours a day) and entitled trainees to the national minimum wage and a lunch allowance. At the end of the course, she presented a project under the LEI programme. The first version included a range of 'local services', including small domestic repairs (plumbers, electricians and carpenters), personal services providing care for the elderly and childcare outside school hours, and ironing and decorating. Ultimately, the Job Centre only supported the part of the project concerning ironing and interior design (curtain making, etc.).

The businesswoman obtained initial funding of PTE 10,000,000 (50% as a grant; 50% as a loan), and in 1998, the ironing division of the establishment began to operate with five employees. The wages of the staff were set by the Job Centre, the pay for ironing work being fixed at PTE 60,000 net. Although this was the scheduled wage, the employee interviewed in this company has a permanent contract of employment and earns PTE 80,000, owing to a lunch allowance of an additional PTE 20,000 over and above the fixed wage. 'It's difficult to find people who can iron for 60,000 escudos', the businesswoman explained.

In accordance with LEI legislation, workers taken on must begin with a fixed-term contract of employment and sign a permanent contract of employment at the end of the probationary period. In this company, one of the workers interviewed had a part-time contract to suit her personal needs. Employees are entitled to social security benefits, company transport and a lunch allowance; with the exception of part-time workers, they work 40 hours per week on a fixed timetable between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The company's success, due to increasing customer demand for its services, in the area of domestic cleaning and small domestic repairs in particular, has led to further prospects for expansion.

Service agencies are another promising organisational form in the household services sector. Along with the examples of agencies created through employment policies, mentioned above, the locality studies also provided examples of agencies arising out of private entrepreneurial initiatives carried out without public subsidies. These agencies sometimes hire staff and sometimes just mediate the contractual arrangements between worker and family (as in the case presented below). The secret of their success is that they keep their overheads low and offer families a broad range of services. However, in some cases the need to maintain a minimal structure means that these agencies, especially when small, invest very little in personnel training or quality.



Il Quadrifoglio (Rome, Italy)

A private service agency.

The Quadrifoglio company was formed in 1995. There were three founders: an owner and two associates – two women with political, trade union and voluntary sector experience in the care of the elderly and aid for non-EU immigrants and travellers.

The idea was to create a company offering a broad range of services. Then, following some market research, the founders realised that the areas in which there was most demand were the selection of home helps and the organisation of parties. Initially, the company worked mainly in caring for people with disabilities. Its activities were then extended to various types of household services, and later to services for organisations and enterprises.

The selection of domestic helps is still one of the company's major activities. Every year the company selects 400-500 people to offer various household services (domestic helps, nannies, waiting staff, cooks, drivers, plumbers, carpenters, blacksmiths, gardeners, electricians, party organisers, etc.). In the case of domestic helps, the employment relationship is arranged via mediation between workers and employers. This leads to a written agreement concerning working conditions, terms and conditions of employment, pay and methods of regularising the relationship.

Once employment relationships have been established, the company continues to monitor workers, who can turn to it if employers do not abide by the rules (e.g. if they refuse to regularise the employment relationship, particularly in the case of non-EU workers who need this if they are to receive a residence permit). In these cases, the company tries to persuade the employer to correct the situation and, where this proves impossible, tries to find the worker another position.

The third sector: new developments

All over Europe, the third sector¹⁷ is viewed as a highly promising source of new jobs in the coming years. According to a recent study, in a group of eight European countries (Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Portugal, Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom), the third sector (including cooperatives, mutuals and associations) provides work for approximately 7.2 million people, accounting for 6.6% of total employment.¹⁸ Neighbourhood and social services are one of the areas with the greatest potential for job creation in the third sector, not just in terms of contracting out by government agencies, but also as regards creating a market of private users. The comparative advantages of the third sector lie in the following: its ability to identify, comprehend and develop demand, thanks to the small size of its organisations and its close ties with local communities; its ability to differentiate supply, thus meeting the needs of different consumer groups; lower production costs resulting from the fact that capital need not be paid

¹⁷ We are aware of the difficulties inherent in the use of the concept of the 'third sector', which does not have a single equivalent in the laws of the various countries. For the European System of Accounts, third sector organisations are private bodies that do not distribute profits (are non-profit) and that offer their services at a price 50% below the cost of production. Here we make reference to a broader area, which includes all the non-profit organisations (both 'public benefit' and 'mutual benefit'), as well as those like cooperatives that distribute proceeds to their members but are guided by the value of solidarity and perform a socially useful function (see Lunaria, 1998).

¹⁸ Findings of a CIRIEC study, cited in Borzaga, Olabe and Greffe, 1999.

back with interest; and the greater availability of flexible work and volunteer work (Borzaga, Olabe and Greffe, 1999).

In the present study, an expanded role for the third sector in establishing services and creating jobs was noted in all countries, especially in childcare and eldercare. However, one needs to keep in mind the differences in starting points. In some countries (like Finland), where public provision has dominated for years, the involvement of the third sector is almost a novelty.

Lempesti Cooperative Kotitiimi – ‘The Hometeam’ (Finland)

A third sector organisation taking advantage of national policies subsidising home help services.

The Lempesti Cooperative works out of Tampere’s neighbouring municipality of Lempäälä. Lempesti has now been in operation for five years. Tampere is its main operational area. Originally, it experimented with a wide spectrum of different types of work, but during the past year the services on offer have been determined on the basis of the tasks covered by the home help subsidy trial. The subsidy trial is thus a highly significant factor in the employment of members of the cooperative. The part of the cooperative which deals with housework services is called Kotitiimi; one of Kotitiimi’s members also has general responsibility for the supply of housework services. In all, the Lempesti Cooperative employs 18 people, 12 of whom belong to Kotitiimi.

Demand for housecleaning, the most requested service, exceeds capacity. The clients of Lempesti Cooperative are working, reasonably affluent families, who often have small children (and sometimes children who are slightly older). These clients do not have enough time to do housework; they want to reserve their leisure time for other activities. Those clients who use the services do not regard them as expensive. However, in order to mobilise new user groups, the price would have to be reduced. Lempesti normally pays VAT on its services, except in the case of care work which is defined as VAT-exempt under the Value Added Tax Act.

In other countries where welfare is based on the principle of subsidiarity (e.g. in Germany and Austria), or in any case where private non-profit welfare institutions, often acting under government regulation and with public funding, have existed for some time (e.g. Italy, Portugal), the third sector was already very much in evidence. Nonetheless, new kinds of organisations are emerging and new operating methods are being adopted. The following are some relevant examples.

- *Social cooperatives (Italy)*. This type of legal entity was introduced by Law No. 381 of 1991, and covers old and new cooperatives that provide social care and educational services (Type A cooperatives); and cooperatives that offer all kinds of services but employ individuals from socially disadvantaged groups (Type B cooperatives).
- *Social enterprises (Germany)*. Known also as training and employment companies, these enterprises are explicitly designed to promote employment in order to encourage the integration of persons with low levels of employability.
- *Socioeconomic enterprises (Austria)*. Promotion of socioeconomic enterprises is one of the measures indicated in the territorial employment pacts.

- *Intermediary associations (France)*. Established in 1987 as a way of reintegrating unemployed persons into the workforce, these associations can recruit personnel and make them available to individuals to perform small jobs of brief duration (labour leasing).
- *Women's cooperatives (Sweden)*. Starting in 1980, these have been created under local government capacity-building schemes, which seek to develop local potential to satisfy local needs, especially those of women.

All of these entities were created and succeed partly because of the enabling environment fostered by policies aimed at promoting employment and services through favourable tax and social security treatment.

The adoption by third sector organisations of new operating methods more akin to those of the private sector largely reflects the need to reduce dependence on public funding. For example, many of the French organisations that typically provided social services on behalf of public authorities now have a mixed organisational model. They still use public funds to provide services to needy groups, but also operate as service agencies for a private clientele (for example, 47% of the approved organisations in Haute-Garonne and 48% of those in the Rhône region offer both kinds of services). In Italy, social cooperatives are no longer limited to bidding for contracts to provide services in the way specified by local government agencies; increasingly, they take the initiative in setting up projects which offer new services and seek funding from a variety of sources. And in Austria, the marketability and financial independence of third sector enterprises is a very topical issue.

Public day care centre for children at 30 Bruesseler Strasse, Wedding (Berlin, Germany)

When competition from the third sector has positive effects on the quality of local government services.

At the request of the staff, this local authority *Kita* has for some time been offering care for 'mixed-age' groups instead of 'same-age' groups. Four mixed-age groups accept children between the ages of two months and five years. The staff/child ratio is exemplary (1.75 nursery nurses to 14 children, or 2.5:19). Particular attention is paid to project-related activities such as potato growing, making fires from the dried potato leaves and drawing with charcoal. The extensive romantic garden of the *Kita* and the generously designed spaces are particularly suited to this. The weekly plans for projects are drawn up jointly with the children. Given the high proportion of foreigners in this district, this *Kita* is designed to be multicultural, and cares for children from ten different countries. Another feature – not yet typical for *Kitas* – is the fact that this childcare centre is near a residential area, has good neighbourhood relations and, according to its principal, is 'simply part of the place'.

The principal of the *Kita*, who was for many years a union representative, hopes to make it clear with this model that public *Kitas* can withstand the strong competition from the voluntary sector and from playgroups. Expert findings confirm this trend towards public childcare centres rectifying the problem of under-usage (especially in some districts of East Berlin and inner city districts) by expanding the range of services on offer. Here the competition from the *Kitas* based on parent initiatives is clearly becoming so strong that the public sector is adopting some of the quality features found in the third sector.

The third sector can have positive effects on the quality of public services. An example is the public childcare centre in the locality of Wedding, in Berlin (box on previous page), where the need to compete with parent-led *kindergartens* was a stimulus for the management to retain high quality standards and to emphasise attention to relationships with the community, one of the major characteristics of third sector initiatives.

A question that arises in this study is whether the growth of paid work in household services occurs at the expense of volunteer work. In some countries (e.g. the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) those third sector mutual aid organisations providing childcare services which rely heavily on volunteer work (like crèches and playgroups run by parents) have diminished in recent years, probably because of both the changes in demand for services and in the availability of volunteer workers. Some continue to operate, however, retaining a mix of paid work and voluntary management by parents.

This is the case of some playgroups found in Austria. Playgroups such as the *Rasselbande* playgroup of Linz (see below) are organised by the parents themselves, constituted as associations and based on a model mid-way between institutional and private childcare. Each individual group has an educational concept which allows the children a high degree of autonomy. Playgroups are also distinguishable from institutional establishments by the group size and the more favourable ratio of carers to children. Age-mixing, which is only now being introduced in some nursery schools, was standard practice from the beginning in play-groups. Parents see advantages in better facilities for participation in the structuring of the groups than are offered in institutional care. In playgroups, it is easier to change basic organisational aspects, such as opening and closing times, or to introduce or alter the range of care facilities offered. Playgroups are of course dependent on the active participation of parents, or only work well when this is assured.

Rasselbande Playgroup Project (Linz, Austria)

A service started by parents.

Rasselbande, the first playgroup in Linz, was set up by committed mothers in 1988 because of the lack of adequate childcare facilities. The group was financed by the City of Linz, the Province of Upper Austria and the parents at a rate of one-third each; the parents' contributions are scaled at between EUR 145.35 and EUR 290.69, according to income. The demand for this service is considerable, as demonstrated by the fact that along with other playgroups, Rasselbande has for some years been obliged to keep waiting lists for new admissions.

For the childcare workers employed, there are also advantages arising from the more favourable care ratio: working with fewer children makes it possible to respond in a more individual way to the children's needs. It is also quite possible for employees to influence the way services are organised. Greater freedom in the provision of care, in the influence that can be exerted and in structuring activities, however, contrasts with the lack of any regulations or legal requirements. Binding quality standards are currently being worked out with a view to guaranteeing the quality of care.

The evolution of the third sector in the countries studied indicates that jobs growth and volunteer activity can be strengthened simultaneously. Indeed, volunteers in the third sector often have organisational, leadership and management roles in organisations with paid workers. In Italy, 34% of social cooperatives were organised by a volunteer group or association. Moreover, many third sector organisations combine the use of volunteers with the use of paid staff, and coordinate activities between these two groups of carers. The following example, taken from the locality study in Florence, illustrates the trajectory that characterises many third sector enterprises: they come into existence as voluntary initiatives and later become professional services, but do not totally eliminate voluntary work and the values associated with it.

L'Abbaino Social Cooperative (Florence, Italy)

A professional organisation created from a community initiative.

The cooperative was set up in 1987 on the initiative of nine people, including general and specialist teachers, all with experience in the volunteer sector. The opportunity to establish the cooperative arose from an agreement with Madonnina del Grappa, a religious body caring for children and young people in difficulty. The impetus which led the young founders to set it up was both a desire for change in the local area and a gap in public provision.

Initially, the cooperative worked mainly with delinquent and socially disadvantaged adolescents; it later extended its activities to younger children. In 1990, the cooperative reorganised its activities and began to introduce skilled professionals to develop the enterprise, which thus finally moved out of the volunteer sector.

In 1994, with the launching of several services for very young children, both the number of workers and annual turnover doubled. Over the past two years, a further 50 teachers (including infant teachers) have been recruited under short-term and fixed-term contracts. The cooperative is also planning to recruit 30 more teachers over the next two years. At present, the plan is to divide it into several smaller enterprises to avoid the disadvantages of size. Working in collaboration with various municipalities in the province of Florence, local health units and other non-profit entities, the cooperative runs nurseries and other services for young and very young children; vocational and pre-vocational training centres for people with disabilities; activities to support disabled children in nurseries and kindergartens; educational services for young people; and family houses. Parents participate in the running of some services as volunteers.

Indeed, some third sector organisations – even very old ones like the Finnish association described on the next page – still see their network of volunteers, who deliver an impressive amount of care work, as their strength.

Finally, it should be stressed that in addition to being major service providers, third sector organisations are increasingly involved in planning (e.g. in Tuscany, Italy) and in local partnerships (e.g. the United Kingdom and Portugal). In some cases, the third sector also organises demand (for example, parents' associations in Austria). This returns us to the importance of the partnership approach, which makes the most of the resources, potential and capabilities of all three sectors in a given locality.

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (Finland)

A network of volunteer carers and paid workers in home help for children.

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare has been working since 1920 to improve the welfare of children. In the 1930s, training and provision of domestic helpers got under way. In 1960, the organisation initiated controlled family day care services in Finland. In the 1970s, the creation of a network of carers for sick children and the development of the day care services took centre stage. The past decade has seen the development of domestic support: help with childcare at any time of the day or night. The service can also be provided – in the form of childcare, support, guidance and home nursing – for special situations, such as children with disabilities or families requiring particular support.

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare bases its operations on a network of voluntary carers paid by the institution. The Society estimates that it provides an average of 450,000 annual care hours, which adds up to an annual workload for about 300 home care workers.

Three sectors on the move

This chapter has summarised the most interesting developments in the way in which the public, private and third sectors intervene in the field of household services.

We have seen that national policy bodies have devised a variety of measures which directly or indirectly encourage the development of these services. However, differences can be noted in the actions designed to improve service quality. Furthermore, the fact that employment creation is the main policy context in which household services are promoted raises some questions about how users' interests can be protected. At local level, some significant results were achieved by local authorities which promoted partnerships with the private sector.

Private enterprises are entering the household services market both as funders and as providers. While small enterprises exist almost everywhere, the involvement of large enterprises is still limited, especially in some countries. It is facilitated by the presence of incentives from the state (e.g. lower VAT rates).

An expanded role for the third sector in establishing services and creating jobs, especially in childcare and eldercare, was noted in all countries. New kinds of organisations are emerging and new operating methods are being adopted. A strength of the third sector is its ability to combine volunteer and paid work without undermining its social and welfare orientation.



Chapter 4

Who works in household services?

In order to assess the implications for equal opportunities, it is important to establish the sex, age and other characteristics of those who work in household services. A striking feature of this sector is the preponderance of female workers, which is why most of this chapter (the first section) is devoted to the problem of gender segregation. The composition of the household services workforce by sex is relatively easy to ascertain; the same does not apply to age, educational level, ethnicity and nationality, for which only a few countries have available data clearly related to household services. Some information on these other characteristics of the workforce is provided in the second section of the chapter.

Gender profile

A sector dominated by women

The household services sector is strongly feminised in all the Member States and other OECD countries. This emerges from statistics on European countries and the US on education, health, social work and employment in private households (see table 3 on following page).

International comparisons show that occupations in household services are among the most female-dominated (Rubery, Smith and Fagan, 1999). This is confirmed by the data obtained in this study.

- In childcare services¹⁹, in eldercare²⁰ and in domestic cleaning, the percentage of women never dips below 90% and often reaches 98-100% (e.g. among nursery teachers in Portugal; childcare generally in the United Kingdom, and home helps in France and Finland).

¹⁹ Portugal: nursery school teachers, 100%; childminders, home helps and allied workers, 92.8%. Netherlands: child care, 92.02%. France: family care assistants, 99.6%. United Kingdom: childcare, 99%.

²⁰ Portugal: childminders, home helps and allied workers, 92.8%. Netherlands: domiciliary care, 95.22%. France: home helps, 98.1%. United Kingdom: eldercare, 91%. Finland: home helps, 98%.

Table 3 Women's share of employment (%) by sector, EU Member States and the US, 1997.

	Education	Health and social work	Employment in private households
US	68.6	78.6	90.9
EU15	66.3	76.2	89.7
Belgium	65.8	74.1	82.8
Denmark	60.0	83.4	88.0
Germany	64.3	76.5	94.5
Greece	62.0	61.8	90.7
Spain	62.7	71.2	88.5
France	65.4	74.5	95.1
Ireland	63.8	77.1	no data
Italy	70.3	55.3	82.3
Luxembourg	56.1	74.6	100.0
Netherlands	51.4	78.9	96.6
Austria	66.5	74.3	92.5
Portugal	76.7	77.2	99.6
Finland	67.1	89.9	83.1
Sweden	68.5	86.3	100.0
United Kingdom	69.7	81.7	73.0

Source: Employment in Europe, 1999

- Feminisation is less striking in the laundry and dry cleaning sector – 60-70%;²¹
- Gender segregation is less marked in catering occupations. In some countries (Portugal and the United Kingdom), the percentage of women is 63-67%, while in Italy there is a slight prevalence of men, women accounting for only 44.6%.
- Only a few countries have data on domestic maintenance employment. These show these occupations to be strongly male-dominated. Women account for only 4% of gardening workers in the UK and 8.6% in the Netherlands; the percentage of women working in the exterior cleaning of buildings is only 4.2% in Portugal and is even lower in Finland.

Gender segregation in certain occupations

It is perhaps less obvious that in the most strongly female-dominated occupations, there has been no significant decrease in segregation in the last ten years. On the contrary, segregation has increased slightly, perhaps due to more women entering the jobs market. For example, in Portugal between 1991 and 1998, the percentage of women childminders, home helps and allied

²¹ Italy: 70%; Netherlands: 64.6%; France: 59.3%; United Kingdom: 59%.

workers increased from 81.8% to 92.8%, while the percentage of nursery teachers who were female rose from 97.3% to 100%.

Where slight trends towards desegregation were found, this was mostly where female dominance is less marked.

- The percentage of women in the laundry sector, for example, dropped from 71% to 65% between 1993 and 1996 in the Netherlands, and from 69% to 59% between 1992 and 1998 in the United Kingdom.
- Between 1992 and 1998, there was an 80% increase in the number of male workers in childcare services in the UK.
- The percentage of men in catering rose in the UK between 1992 and 1998 from 32% to 37%, and in Austria from 31% to 40% in 1992-1997. It decreased, however, in 1991-1998 in both Portugal (from 44% to 33%) and Italy (46% to 45%).

This is the big picture at the macro level. It should be added, however, that at the micro level, we occasionally found a gender-based division of labour within a given service (for example, in 'meals-on-wheels' services the packers tend to be women and the drivers tend to be men).

This study was not designed to document vertical segregation; however, we did encounter some interesting data. In Italy, for example, when 'qualified' and 'unqualified' occupations are distinguished in the same sector, the number of women is decreasing in the former and increasing in the latter. Between 1991 and 1998, the percentage of qualified cleaning workers who were women dropped from 68.6% to 62.8%, while the percentage who were unqualified increased from 62.7% to 66.1%; the percentage of women employed in 'qualified household services occupations' dropped from 76.7% to 73%. In addition, in the localities studied in Portugal, the percentage of women managers and employees in domestic services enterprises was on average less than that found in the workforce as a whole. Conversely, in Germany, the percentage of women in these managerial positions was equivalent to that in the overall jobs market.

Moreover, it emerged that the few men in the sector tend to be workers who often have low wage expectations and are willing to accept precarious jobs, such as students and immigrant workers. For example, in Italy the percentage of men working in the domestic help sector amounts to 3% of Italians, but fully 25% of foreign workers.

Gender perceptions in household services

So far we have relied on 'objective' data on occupational segregation in household services. To understand how this situation may change in the future, however, we also need to know how this segregation is viewed by those involved: workers, consumers and employers.

Gender stereotypes are more common among less qualified workers. For example, in childcare services, nursery teachers and the better qualified workers in organised facilities tend to reject the importance of a 'maternal instinct' in their work (where in fact qualification is the result of

specific training), while childminders, babysitters and less qualified childcare workers tend to emphasise this ‘natural’ predisposition:

‘Women are more suited to dealing with children because they are more sensitive and have more maternal instinct.’

(Assistant in a nursery, Portugal)

‘Both sexes have the same ability and potential to be good professionals, as in any other sector.’

(Nursery school teacher, Portugal)

In domiciliary eldercare, women often consider themselves better suited to the work. In some cases, they can see the need for men’s help (especially when it comes to security and work that is physically demanding); in other cases, men are accepted provided they are ‘gentle and caring’.

‘More men should work in institutions like this, not only in tasks that demand greater physical effort, but also for security reasons.’

(Eldercare worker, Portugal)

‘Women are normally more patient in dealing with the elderly because it’s like dealing with children, only much more complicated.’

(Eldercare worker, Portugal)

The few men interviewed did not seem to have a problem with their minority status.

‘Being a man creates fewer problems when making initial contact with the boys.’

(Male after-school club worker, Italy)

‘You simply have to be yourself.’

(Male worker in children’s day care centre, Italy).

Gender perceptions of users are also relevant. In eldercare, managers and workers reported that sometimes users of domiciliary care (who are mainly women) dislike being cared for by members of the opposite sex. In childcare services, however, and especially for older children, male childcare workers are particularly sought after and valued in some countries.

Evidence of gender-based prejudices on the part of employers is particularly difficult to gather, not least because sex discrimination is usually prohibited by law. However, some evidence of such prejudices emerges indirectly from descriptions of the recruitment process. In France, for example, key informants and workers reported that when hiring home helps and domestic help, service agencies tend to give greater importance to whether the worker has ever been a mother and run a household than to any skills acquired through training. In the case of domestic cleaning, men are often considered more suited to jobs requiring physical strength.

‘They decided to employ me to clean the 600 square metre villa because I’m a man. I have an advantage when it comes to heavy work, and I cope with tiredness better than my wife does.’

(Cleaning worker, Italy)

‘For some jobs, many women are afraid to climb the moveable ladders you need, which would probably not be the case with a man.’

(Businesswoman in the cleaning services industry, Portugal).

The vicious circle of female-dominated occupations

There is thus a vicious circle which perpetuates occupational segregation by sex. The importance of skills traditionally considered to be female in caregiving work is overemphasised, while qualifications obtained through training are given less attention. This contributes to the low status and low pay of these jobs, which in turn tends to discourage men from entering the sector. Cultural factors, therefore, play a significant role, and in many ways they are the same ones that impede a fair division of caregiving responsibilities between men and women (see below).

Obstacles to involving men in childcare

At European level, the issue of men in the care services focused on childcare. The European Commission Network on Childcare proposed a target of 20% male staff in childcare services and dealt with the issue of obstacles to men’s entry into the childcare professions, emphasising that they are for the most part the very same obstacles that hamper their involvement as fathers, such as cultural stereotypes (the myth of maternity and the idea that childcare runs contrary to the idea of virility), or the lack of public policies to promote men’s entry into the field. There are, however, other negative factors. For example, the participation of men in childcare often elicits fear and concerns about sexual abuse among parents. There is then the difficulty of having men work in places where women have a dominant role, which often causes friction among both men and women.

We should also mention the problem of low wages, which, while it should theoretically be of equal concern to men and women, is in fact a greater problem for men, since here too they are influenced by well-rooted cultural stereotypes and thus aspire to more prestigious professional occupations at higher pay.

Source: European Commission Network on Childcare, 1990.

In addition, we should note the scope offered by household services work to reconcile work with family life or with other choices, where work and career are not the first priority. This is especially the case with part-time work, and is a further reason why women are attracted to this sector.

Every country studied lacked adequate policies to attract men into household services jobs. This contrasts with policies relating to men and childcare, for example, in some Nordic countries, especially Norway (Pringle, 1998). Experts in the field suggest that suitable policies include incorporating household services in youth employment programmes, and involving men through volunteer work. In addition, the expansion of entrepreneurship, which is more attractive to men, was suggested as another path worth pursuing.

Other characteristics of workers in household services

Age and educational level

Within childcare, workers based in day care centres and nurseries tend to be younger and on average better qualified people who are frequently in their first job. By contrast nannies and childminders tend to be older and less qualified, and include many women who have returned to paid work after a long period of absence due to family responsibilities, or who have lost their job in another sector.

The age profile of eldercare workers varies from country to country. For example, in Italy, organisations providing home help for the elderly are mainly cooperatives with a strong volunteer orientation; there are many workers between the ages of 30 and 40 who began their careers in the field when young. On the other hand, in Finland it is more common to find workers between the ages of 40 and 50 who have re-entered the jobs market after a long gap. Similarly, workers in residential facilities in Portugal, who are now involved in the day care services provided by these same facilities, tend to be older.

In the domestic cleaning sector, workers are found in all age groups. France is one of the few countries where relevant statistics at national level are available: here, 13.1% of household employees are under 30; 20.4% are aged 30-40; 30.2% are between 40 and 50; 28.9% are between 50 and 60; and 7.7% are over 60. On average, they are slightly older than home helps.

Some countries have a significant number of immigrant domestic workers (e.g. Italy, Germany and Austria), who tend to be younger than native workers. This can be explained by the better education of the native younger generation, who are less likely to choose domestic cleaning as a profession, while immigrants may have no alternative, because their educational qualifications are often not recognised. In the Netherlands, however, some young people – often students – work in this field, as do some older people who are divorced or widowed. In France, many workers are young people who did not complete their education or who have alternated periods of unemployment and professional training with periods of domestic cleaning. Household employees mostly have a low educational level: 49.8% do not have any diploma, compared to 27.0% among home helps. In Finland, 54% of domestic helps have a basic schooling certificate, 42% have a vocational or academic diploma, and 4% are studying for a degree.

Ethnicity and nationality

For most countries there are no national statistics on which to base an assessment of the presence of ethnic minority workers in the household service occupations investigated in this study. Detailed data were available only in the United Kingdom, where in 1998 the percentage of non-whites was lower among childcare workers (4%) and carers (5%) than among the general population, where non-whites are 6%. On the other hand, it was higher among food services workers (7%), especially among restaurant and catering managers (16%) kitchen porters (9%), catering assistants (9%) and waiters (8%). A notably higher representation of non-white workers was also found among launderers and dry cleaners.



In the Netherlands, estimates of the number of ethnic minority workers in the cleaning sector range from 12% to 20%. However, the proportion of minorities is lower (8%) amongst personnel working for private households. In Finland, 11% of home helps belong to linguistic minorities (5% speak Swedish, 6% speak other languages).

An in-depth investigation of racial prejudices was not conducted in the present study. In the UK, however, occasional forms of race discrimination against non-white workers in the care sector were reported by key informants, who also reported that some voluntary organisations refer potential clients of different ethnic origin to other 'more culturally appropriate' organisations. Other countries do not have data on ethnicity, but record the percentage of foreign workers – which represent a more specific and distinct phenomenon – in personal services, in domestic services and in the cleaning sector as a whole. The data must be interpreted with care, given the prevalence of undeclared work, although they do suggest that there is a significant percentage of foreign workers in these sectors.

In Italy, the proportion of non-EU citizens working in domestic cleaning is significant and rising, with this group accounting for 28% of registered workers in 1994 (even higher percentages were found in the localities of Florence, at 57.1%, and Rome, at 70.5%).

- In Spain, domestic services account for a significant share (32%) of total work permits granted to non-EU residents in 1997.²²
- In France, 14.3% of immigrants (and only 7.9% of the total employed active population) work in personal services.²³
- In Austria, 22.9% of employed foreign women (and only 7.3% of native women) are employed in the city of Vienna in the cleaning occupations,²⁴ which represent the largest share (40%) of foreign workers' employment.
- In Germany, foreign workers predominate in domestic cleaning jobs, except for window cleaning.

The presence of non-EU workers has significant implications for the relationship between household services employment and social integration policies. In fact, the integration of these workers tends to occur in jobs with the lowest skills and often in the underground economy.

When asked what her relatives back home would think of her job in Rome, an immigrant domestic help said, 'I haven't told them; they could never even imagine the amount of work I have to do to get my wage; here in Italy, we do things we have never had to do at home.'

In Germany, Austria and Italy, domestic work is often the most accessible market for the constant flow of migrants from Eastern countries, which also has implications for the future prospects of enlarging the European Union and for related job mobility policies.

²² Boletín de Estadísticas Laborales, n. 152, June 1998, cited in Employment Observatory, SYSDÉM Trends No. 32, Summer 1999, DG Employment and Social Affairs.

²³ Data from INSEE, Labour Survey, 1995, reported in Employment Observatory, SYSDÉM Trends No. 32, Summer 1999, DG Employment and Social Affairs.

²⁴ Author's calculation on data from Oestat, 1997, and AMS, 1998; F. Lechner, 'Austria', in Employment Observatory, SYSDÉM Trends No. 32, Summer 1999, DG Employment and Social Affairs.

A number of specific barriers preventing foreign workers from obtaining good quality occupations in household services were identified in several of the national reports. For example, in Austria, a need to review regulations for residency and work permits emerged, while the need to be perfectly fluent in German to qualify for more highly skilled jobs was an obstacle to integration. Action has been taken on this elsewhere: in the Netherlands, for example, where girls from ethnic minorities without educational qualifications are provided with intensive language courses and offered training as home helps. A few projects to increase the employment of immigrant workers have also been implemented in Germany (Berlin and Wedding), based on local partnerships. In Italy, in the framework of programmes with European Social Fund financing, there have been a number of projects involving the creation of skilled enterprises (including some in the family services sector) aimed at the advancement of immigrants with high academic and professional qualifications, a large percentage of whom cannot find good jobs, often because their educational degrees go unrecognised.

Equal opportunities issues in household services

The main characteristics of household services workers – a strong presence of women, but also a significant presence, in some countries, of foreign workers, as well as the diversity of age and family circumstances – highlight the importance of equal opportunities issues in this sector. As far as gender is concerned, a vicious circle arises from: the overemphasis in care work on skills traditionally considered to be female compared to qualifications obtained through training; the low pay and status of these jobs; and men's consequent reluctance to enter the sector. Cultural factors play a significant role, and in many ways they are the same ones that impede a fair division of caregiving responsibilities between men and women.

The presence of non-EU workers has important implications for the relationship between household services employment and social integration policies. In fact, the integration of these workers tends to occur in jobs with the lowest skills and often in the underground economy. A number of specific barriers to foreigners obtaining good quality occupations in household services were identified in several of the national reports. Initiatives to promote equal opportunities both for men and women, and for ethnic minorities and foreigners, are still rare in most countries, although a few interesting pilot experiments were under way when the study was being carried out.



Chapter 5

Working conditions in household services

This chapter is about working conditions in household services. It deals with different factors which affect quality of employment, from structural issues of pay and contracts to subjective aspects such as job satisfaction or career prospects. It ends with some questions on a crucial theme for the future of this employment sector, namely the advantages and disadvantages of its professionalisation.

Aspects examined in the study

One of this study's main objectives has been to document working conditions in household services. This is necessary to define under which conditions the sector can offer good quality jobs in the coming years.

The study included interviews with a small sample of workers (a total of 281 in the 16 localities where the study was carried out) who work in the fields of childcare, eldercare and domestic cleaning. The interviews give us some idea 'from the inside' of what it is like to work in household services. They are not, of course, representative in the statistical sense, nor do they allow us to generalise (see Annex, *Studies of Workers*), and they can only provide a picture of working conditions in the household service situations existing in the localities studied. In some cases, they reflected relatively good employment situations, because they were deliberately conducted in innovative settings.

The interviews were supplemented with broad documentary information from the countries involved; with other studies conducted in specific countries and at transnational level, and with interviews with key informants in the sector, both at national and local level. The data from these

varied sources led to essentially the same conclusions, reinforcing the impression that an accurate snapshot of the experience of working in household services had been obtained.

Different aspects of working conditions were examined: pay; working hours; job security and social protection (contractual status and social security benefits); the organisation of the work (especially regarding how independent workers are and how much support they receive from their organisations); opportunities for training and professional qualification; career prospects; and job satisfaction. Although the reconciliation of work and family life is a legitimate issue related to the quality of work, it is dealt with separately in the next chapter.

Even if we consider only the childcare, eldercare and cleaning sub-sectors, household services cover a broad range of jobs. Some are performed in the user’s home, e.g. home carer, nanny, domestic help, window cleaner; others in separate facilities (e.g. in day care centres) or in the worker’s home. We have included both professions where the number of jobs is increasing sharply and jobs performed in innovative, and thus interesting, organisational settings.

Table 4 Examples of jobs in household services

Childcare	Eldercare	Domestic Cleaning
Childcare centre manager/entrepreneur	Home care agency manager/entrepreneur	Laundry and ironing business entrepreneur
Nanny	Educational staff in day care centre for the elderly	Cleaning worker/domestic help
Childminder	Nurse	Carpet cleaner
Worker in out-of-school club	‘Meals on wheels’ driver	Window cleaner
Childcare centre auxiliary staff	Home care assistant; home help	Laundry and domestic workers
Playgroup worker	‘Meals on wheels’ cooking and packing staff	

Source: National reports

Pay

A first and basic aspect of working conditions is pay. In many countries, the pay of workers in all household services is below average national standards. In countries where the minimum wage is set by law, it is often set at the minimum hourly wage. For some jobs in childcare, pay seems low in view of the qualifications required.

Pay is calculated on an hourly basis for many jobs. All the occupations that involve services in the home of the user entail substantial travel time, but this not always paid. This problem affects both the self-employed and employees of organisations. In addition, there are situations where workers are paid less for some of their working hours. For example, in France, the national collective agreement for *employées de maison* distinguishes between effective work hours and



hours of ‘responsible presence’. The latter are defined (Article 25) as ‘those hours devoted to the family-type surveillance of a person without the performance of effective work’, and are remunerated at 75%. A domestic worker who was interviewed speaks persuasively of this situation.

‘I think it was an out-and-out bloodsucker who created it [the collective agreement for household employees], because it’s inhuman when you see a person working for ten hours a day, and then they turn around and say that there are active hours and passive hours in there. What does that mean, active hours and passive hours? You care for the child: those are active hours, when it’s awake; you play games, you feed it, you clean it up. And when you’re doing passive hours in their eyes, that’s when the child’s having its nap, but I’ll tell you what I do when the child’s asleep – I do the dishes, I do housework, I do the ironing. I don’t call that passive...’

Q. ‘And do you have passive hours in your contract?’

A. ‘It comes to the same thing, because I’ve got a standard contract. It’s a contract based on the agreement; everybody has the same one. [...] It gives us a net monthly salary of 5,200 francs a month for working nine to ten hours a day. I find that appalling.’

(Mrs. N.V., aged 32).

Here we should note that some service agencies provide more reasonable protection (see below).

Preventing turnover by recognising employees’ qualifications

The *Service de Maintien à Domicile* association in Lyon asks individual employers who use their agency service not to include hours of ‘responsible presence’ in the calculation of working hours, and to take account of the employee’s years of service in the realm of domiciliary support in contracts concluded through the agency. The ADOQ association, which is also based in Lyon, asks employers to take account of the qualifications that employees have obtained, even if those qualifications are not officially recognised in the collective agreement.

The administrative team has drawn up a pay scale based on the principal diplomas in the field of personal services. In fact, individuals availing themselves of childminding services often demand higher standards, particularly as regards the educational aspect of the service, than those demanded for any other kind of household service. The association therefore strives to make these individuals aware of the efforts required on all sides to establish a truly professional and competent service.

These arrangements are incumbent on the associations as a means of retaining the services of their most highly qualified employees, who regularly undergo training, often at their own expense. By rewarding them for this, the associations seek to avoid an excessively high turnover of staff.

The *Multi Service Entraide* association in Toulouse tries to combat the precariousness of the terms of employment in the realm of household services by setting the hourly minimum rate of pay at 45 FRF, which is above the minimum hourly rate laid down in the collective agreement.

In terms of pay, undeclared work in the domestic sector is very competitive, especially in countries with high non-wage labour costs and taxes. For example, in Germany even if an employer’s cost is double the informal market rate, a worker’s hourly rate remains equal to or less

than her undeclared colleague's. In service pools, the service costs fully 25 DM per hour and the hourly wage is 12.50-14.50 DM net (16.50 gross); in comparison, the market price for undeclared work is between 8 and 15 DM per hour.

The low hourly rate, together with the frequency of part-time and marginal part-time work, means that many workers' monthly wage is insufficient, for example to maintain a family, thus explaining the substantial number of women and young people in some occupations.

In the United Kingdom, for example, childcare work is among the ten worst paid occupations: the average weekly wage is GBP 191, while the average for all occupations is GBP 384. In France, only 7.1% of household employees earn more than 7,000 FRF per month, which corresponds to a month of full-time work at the minimum wage. Among household employees, 52.7% declared an income of less than 2,500 FRF, as did 27.9% of home helps.

In Portugal, a home help earns between 75,800 and 83,100 PTE per month (the minimum scale for a professional career); a day centre assistant 68,000-71,200 PTE. A domestic employee earns 800 PTE per hour (between 70,000 and 90,000 PTE per month if she has fixed wages); and a childminder between 20,000 and 30,000 PTE per child per month. As a reference, paid employees' average net monthly earnings (main job) in Portugal is 132,800 PTE²⁵ (102,400 in 'personal and protective services'.)

Working hours

Working hours in household services vary according to the organisation of the service (e.g. starting hours) and type of task performed, as well as the subjective choices of workers, who, in turn, are constrained by their need to earn and by the time they have available for doing paid work.

In services like nurseries and crèches, most workers work a standard full-time week (between 30 and 38 hours). For example, in the United Kingdom 65% of nursery nurses worked full time in 1998; workers' interviews confirm this picture for other countries as well. In other childcare services, such as out-of-school clubs and playgroups, part-time and even marginal part-time jobs predominate. (This would be the case for activity leaders hired to teach specific subjects like music or drama.) For example, 94% of playgroup leaders in the UK work part-time, and interviews with workers in the other countries confirmed this trend. Childminders also work variable hours: when interviewing, we found people who worked eight hours a week (e.g. in the Netherlands) and others who worked 48-50 hours weekly (e.g. in the UK).

In the domiciliary care of the elderly, workers are also generally free to set their own hours. Among the interviewees, hours were found to range from 20 to 48 per week, with managers

²⁵ Source: European Community Household Panel Survey, 1995.



working sometimes as many as 60 hours per week. Such variability can also be found in the statistics, where they are available: for instance, in the UK in 1998, care assistants and attendants were split almost equally between those working part time (53%) and those working full time (47%).

Self-employed domestic cleaners and those who work for agencies also work a variable number of hours, either from choice or because of the availability of work. For example, in France in 1996, 64.9% of household employees worked part-time. We found different tendencies among the interviewees, for example, between workers in Portugal and Italy, who tend to work longer hours (as many as 61 hours a week in Italy), and their co-workers in the Netherlands, who tend to work few hours a week (77% work for less than 20 hours).

For most of the occupations, work is performed in the daytime; exceptions can be found in the domiciliary care of the elderly, sick/dying and disabled, which requires night shifts. Even in this area, however, workers have ways of tailoring their hours.

In some jobs workers are regularly required to be flexible about weekend work. All the workers interviewed, however, seemed to be guaranteed at least one day off a week. In some countries, self-employed workers were competing with employees of organisations by providing cover outside normal hours, such as at weekends.

On the whole, a short working week is not a major cause of dissatisfaction among household services workers, which is not surprising given the low hourly pay. In some countries, however, many workers would like to work more. This desire was expressed, for example, by 43% of part-time home helps and 46.5% of part-time household employees in France. This should not be interpreted as a lifestyle preference, however, but rather as a desire to earn more money.

Proxim'Service (Lyon, France)

Adapting hours to employees' needs.

The *Proxim'Service* association administers working hours on the basis of employees' requests and the proximity of their homes. The coordinator does not penalise employees who turn down a contract on grounds of the incompatibility of the proposed timetable with their family responsibilities. Moreover, the distribution of working hours is adapted to the needs of each employee. When the level of activity rises, the first priority is to meet any requests for additional hours made by existing employees.

Another problem for domestic workers is the variability of working hours from one week to another, which causes uncertainty both about income and the time available for other activities. In France, for example, agency workers have contracts which set the number of weekly working hours, but which are not legally binding. Again, agencies can often compensate for any loss of income arising from gaps between jobs by issuing new contracts, but they do so at their own discretion, not because it is a worker's right.

Job security and social protection

Job security and social protection varies considerably according to profession and job status. Here, too, there are major differences between the relatively better situation of those employed by organisations and that of the self-employed.

Childcare

Workers in nursery schools and crèches, especially public ones, tend for the most part to have permanent job contracts. They are frequently included in collective agreements for workers in the public or welfare sector, entitling them to social security benefits, sick leave, maternity leave and paid holidays.

Workers in out-of-school clubs, playgroups and other childcare service facilities, which are often run by third sector or private organisations, are frequently hired under fixed-term contracts and sometimes just for a few hours per week. They tend, however, to have a formal contractual relationship and a minimum of social protection.

Self-employed childminders, who care for children in their own homes, tend to be less subject to regulation and protection – this is particularly the case for nannies. There are differences, however. In the UK, childminders usually have contracts with parents and are paid cash-in-hand (although those who care for children sent to them by the social services benefit from agreements with local public authorities), and this poses some problems in terms of assuring continuous work, both generally and during holiday periods. In Germany, Tagesmütter are better integrated into the public welfare system and are often paid directly by local authorities, who guarantee them a steady flow of clients. In the Netherlands, childminding bureaux or agencies exist, run by regional domiciliary care offices or private organisations.

Eldercare

In home and day care for the elderly, job security and social security entitlements vary according to the type of employer and the status of workers.

A core group of workers employed by organisations and agencies have both secure contracts and entitlement to social security benefits, maternity leave, paid holidays etc., often on the basis of collective agreements. Within these same organisations, however, one may sometimes find a group of marginal part-time workers (e.g. in Germany), and/or workers hired on fixed-term contracts (e.g. in Finland) who do not enjoy the same protection.

Self-employed workers in the care of the elderly cannot easily be distinguished from the broader category of domestic helps. They share the level of insecurity that often characterises this latter category, especially when work is paid cash-in-hand and goes undeclared.



Domestic cleaning

In domestic cleaning the situation varies according to country: in general, most domestic work is unregulated. Most workers are self-employed and clients tend to hire domestic workers for just a few hours a week. In this situation, job security and a steady income are tied primarily to workers' ability to find work for enough hours to meet their financial needs.

In some countries, the work has been regulated for years by collective agreements, for example, the contract for *employées de maison* in France or for *collaboratori domestici* in Italy. These agreements provide a minimum of social benefits and protection, although workers often consider these inadequate in view of the social contributions they have to pay. These agreements have not prevented the proliferation of undeclared work, notwithstanding recent developments like the CES in France, which have simplified social security payments.

In Portugal in 1978 a special contribution regime was introduced for domestic workers which seems to have had the perverse effect of encouraging undeclared work. The original aim was to provide even those who worked for just a few hours a week with entitlement to benefits. The minimum working hours which had to be declared, and on which contributions had to be paid for entitlement to a pension, was set at just 20 hours a month. The result has been that today many domestic workers declare only the minimum number of hours, and do undeclared work the rest of the time. Nevertheless, these contracts mean that workers can sue an employer in the event of a dispute, even if they originally agreed to work 'on the side', and this certainly constitutes greater protection.

In other countries (e.g. the United Kingdom and the Netherlands) domestic work by self-employed workers is for the most part unregulated and payment is usually cash-in-hand. However, this does not necessarily result in irregular work. In the Netherlands, for example, married women whose husbands work can earn up to NLG 8,380 annually without declaring the income, and they are covered by their husband's social security benefits. Many domestic workers find themselves precisely in this situation and work few hours a week, in line with the strong predilection for part-time work in the Dutch workforce.

Savarahm (Lyon, France)

Protecting workers from income fluctuation.

One example of good practice in worker protection in provider associations can be seen in *Savarahm*, based in Lyon, which minimises monthly income fluctuations for the whole staff by redistributing work. Other associations (*ADPAM* and *SMD*) include a certain number of days' paid leave on employees' payslips at the end of each month in which the volume of activity has been low.

It is not clear how far the existence of service agencies increases job security for workers in domestic cleaning. The agencies are of course required to declare the work and make social security payments, and to comply with any collective agreements. However, steady work and a regular income are not necessarily ensured by organisations of this kind.

Coping with stress

The organisation of work, and in particular the degree of autonomy and the amount of support given to workers, are further important aspects of job quality. In household services, many workers have some freedom to organise their own work. This also allows them (especially those who work with the elderly and children) to be quite creative. In fact, the work constantly poses new challenges that can be stimulating and a source of satisfaction for those with adequate skills.

On the other hand, many workers noted the physical and mental stress involved in working with families in the privacy of their own homes, with the complex needs of growing children, and with the special physical, psychological and economic vulnerability of the elderly receiving domiciliary care.

Working with the elderly involves both great physical effort – for example, when lifting clients – and psychological tension. The elderly often reject home help because it reminds them of how dependent they have become and because of the intrusion on their privacy, as shown in the following excerpts of interviews with home helps.

‘There are people who really need help but who don’t want anybody, so we are sent to them whether they like it or not, and it’s up to us to win their acceptance, and well, sometimes it’s a bit tough. I have one person out there, it must have taken me...five months, I think, [...] She used to knock things down but I wasn’t allowed to pick them up. So I stepped over them because that’s what she wanted. I would clean something, and the next day it would be dirtier than ever – not bad, eh? So one day, I said, ‘This can’t go on: I’m going to ask for a change’. And just then, that’s when she cracked. She became an absolute delight. They left me there because nobody else wanted to go. She would wait for me behind the door; afterwards, we would have tea and I’d get my little square of chocolate, but the whole thing was incredible.’

Q. ‘So you didn’t let her walk over you?’

A. ‘Oh well, that depends. I had no option but to play along, because I saw she could be violent at times too. Yes, she was violent, so I played along; I didn’t say a word. [...] In fact, behind that awful aggressiveness, there was terrible suffering. The point was that she was losing her sight. This was somebody who did lots of knitting and couldn’t manage to knit any more; she couldn’t read any more, although she was an educated woman. She was at her wits’ end, she couldn’t do a thing any more, and this frustration and suffering was all channelled into unbelievable aggressiveness.’

(Home help, France)

‘Imagine what it’s like holding an immobile old person and having to treat them like a child who doesn’t obey because they can’t.’

(Eldercare worker, Portugal)

In childcare services, working conditions are especially stressful for those who have to deal with a large number of children, especially childminders working in their own home. In addition, there are tensions in relation to parents, for example, having to deal with failure to pick up children on time, pay issues, educational practices and styles and planning time off.

For workers in childcare and eldercare services provided under a contract or on behalf of the government, a further source of stress is their role as the interface between clients, the organisation and a government bureaucracy that places numerous restrictions on the availability and utilisation of resources. Some workers providing domiciliary care find a conflict between meeting the needs of users and the need to contain the work within a limited, scheduled number of hours.

In the case of domestic cleaners, stress is linked not to caregiving but rather to the repetitiveness of the tasks to be performed and their similarity to those done in the worker's own home. In these conditions, some workers begin to doubt their personal abilities and lose self-esteem, deriding themselves as 'walking dusters, dish towels and brooms'.

In view of these conditions, it makes a big difference if workers have the psychological, professional and practical support of an organisation behind them, and it is workers employed individually by families (e.g. as nannies and domestic helps not hired through agencies) who find themselves most isolated.

However, not all workers with the backing of an organisation receive the support they need from advisors or supervisors, or have an opportunity to discuss job-related problems with co-workers. In these situations also therefore, burn-out is not uncommon. Some kinds of organisations in the various countries give more support to their workers than others. In some countries (e.g. France and Italy) it is especially in larger third sector organisations rather than in service agencies that the relationship with workers is most flexible, and here management structures are often kept to a minimum. In the United Kingdom, opportunities for contact and discussion with colleagues are better and more structured in public services than in private facilities. Some examples of good practice in supporting household service workers are given below.

META Social Cooperative (Rome, Italy)

Supporting the hard work of home helps.

This cooperative was set up in 1980 at the initiative of a group of people already working in the social sector. Within the service offering home care for the elderly, the 20 workers are divided into four teams who visit users in their homes on a shift basis. These teams are backed by a specialist team comprising a social worker, psychologist and administrative coordinator. Everybody works an average of 36 hours a week and cares for several users. This form of organisation allows a certain degree of flexibility and the possibility of informal adjustments to enable workers to meet any personal or family requirements, in addition to the application of contractual clauses concerning holidays, maternity and leaves of absence. Everyone – from psychologists and social workers to basic workers, who are home carers – is involved in a broad range of training activities, both internally (on-going training with team meetings, service meetings, supervision sessions) and externally (e.g. seminars on quality). The cooperative is involved in various forms of collaboration with the university and the school for social workers. Among other things, it serves as a training placement for psychologists and social workers).

Initielles Association (Toulouse, France)

Connecting owners of small businesses in personal household services.

The isolation of employees is recognised as a real problem by several French associations providing household services. The proposed solutions vary, but all of them seek to integrate women into a real or 'virtual' collective body. An association in Toulouse (*Initielles*), which is dedicated to the absorption of women into the active labour force by means of business start-ups, has tried to eliminate this isolation by launching a project to establish a meeting place in the arcade of a large shopping centre for a number of owners/managers of microbusinesses. From there, they can offer various services (ironing, for example) to the employees of the large companies in the surrounding area.

Savarahm (Lyon, France)

Staff meetings as a learning tool for workers.

The *Savarahm* association in Lyon organises compulsory staff meetings within working hours at fortnightly intervals. The meetings alternate between case updates and discussion groups on wider subjects with contributions from external speakers. These meetings are important occasions for the employees, enabling them to iron out problems and to discuss matters relating to carer/client relations. This part of the work cycle is designed to foster cooperation and exchanges of knowledge.

Qualifications systems and vocational training

Qualifications

Childcare is the field where qualification systems and professional training are most developed in all the countries. Here too, however, there is a divide between a qualified and professional group of educators, who received their training before they got a job, and a large group of unskilled carers, home helps and childminders who have no opportunity for career advancement in the field, unless they obtain more training (OECD, 1997). France has one of the highest standards of qualifications for childcare services. In other countries – e.g. in Italy, as well as in the Netherlands, where a well-established qualifications system has been set up – there are recognised qualifications for nursery nursing and for social education, which covers work with disadvantaged groups. In the United Kingdom, which traditionally lacks centralised regulation of access to the childcare professions, a national framework for qualifications and training in the sector is in the process of being developed. In Austria, an interesting effort is underway to set standards for the childminder profession (see below). In the UK, too, childminders must undergo a basic training programme before they can register with the authorities (OECD, 1997). In Portugal, the new Amas 2000 programme (Childminders 2000) is designed to give training to informal and unregistered childminders. This programme also provides funds to equip childminders' homes for childcare purposes.



Cinderella project – Verein Initiative Pflegeeltern (Vienna, Austria)

Qualifications for childminders.

Cinderella is an employment and qualification project forming part of the EU Community initiative, 'Employment Now'. An Austrian sponsorship consortium (*Eltern für Kinder*) was entrusted with the execution of the project. This consortium brings together non-profit organisations of childminders and foster parents from Vienna and some other Austrian Provinces. The aim is to develop a common solution for two crucial issues: the creation of jobs for women with training and the provision of qualified childcare.

The target group consists of women with childcare responsibilities who want to take a job or return to work. *Cinderella* offers them flexible, family-friendly and needs-oriented childcare places (so that the parents can concentrate on their jobs) and/or qualified training in childcare (childminding, fostering), with prospects for employment with a private non-profit organisation.

The aims are to develop and establish in law a professional profile with nationwide validity for the occupation of 'childminder' (or with the job title of 'family educator'), and corresponding minimum standards of vocational training for childcare in the family environment. The training programme is organised in modules which are comparable to related training courses (for social educators, family helps, elder helps), and which facilitate mutual recognition of these courses and transfer to them. This gives women long-term prospects in the labour market.

Cinderella was selected by the European Commission as a model for the reconciliation of work and family life, and has been adopted for inclusion in the National Action Plan (NAP) for Employment. A bill drafted by *Cinderella* for legislation to integrate the professional profile of childminders into the range of the social service professions in Austria is before Parliament.

Negotiations have started with the trade unions on collective agreement coverage. A panel of experts on quality assurance in childcare has drafted a bill for Austria-wide legislation on childcare. The facilities offered by *Cinderella* are targeted on a gender-neutral basis at childminders and foster parents, both men and women. The training provided has been mainly taken up by women, however, and the participation of men is minimal (two foster fathers are employed).

In the domiciliary care of the elderly, too, specific qualifications can be obtained through professional training courses (e.g. the home carer diploma in Italy and the *Certificat d'Aptitude aux Fonctions d'Aide à Domicile* in France) in most countries, but these are by no means essential for gaining a job. In this sector, too, new qualifications systems are being developed. In the United Kingdom, for example, a number of professional training programmes seek to build the skills needed by eldercare workers. Norway has developed a practical nursing training programme for those already working in the home care sector. In Finland, ten separate professional qualifications in the social and health sector were combined into a single training programme for practical nurses. A distinctive aspect of this programme, which resembles a similar one in the Netherlands, is its objective of qualifying workers so that they can work in different sectors (e.g. providing care in institutions and communities), thus providing mobility among the various social services professions (OECD, 1997).

No qualifications are needed to find work in the domestic cleaning sector. Nevertheless, this does not mean that qualifications in this sector do not exist, rather that qualifications frameworks are not yet set up. Pilot projects aimed at qualifying domestic helps have been

implemented in some countries. The case presented below shows how minimum training modules can be introduced even in a field where on-the-job training is the main source of qualification.

Volkshilfe Oberösterreich – Hausliche Hilfe Project (Linz, Austria)

Providing minimum qualifications and social security to domestic helps.

The project *Häusliche Hilfe*, launched in September 1997, contributes to the creation of jobs, in a sector dominated by undeclared work, through the provision of a range of household services. The aim is to place or resettle unemployed persons or emergency assistance claimants in regular jobs by way of fixed-term employment and qualification. In its essentials the project is sponsored by the Upper Austrian welfare organisations, *Volkshilfe Oberösterreich* and *Oberösterreich Hilfswerk*. The special advantage of this project for the participants lies, on the one hand, in the social and insurance-related protection it offers, and on the other, in a basic qualification which constitutes a first module for (subsequent) on-the-job training as a home help. At the end of the project the participants thus have several employment options open to them, ranging from work in the ambulatory care of the elderly to jobs with cleaning firms or in private households.

Quality standards

Whether qualifications should become a requirement for the job needs to be seen in the context of the trend towards adopting quality assurance systems which appears in all the countries. The standards thus being set often include minimum qualifications for personnel.

In childcare, all countries have minimum requirements for setting up services, which statutory authorities periodically check through inspections. In some countries, standards are checked not just in nurseries and crèches but also in playgroups and out-of-school clubs (e.g. Germany and the United Kingdom), as well as in the case of childminders (e.g. in Portugal and the UK). Some standards, especially those applied to premises, have posed a problem for the expansion of childcare services (e.g. in the UK and Italy).

In the domiciliary care of the elderly, the agencies that provide services are also subject to periodic checks. This occurs, for example, in the United Kingdom, where registered organisations are inspected annually by local authority social services. In Italy, some quality standards are included in the technical specifications of conventions between local authorities and the organisations providing home care services; in recent months, an effort has been made to give more weight to quality than to price in evaluating tenders from organisations bidding for competitive contracts.²⁶

Other countries provide for accreditation at different levels by public authorities. For example in France, there are two types of approval for enterprises and associations: ‘basic approval’ for those who provide services that do not involve the care of children under the age of three or care of the elderly and disabled; and ‘quality approval’ for those who do work in these fields.

²⁶ It should be remembered that while they are not covered in this study, the quality of residential services for the elderly is a difficult issue in many countries.



In addition, more voluntary quality certifications are emerging. For example, in the Netherlands in 1999, representatives from business, unions, parents' groups and service providers established a foundation that will set quality standards for childcare centres and will issue a 'quality mark' to those services that submit to checks. In Italy, too, the Social Affairs Department is following the route of promoting quality in the social services by encouraging peer review among organisations.

To foster the more systematic application of quality standards in services, some countries (e.g. Austria and Germany) have started to apply quality management methods to childcare services. An attempt has even been made to set quality standards in household cleaning. As an example, in Germany, an association of housewives proposed a checklist to ensure that cleaning was being performed properly (table 5) and this received a favourable response from agencies. In general, however, these efforts do not seem to have had a major impact.

Table 5 Extract from inspection form for cleaning services proposed by housewives' association (Germany)

Checklist of surfaces, furnishings and fittings to be cleaned	
01	Bath, floors and skirting boards (always the last cleaning job).
02	Remove and shake mats. Where appropriate, or if very stained, wash.
03	Remove the worst dirt, pay special attention to carpet-lice, sand and hair, especially in corners (hoover rather than sweep).
04	Choose different cleaning methods depending on the type of floor or the customer's wishes, e.g. use damp or wet cloths for tiles.
05	Clean corners particularly carefully. Where appropriate clean by hand and with a microfibre cloth.
06	Wipe skirting boards and the upper edges of tiles with a damp cloth.
07	Remove traces of wiping; dry surfaces afterwards.
08	Replace cleaned mats (dry those that have been washed).
Name of firm	
Contract terms	

Source: Seebon, 'Zukunft im Zentrum', 1999:83.

Continuing education

Since in many services workers often start work without specific qualifications, training on the job assumes special importance. Access to continuing education now seems to be a distinguishing feature of better-quality jobs in family services.

In general, training is handled fairly systematically in the fields of childcare and eldercare. The ways in which it is provided range from updating courses and workshops on specific topics to supervision by the organisation's more qualified workers. Public structures and larger third sector organisations offer more of these opportunities than private for-profit and smaller third sector organisations.

One way in which organisations with fewer resources gain access to training is by forming partnerships with job creation programmes that provide training, as in the two following examples.

Bons Dias Teaching Cooperative (Cascais, Portugal)

Using job creation programmes combined with intensive training to qualify childcare staff

An innovative example in training in the area of childcare provision is the *Bons Dias* Teaching Cooperative set up in 1987 to respond to the need felt by a group of residents. It began as an after-school centre accommodating 40 children. By means of an IEPF employment support programme, the cooperative was formed as a local employment initiative and created 10 jobs.

At present, it has a day nursery, a crèche, a kindergarten, a play centre and a food support programme for underprivileged families. The development of social activities allowed a protocol to be signed with the Cascais Regional Social Security Centre. The cooperative's activities encompass various components of the education process in addition to those already mentioned; in particular, it provides training for teachers, instructors and school helpers.

It also provides psychological, educational and therapeutic observation and monitoring services for children and adolescents. This institution can also be seen as innovative because of the type of resources used in its management, mainly in staff recruitment. In the first stage, it adopted the LEI programme, creating 10 jobs; in the second, it employed another five workers, including three education specialists, by means of other vocational start-up programmes – *Ocupação de Tempos Livres para Jovens* (Leisure Activities for Young People) and *Apoio a Trabalhadores Desempregados e Coopemprego* (Support for Unemployed Workers and Job Sharing).

Forty people currently work in the cooperative, including staff, specialists and supervisory staff. All sections have waiting lists, though they are not very long compared to those in other case studies. Personnel recruitment is an 'extremely stringent' process. Vocational training courses, normally lasting nine months, are used for those functions where more advanced training is necessary. A one-week unpaid training course is required for less skilled functions. If the applicant has the right profile, a six-month contract is provided. Almost all the staff have tenured contracts, but fixed-term contracts and services contracts also exist. Both the education specialists and the less qualified staff have to undergo regular training. Vocational training is, moreover, another service the cooperative provides to the community. The institution has prepared vocational training courses for adolescents at risk and for young people through the *Integrar* project.

SMD (Lyon, France)

Partnership between associations to ensure training to employees.

The SMD (Service de maintien à domicile) association in Lyon tries to devise training plans for the employees of its homecare agency service, who rarely benefit from that opportunity. Since the available funding was insufficient, SMD developed a partnership arrangement with another local organisation (ARPEJ) in order to set up a training programme financed by the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council. The programme is organised on a very ad hoc basis (only one session has been organised to date) and depends on highly irregular injections of funding. The administrative team, however, considers that staff training is an indispensable condition of higher service quality.



Career prospects

Overall, career prospects are rather limited in all three of the household services sectors studied.

Childcare

Career prospects are better in childcare than in the other sectors. However, some studies have identified obstacles to career advancement in this field too: the fact that the work is performed in small premises or at home; the existence of a bewildering range of qualifications for workers who care for children of different ages (e.g. crèche workers, nursery school teachers, primary school teachers), which prevents mobility between them; and the absence of any connection, from the standpoint of training and finding jobs, between jobs in the childcare sector and in other social and educational services. It has been suggested that a more integrated approach to the provision of services is essentially linked to a more integrated approach to the training of workers (OECD, 1997). For example, there are some interesting experiments (in some Scandinavian countries and even in other countries, including Italy) in which family counselling and mediation services are offered through childcare facilities.

In addition, the study found examples of workers building their own career paths, combining work, institutional training and vocational training in the childcare sector. One example was a female psychology student who worked as a babysitter, later starting to work part-time in an out-of-school club and subsequently applying for a job in a public crèche. Such efforts need to be studied and encouraged to enable a career path for motivated young workers to be properly established.

Some workers, however, (especially among childminders and nannies) have low career expectations because of their mature age, because they see the job as a stop-gap while they look for better employment elsewhere, or because they value other aspects of the job (e.g. the option of working a limited number of hours a week).

Eldercare

In eldercare, the low level of qualifications and the structural characteristics – especially the small size – of the organisations involved mean that career prospects are even worse. In some countries (such as France) some progress has been made in recognising seniority in setting wages. However, even in France, the trend toward more individualised employment has combined with the differentiation of work-sites to fragment already quite limited career paths and increase the tendency toward two-track employment structures (OECD, 1997). Seniority, for example, is only recognised when acquired with the same employer; thus, people who work for many years but for different families are not given due recognition for their experience.

In the case of home helps, improved career prospects might lie in higher qualifications in the healthcare field and in social services. Many workers can gain skills in this area through continuing education, but at present this is not easy. In most countries, jobs as nurses and social workers require many years of training, which only young and very motivated workers will

tolerate. These workers are just a fraction of those working in eldercare. Moreover, nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists, and social workers, who are already pursuing their own professional recognition in the context of a predominant medical profession, have an obvious incentive to raise entry barriers. This leaves management and coordination responsibilities as the only career prospect currently open to workers (and here, too, they must compete with psychologists, social workers and healthcare workers). It is perhaps worth adding that the third sector, with its growing demand for skills in management, public relations, fund raising, etc., offers particularly promising opportunities.

Domestic Cleaning

In the domestic cleaning sector, career prospects are dismal in all the countries studied. Workers seem to be aware of this and have correspondingly low expectations. However, some modest attempts to establish something akin to a ‘career’ were found. For example, a multinational franchise company (already mentioned in Chapter 3) had created the positions of ‘head cleaner’ and ‘assistant cleaner’ in their work teams.

Job satisfaction

At least four factors influence the overall job satisfaction of workers in household services: the intrinsic aspects of the job (e.g. relationships with children and the elderly, and the performance of domestic tasks); extrinsic aspects (e.g. hours, pay and contractual conditions); subjective career aspirations; and the level of workers’ qualifications.

In childcare services, there is usually a high level of satisfaction with the intrinsic elements of the job: working with children is considered rewarding and interesting. However, satisfaction is often low with regard to the extrinsic elements. The more qualified workers especially think they are underpaid, given their skills.

In domestic cleaning, satisfaction with the intrinsic aspects of the job inevitably tends to be low. However, some workers are satisfied with extrinsic aspects like the freedom to set their own timetable or being able to work close to home. This is more the case in countries like the Netherlands, where domestic workers work fewer hours, than in those like Italy and Portugal, where workers tend to have more jobs in distant locations. Satisfaction with the wage is average: pay is not high but many workers are unskilled and do not have high expectations.

‘I like it when I’m doing something like cooking or cleaning, but I don’t like taking the old lady out in her wheelchair, especially when she stops to chat and I have to wait around with nothing to do.

I enjoy going shopping, because it gives me a chance to have a little stroll around and enjoy the fresh air, and I can phone my wife from a call-box. I don’t like washing the windows, cleaning the bathrooms and dusting all the knick-knacks. My employer doesn’t like me using the vacuum cleaner, so I have to do everything by hand. And I don’t like taking the dog for a walk, because I have to do it during my hour off.’

(Domestic help, Rome).



In the domiciliary care of the elderly, the situation is harder to assess. Satisfaction with intrinsic aspects of the job varies according to workers' endurance capacity and how motivated they are. Some consider relationships with the elderly extremely gratifying.

'I like the fact that my work is truly about people. It's hard, too, but it gives you so much satisfaction, even if you don't always manage to do everything as well as you'd like. It gives you an awareness of some very diverse situations, enables you to do something about situations that nobody is tackling. For example, everyone talks about elderly people as 'poor things', but they don't do anything about it.'

(Home care assistant, Rome)

'The elderly are always appreciative of what you do, some are more like friends now, and you feel quite committed to them. It's good to give service to the elderly.'

(Home support worker, Leeds)

Other workers find the job too exhausting because of the physical exertion, problems relating to older people with difficult personalities, exposure to marginalisation and situations of particular poverty, tensions with families and so on. As regards extrinsic aspects, satisfaction tends to be fairly low. Overall, we found it to be higher in the United Kingdom, Italy and Finland; relatively high in Austria; and lower in France and Germany.

In the domestic cleaning and domiciliary care sectors, the French report identified a relationship between current job satisfaction and previous career patterns. While young women in their first job and women who had stopped work for long periods to take care of a family (and who thus give more importance to the family than to work) were generally satisfied, women who have always worked tended to be dissatisfied.

A further point is that job satisfaction tends to be higher in the third sector despite the pay, which is often lower than in the public sector for the same work. In one survey of a sample of day care services for children in Sweden, between 68.3% and 85.5% of workers (depending on the type of enterprise – parents' cooperatives, workers' cooperatives or volunteer organisations) stated that they preferred to work in a social enterprise than in a municipal service. In an Italian study also, which interviewed workers in third sector enterprises, job satisfaction was higher on average in the third sector than in the public or for-profit private sector for 11 out of the 15 aspects which interviewees were asked to assess (Borzaga, Olabe and Greffe, 1999).

In general, what workers would like from their jobs in every country is higher pay and more recognition of the social and professional value of their work.

'Home carers should have more status; instead, because it is a relatively new profession, they tend to be seen as a kind of domestic help.'

(Home care assistant, Rome).

For those who work few hours a week and do not have set hours, more certainty about working hours would also be desirable, both for organising their personal lives and for security about their income.

Initiatives to improve working conditions

Efforts to improve working conditions in household services are now under way through organisations that provide services (especially larger ones and those in the third sector and their umbrella organisations) and through sectoral trade unions, which to a varying extent in the different countries, are working to negotiate better wages and promote the development of professional qualification systems, as well as to conclude collective agreements.

- In Italy, for example, trade unions have established collective agreements for workers in the non-profit sector, and support the introduction of tax deductions for the expense of engaging household help, in order to encourage the regularising of undeclared work;
- In Austria, the professional childminders' association is working to achieve a uniform pay scale for this category of worker, and various provider associations are establishing collective agreements. Some, including non-profit organisations, are also working with the government to implement pilot projects with above-average working conditions and training opportunities.
- In Portugal, there are provider organisations that pay their workers more; or organise the work to meet employees' family needs; or provide training.
- In the Netherlands, the unions have negotiated qualifications requirements, higher wages and smaller groups of children for workers in childcare centres.
- In France, as we have already seen, some provider and agency associations have introduced innovative practices to improve the quality of work.
- In the United Kingdom, campaigns have been organised for fair working conditions, access to training and career development. In the cleaning sector, issues of health and safety at work have been raised, and efforts made to revise the qualifications system. The Department of Health has established a 'Fair Access to Care' Task Force, concerned with benchmarking and evaluating performance and eligibility criteria for care workers. In childcare, organisations like the Kids' Club Network have assisted in creating a framework of qualifications.
- In Germany, the unions have negotiated with employers a system of counting hours, agreeing that workers declare the actual number of hours worked instead of using the theoretical number of hours assigned to that job.

However, no country was found to have implemented public policies at national level designed to systematically improve working conditions in these jobs across the entire household services sector.

The professionalisation dilemma

It can be seen from the above that a key issue for improving working conditions in household services is whether or not the occupations in the sector should be made more professional,



through greater formalisation of qualifications, more training, higher entry standards and higher wages. This would have both advantages and disadvantages.

The advantages include:

- more social recognition of caregiving and domestic work;
- the legitimisation of a higher hourly wage, thus reducing pressure on workers to work long hours; and
- better-quality guarantees for users.

The disadvantages might include:

- restricted access to these occupations, which would compromise the plan to use them to create jobs even for less qualified workers and would leave those workers with no option but to work in the black market; and
- higher labour costs, which could damage the growth of entrepreneurship in this field, increase prices and make it even harder to transform potential demand into real demand.

An analysis of the current situation for workers, however, reveals a number of options that could help balance these various aspects. One of these is to improve working conditions in ways that would not entail a substantial increase in the cost of services, such as giving workers access to the support of an organisation, participation in a communications network and continuing education. Here, the experience of the third sector – in which workers’ job satisfaction is often high, even with relatively low wages – could be a good model. In this chapter, several examples have been provided of good practices that can be replicated.

Another possibility is to encourage the development of career paths from a minimum to a maximum level of qualification, encouraging, in particular, upward mobility from one job to another and from one household services sub-sector to another, and to support this advancement with regular training that is easily accessible to workers.

A third way could be to promote entrepreneurship through training in management, marketing, fund-raising and the like. On the one hand, this would increase the job qualifications of those who want to create household services enterprises; on the other, it would make it easier to transform potential demand into real demand and therefore to create new jobs.



Chapter 6

Reconciling work, family life and community activity

This chapter focuses on the reconciliation between work and other spheres of life as it is currently experienced by household service workers. A number of categories of workers are identified who are at a risk from work/family conflict, and possible measures are suggested to improve their situation.

Reconciliation as an emerging issue

Household services represent an important tool in terms of a critically important issue in European lifestyles: the relationship between work and other spheres of human life. European citizens' increased expectations as regards quality of life have given rise to a growing need to reconcile work with family life and with social and community activities. This issue concerns all workers, of course: both women and men. However, it has a different meaning for the two sexes. The imbalance in family responsibilities between women and men is such that while men, once outside work, can often gain satisfaction from family life, or alternatively spend their time in other activities related to community and civic life or leisure, most women spend additional time, varying from two and a half to five hours, working in their second, unpaid job – housework – which, far from giving satisfaction, limits their opportunities for social activities. Overstated, perhaps, but this is the picture which emerges from time-use surveys.²⁷ To speak of reconciling work and family life, then, can be misleading: for women, it means making two different kinds of work compatible, while for men, it means reconciling two inherently different spheres of life. This means that it is important to focus not just on reconciling work and family life, but on reconciling work and other spheres of life.

²⁷ For a recent discussion of the results of such surveys, see 'The Future of Work in Europe: Gendered Patterns of Time Use.' (European Commission, *Gender Use of Time. Three European Studies*, 2000f).

Reconciliation policies: risks and constraints

Since the 1980s, the EU has developed a set of policies specifically aimed at reconciliation. Four types of measures have been identified to enable men and women to reconcile their occupational, family and childrearing responsibilities: childcare services; leave arrangements for employed parents; making the environment, structure and organisation of the workplace responsive to the needs of workers with children; and encouraging increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children.²⁸ With an ageing population, increasing emphasis is also being placed on eldercare, although efforts are less developed here than in childcare (European Commission, 2000b²⁹). Moreover, the work/family issue has been broadened to include those without children or dependent older relatives, as well as ‘non-traditional’ households, such as gay couples, domestic partners and grandparents raising grandchildren. There is also increasing interest in the relationship between employment and communities, and in the community involvement of women and men, as increased emphasis on paid employment has decreased citizen participation in community life (European Commission, 1999a).

National governments are responding to this agenda with a range of family-friendly policies,³⁰ and workplace measures are also being experimented with by the more progressive employers – for instance, policies fostering an enabling environment, policies against discrimination, policies in favour of career development and positive action.

In most cases, these policies and workplace measures have been directed at reducing the burden of work (introducing flexible work schedules, temporary and part-time work, work at home, and parental leave and permits) rather than reducing the burden of care activities by facilitating access, for instance, to already existing childcare or eldercare facilities, or by creating childcare services in the workplace. Measures based on the reduction of working hours alone, without any changes at organisational level, do not necessarily help women who wish to invest in their career; indeed, they can have negative effects, since men are still able to work long hours. More generally, measures which encourage parents to take long periods of leave (by making such leave paid) have often resulted in decreased female participation.

In France, for instance, provisions such as the parental education allowance instituted in 1994, and the child-rearing allowance, were found to induce parents (normally mothers) to provide their household services themselves, opting out of the labour market. In Austria, the unintended negative effects that generous parental leave and caregiving allowances are having on women’s entry or re-entry to the labour market is the subject of debate.

In several countries, however, policies have sought to promote reconciliation by reducing the burden of care work through the development of household services. The German government,

²⁸ Council Recommendation on Childcare, 1992.

²⁹ Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union 1999 (European Commission, 2000d).

³⁰ For a recent review of such measures, see the Joint Report of the ‘Gender and Employment’ and ‘Gender and Law’ Groups of Experts, *Care in Europe* (European Commission, September 1998c).



for example, has taken steps to improve childcare facilities outside the family by means of legislation which entitles parents to enrol their children in nursery schools and provides social security insurance. The 'Women and Work' programme is designed to help reconcile family and work by making paid parental leave more flexible, improving childcare provision, and initiating various other campaigns.

In the Netherlands, improving childcare services is seen as an important means of promoting reconciliation between work and family. Numerous organisations, from the Equal Opportunities Council to the Family Council, have been urging the government since 1982 to acknowledge childcare as a basic benefit. It took seven years, however, for the government to decide to subsidise it through the Child Care Incentive. This was done in response to growing demand and to the fact that the alternative, paid parental leave, is still unavailable in most business sectors. Recently, plans were laid for the Basic Childcare Provision Act, giving any parent, irrespective of income, a statutory right to childcare and out-of-school care.

In Austria, efforts have been made to secure an expansion of childcare institutions. In 1997-1998 the Federal Government spent 43,6 million EUR for this purpose, and the Provinces matched the funding; 18,800 new care places were created. In addition, the Public Employment Service supports the institutional care of children by providing a childcare grant.

In the United Kingdom, the development of family-friendly employment is now on the government agenda, and a number of initiatives in the childcare and eldercare fields have been explicitly identified to achieve this. Household services are seen as essential underpinnings of family-friendly employment policies, and the National Childcare Strategy plays a very important role in this.

Domestic and care responsibilities of household services workers

As shown in Chapter 4, household services represents a very segregated segment of the labour market, with women dominating. Thus, although availing of household services may offer employed women a way of reconciling work and other spheres of life, this may be at the expense of other women, who work in these services. For this reason the present study concerned itself from the start with the compatibility of work in household services with the family life of workers and their involvement in any volunteer activities in the community.

The need for reconciliation varies according to the age and family status of workers. Systematic data on the composition of the workforce in household services according to age or family status in the various countries were not available. However, the information collected through key informants and interviews with workers, as well as other studies, showed that childcare workers in specialist facilities tend to be younger, while childminders working in their own homes are usually older. In eldercare, workers in some countries are mostly middle-aged, while in others they are mostly aged between 30 and 40. In organisations providing childcare (such as crèches and out-of-school clubs) and in domiciliary care for the elderly, many of the women interviewed

had no children or had grown-up children; most of the childminders, on the other hand, had dependent children of their own. A substantial number of domestic cleaners had small children.

Work and family

The first general observation which can be made is that work in household services presents no greater obstacles to reconciling work and family life than any other employment sector. Indeed, sometimes it is chosen precisely because of the ease with which the two can be reconciled. This is especially true for part-time workers, for some of whom the job is merely an extension of their everyday family life.

‘I look after children two days a week. The mother brings the two children to me in the morning, and the father, who is usually finished by half-past four, picks them up. My own children are already at primary school; it is just round the corner so they can go on their own. My children come home at lunch-time and we all eat together. It works very well.’

(Childminder, The Netherlands)

In childcare services, regular daytime hours are the rule, and many workers have reduced hours. Some workers are allowed to bring their own children to the workplace (in nurseries) or to care for them while they are caring for their clients’ children in their own home (in the case of childminders), which solves the childcare problem for mothers.

‘I would far rather be working with children than sitting behind a supermarket till. That’s why I decided to train for this. I enjoy the work and I hope to do it for a few more years yet. I think it is a job you can combine with having your own children. You can also work part-time in a crèche, and you can take your own child there. That is what the boss does.’

(Young nursery nurse, The Netherlands)

Social and Parish Centre (Loures, Portugal)

Facilitating the reconciliation of the staff’s work/family life.

This Social and Parish Centre was established on the initiative of the parish in 1967, when two kindergartens and a crèche were created to overcome the municipality’s shortage of such facilities. In addition to users’ monthly fees, calculated according to the household’s income, this establishment is financed both by the parish itself and by the Department of Social Security. The person with overall responsibility is the parish priest, who chairs a board composed of individuals who do voluntary work. The administration normally consists of people who have or who once had some relationship with the institution, and who generally carry out administrative or legal functions on an unpaid basis. One factor contributing to making the Centre an example of good practice is the concern demonstrated by management to facilitate the reconciliation of the staff’s work and family life, e.g. allowing workers to place their own relatives in the establishment, both the elderly and children.

The home care manager explains that her elderly father can use the Centre, making it much easier for her to pursue her professional activity, and since the management allows flexitime, she can take care of her mother at home when necessary. Another member of staff says that having her son in the Centre’s nursery is ‘a great help’.

Workers' needs are treated with greater sensitivity in the informal and community atmosphere of some third-sector services than in other employment. An example is the Proxim'Service association in Lyon, which allocates working hours on the basis of employees' requests and the proximity of their homes, and where the coordinator does not penalise employees who turn down a contract on the grounds that the proposed timetable is incompatible with their family responsibilities. Another example of informal adjustment to workers' needs is presented in the box on the previous page.

In domiciliary eldercare, and also in domestic cleaning, some workers are able to choose the number of working hours and schedule which best suits their own family needs.

In the catering sector, some employment projects which explicitly addressed the issue of reconciliation were found. In the following example single mothers were the target group, and here it was considered essential for the success of the initiative to take account of their family commitments.

Zenit Restaurant and Catering Services (Berlin, Germany)

Zenit is a training and employment establishment run by the social services association, *Zukunftsbau GmbH*. This association offers services in the following areas: qualifications and training; the redevelopment and renting out of cheap accommodation; the housing of young people, children and women; and social education work with these clients. The association runs the Zenit restaurant and catering service. Single mothers in particular receive training in the catering industry in what is called a 'real' firm (as opposed to a mock one), and can therefore look forward to an income and job prospects.

The special services offered to these women are:

- individually adjusted working hours;
- transport services at night;
- social counselling and settlement of debts;
- the chance to work in a women-only undertaking;
- childcare facilities provided by the firm.

What can be regarded as particularly innovative here is the original combination of the project's aims of creating work and training, providing assistance to single mothers and the provision of the appropriate counselling.

The examples we have given do not, however, mean that reconciliation problems do not exist for household services workers. While the cases cited above which demonstrate employers' sensitivity were not isolated examples, they cannot be generalised to apply to all employment situations. Indeed, the study identified some groups of workers particularly at risk from work/family life conflict. Examples are:

- Workers who work night shifts.
- Home helps with dependent children who are forced to work long hours in order to earn a living wage.
- Domestic helps who for financial reasons hold several jobs with different employers, giving a very long and tiring working day, especially when commuting time is included. An example was the case of a 32-year-old Peruvian woman working in Italy, who lives with her partner and a young son who attends a nursery, and who works 56 hours a week. She told the interviewer, 'I don't manage to do the chores at home because I get back too late. I argue with my partner because he works until midnight and would like me to work until just two or three in the afternoon.'

(The last two categories illustrate that it is precisely those workers who need more time to take care of their families who lack it.)

- Household workers who live in the home of their employer (and who thus may have to live apart from their family – a particularly difficult situation which applies most often to immigrant workers).
- Entrepreneurs and managers who, because of their greater work responsibilities, must dedicate more time to work. One such person from a private agency in the UK said, 'Don't run your own business! But I cope because I do not have ties or family responsibilities.'
- Workers in positions of great responsibility towards clients and their needs (because of the emotional demands of the job).

In the case of the second and third category, we see that it is precisely those workers who need more time to take care of their families who lack it.

Various strategies have been adopted by household services workers to solve the problem of needing to care for a family. In Italy and Portugal, an extended family is a definite asset, especially mothers or mothers-in-law who babysit small children. In all countries, some workers avail themselves of the range of services available (childminders and nurseries); however, their income is often too low to access such services.

Aside from organisations that manage childcare services and provide such services to their own employees, employers are often small and medium-sized enterprises which lack the capacity to open their own crèche or nursery. The availability of reasonably priced services in the locality is therefore of the utmost importance to these workers.

Lastly, we should note that (the youngest women apart) partners' support in caring for families and doing household chores is rather limited, and most of the time responsibility rests entirely on the shoulders of the working women. Nevertheless, some cases were found where women – especially young women – having begun to do domestic work for pay, changed their attitude towards their own housework.

'It's true that I try to keep my flat clean, but since I've been a home help, specially in the weeks when I do a lot of it, I come back home in the evenings, and I don't feel like cleaning and tidying. I'll tell you that honestly, and I must say I'm sorry for those people who have children and have to



clean up their house when they get home and have to look after their children. It's really not an easy job, and I honestly do think now that [...] my boyfriend started to do the dishes because I just didn't feel like it. I'd been working, sweeping, dusting, doing the dishes, cleaning bathrooms and so on. You come back home in the evening, and you just want to do nothing, you know, to do something else, to go out for a walk.'

(Home help, aged 25, France)

'...when I work with my clients, they appreciate my work, but when I first started, I'd get home and do my housework here and they had no appreciation at all. I mean there was no point in doing all these things. The place was just as dirty the next day; it was as if I hadn't done anything. So I decided not to do it from then on. That was it, that's the reason, because at home the children and my husband have no appreciation.'

(Home help, aged 31, France).

Workers' ideas on measures that would help them reconcile work and family life vary. The following suggestions were made:

- changes in working hours, meaning shorter hours or flexitime;
- affordable local childcare services;
- informal arrangements with their own employment, e.g. being allowed to bring their children to work with them;
- working nearer home and having adequate transportation; and
- more cooperation from family members.

Some changes that might have an indirect influence could be added to these – such as a higher hourly wage which would save many workers from having to work such long hours.

Work and volunteer activities

In some countries (e.g. Italy, Germany and Finland) we came across workers who at some point in their lives had done volunteer work alongside paid work in the household services sector. People who work in care services are often especially sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups, and this may explain the high level of motivation found even where working conditions were difficult. Of course in the third sector, many household services enterprises were originally established by volunteer organisations, and retain links with them (see Chapter 3).

Some workers find they are able to continue their volunteer activities, while others are forced to stop, usually because of a lack of time and energy. In Italy, for example, numerous home helps interviewed once worked with elderly, disabled and disadvantaged people in their neighbourhood, both in organisations and on their own initiative. Some still do this kind of volunteer work, while others have had to stop because of their long working hours. One woman who works 46 hours a week, for example, said she was too tired and stressed to continue working as a volunteer.

In Finland, some home helps are also members of women's organisations, like the Martha Association and the Farm and Household Women's Association. In these organisations they receive training that is also useful in their career, and they publicise home help services.

Some workers in Germany, especially those in occupations requiring higher qualifications, took on volunteer duties (for example, on the advisory committee of the Alzheimer's Association) in addition to their own work, even though they had their own families to care for.

Some workers saw a synergy between voluntary and professional work in household services. For example, in Italy two nannies who did voluntary work with children felt there was a positive relationship between their voluntary activities and their decision to work in childcare; while an interviewee from Ecuador said that the fact that he had worked as a volunteer in a nursing home in his homeland had raised his awareness of the problem of elderly people abandoned by their families.

Reconciliation measures

In response to some of the problems mentioned above, and to the suggestions made by workers, we can identify some measures that might improve the reconciliation of work, family life and social activities for people working in household services.

The first set of measures concerns working hours.

- Workers' pay might be increased so that they do not have to work an excessive number of hours or do several jobs simultaneously.
- More regular working hours could be encouraged, and the planning of workloads in advance and in agreement with workers promoted.

A second set of measures concerns family-friendly policies. Policies need to be capable of being implemented in small and medium-sized enterprises, with flexible services provided to meet consumers' needs. Thus, in addition to the arrangements put in place through collective agreements (e.g. maternity leave and parental leave), a way of exploiting the flexibility inherent in the 'social' culture typical of many services needs to be found. For example:

- experiments with flexitime might be undertaken;
- enterprises in the household services sector (particularly management) could be encouraged to make informal arrangements to meet workers' needs; and
- solutions could be found to rationalise the travel and commuting arrangements of workers working in several different places during the same day.

The third set of measures entails reducing the mental and physical stress that saps the energies that would otherwise go into family and volunteer work. Thus, employers and social partners should:



- pay special attention to those who work night shifts, allowing them adequate means of recuperating;
- increase psychological and practical support for workers to prevent the stress from damaging the quality of family life; and
- wherever possible, promote the use of new technologies to lighten the load of household services work.

Finally, the fourth set of measures concerns actions which are not directly related to household services workers, but which could be of great help to them, such as:

- promoting the establishment of affordable childcare and eldercare services, or encouraging enterprises to collaborate in establishing private non profit-making services managed collectively by workers; and
- promoting the sharing of responsibility for domestic and care work between women and men.



Chapter 7

How national experiences and policies differ and converge

This chapter focuses on the main differences in the way the various countries approach household services. Many differences are mainly attributable to time lags – and may reduce in the future with Europe-wide policies. However, some indicate different responses to the challenges posed by the social trends affecting the development of household services.

Different national approaches

In earlier chapters, we have described the situation in household services as regards job creation and working conditions in different sub-sectors, as well as the gender and equal opportunities' issues. Those chapters highlighted major trends, noting that specific national differences exist within a framework of substantial convergence, often as a result of European policies. Some of the differences found can be restated here. Among other things, they concern the scope for additional employment in the various sub-sectors of household services, the role played by the public sector, the private sector and the third sector in supplying services, and the wider context of the conditions in which the work is performed.

Scope for additional employment in childcare

There is a difference between countries like Finland – which has had extensive public provision of childcare services for many years, and where unsatisfied demand is therefore low – and most of the other countries, where significant demand still exists.

Scope for additional employment in eldercare

In several countries, notably the Netherlands, the scope for employment growth seems lower than elsewhere. This is mainly due to limited demand for new services because a highly developed

network of residential facilities already exists. The new demand being created is easily absorbed by existing enterprises and institutions, and, as documented in studies of the localities of Purmerend and Zaanstad, does not engender new businesses. Moreover, needs for assistance, here as in other countries, are satisfied in part by volunteer work.

Scope for additional employment in domestic cleaning

In most countries employment in this sector increased (although measurement is affected by widespread undeclared work). In some (e.g. Germany, Finland) experiments with subsidies to stimulate demand have produced disappointing results, while in others (e.g. France) there has been a considerable increase in employment. While the design of these policies to support demand has influenced these different results, the national studies revealed that cultural factors are also influential, such as, for example, aversion to the domestic help relationship (considered a form of exploitation) and the idea that women ought to perform their housework themselves. Such factors may constitute a brake on future growth in this sector.

Labour shortages

In some countries labour supply factors are more important than those affecting demand, at least for certain sub-sectors of household services. In the Netherlands, for example, there is a shortage of labour willing to do domestic work, while there is a large unsatisfied demand. Here (in particular in the studies of the localities of Purmerend and Zaanstad), a lack of business initiatives in the cleaning field was also noted. This problem does not seem to exist in the United Kingdom, where there seems to be market demand supported by purchasing power; however, there is a shortage of labour in the home care sector. Difficulties in finding personnel willing to work in household services derive from low salaries and from some aspects of the working conditions, and they are greater where there is alternative work for unemployed people in the local labour market.

The importance of public policies versus the dynamics of the market

In the preceding chapters the role played by European and national policies in creating household services employment has been emphasised many times. It is nevertheless necessary to specify that in several countries (France, for example) this role has been more important, while in others, such as the UK, most of the development of household services can be attributed to market changes – even though recent policy developments, such as the National Childcare Strategy, represent an accelerating factor.

The presence of the private sector as a provider

In several countries, e.g. the UK, large businesses operate in household services – in the house cleaning sector, for example – while in others, e.g. Germany and Italy, the sector has not attracted much interest from large organisations. In countries like the UK, the supply of household services has for many years been left primarily to the market, while in others (e.g. Finland) the state has always been involved. Thus in Finland the private sector is still in an embryonic state. Another differentiating factor worth noting is the presence of small artisanal businesses in domestic maintenance and repairs, which is historically stronger in some countries than in others.



The presence of the third sector as a provider

The role of the third sector is increasingly important in all countries. In some, such as Germany, Austria, Italy and Portugal, the third sector has for decades had a pre-eminent role in providing services, especially in childcare and in eldercare; in others, like Finland (where the public sector has always dominated), third sector providers are a new development. Some third sector providers, such as playgroups run by parents, have existed for several decades in certain countries (Germany, Austria, the UK), while they are almost absent in others, such as Italy.

The public sector as a provider

In all countries the public sector is reducing its role in the direct management of services. In Finland, this role has been markedly reduced in recent years, with important implications for employment, including a 20% reduction in contracts for childcare between 1990 and 1993. In Italy by contrast, public childcare services and related employment are growing, even if at rates lower than anticipated in the 1970s.

Contractual regulation of jobs

Even acknowledging the large volume of undeclared work in all countries, some occupations, like domestic cleaning, are now governed in several countries (e.g. France and Italy) by collective agreements, while in others they tend to be less regulated.

Status of part-time workers

The varying extent of part-time work in the different countries also has implications for household services, and influences the status of the workers involved, whether they are fully integrated into the labour market or marginal.

These differences, like others found between the different countries, are often due to time lags, i.e. to the different starting points and different stages of development of the countries' welfare policies. They are also attributable to differences in labour markets and in systems of employment regulation; to the centralisation or decentralisation of government; and to broader social and cultural factors. The way in which the relationships between the state, the market, the third sector and private households have developed in the various countries is a key factor. Of great importance also are such matters as the state of the economy, the level of unemployment and the progress made in combating unemployment, together with the spread of part-time work both in general and within the female workforce. To the extent that they can be reduced through Europe-wide policies, these differences do not automatically imply divergence. In the sections below we focus particularly on what do seem to represent divergent trends and choices. However, the purpose of this is neither to produce classifications or typologies nor to predict how national policies will evolve, but rather to identify unresolved and controversial issues.

The following are the areas in which countries seem to differ:

- public intervention in certain sub-sectors of household services (domestic cleaning);
- support of demand for household services from 'average users';

- incentives to perform household work within the family;
- the degree to which the public authorities involve the private sector in household services;
- the tendency to focus job creation efforts on jobs in structured environments.

Public intervention in certain sub-sectors of household services

All the countries covered by this study have implemented policies promoting household services in the childcare and eldercare sectors. No country, on the other hand, has taken significant action in the field of catering or domestic maintenance. What seems to distinguish countries most is their willingness or otherwise to adopt public policies, including tax incentives and subsidies³¹, in favour of domestic cleaning. Austria, Germany, Finland, France and the Netherlands have taken action in this area; Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom have not.

Underlying this difference could be a different concept of the extent to which government resources should be used in certain household services sub-sectors. Domestic cleaning, for example – unlike childcare and eldercare – is traditionally considered a private matter for households to deal with; they may, if they have the means, contract out the work to the market, but it should remain outside the sphere of public policy. This view is probably held in most of Europe, with the possible exception of some Nordic countries. European directives on reconciling work and family life often refer to childcare services and to some extent to eldercare, but hardly ever mention domestic cleaning. However, in some countries the desire to solve the problem of undeclared work and transform it into new forms of regular employment through subsidies and tax incentives aimed at bridging the competitive gap between the two forms of work has overcome reluctance to intervene in such a traditionally private sphere of family life.

The fact that in some countries families, and women in particular, may now benefit from outsourcing incentives for household cleaning is therefore (in terms of equal opportunities) an interesting, unintended by-product of the effort to regulate the jobs market and increase the number of people contributing to the social security system.

Supporting demand for household services

If they are to have any impact, job creation policies in household services need a market for services that goes beyond the disadvantaged groups traditionally served by welfare systems. As we have already pointed out, however, this is not the kind of market that develops easily or spontaneously (except in the case of undeclared work), because services tend to cost more than households can afford to pay. The countries covered by the study have approached this problem in different ways.

³¹ Also collective agreements for domestic help, which divide the countries differently: such agreements exist in Italy, France and Portugal.



Some (France, Germany and Finland) have experimented with supporting demand by means of tax incentives and subsidies, taking a universalistic approach. Others (the UK and the Netherlands) have tried to target support of demand at vulnerable and low-income segments of the population; while still others (Austria, Portugal and Italy) have provided no support at all.

This subdivision is probably not set in stone; in fact, many countries are already reviewing their policies. However, they started out with different ideas about the degree to which the state should intervene in lightening the load of housework for ordinary households. This is also significant with regard to the issue of equal opportunities between men and women. If household services are seen as an extension of social services, the ordinary consumer is probably not the target. If instead the point is to lighten the workload falling on women, a universal approach is required. This interpretation, however, has more to do with the objective significance of the choices made in the various countries than the subjective motivations of policy makers in making them. In fact, the adoption of different options in supporting demand probably depended also on other considerations, such as the need to limit public social expenditure and the extent to which job subsidies replace existing spending (such as unemployment benefits).

Direct incentives for household work performed within the family

Virtually all the countries tend to tailor the supply of services to the new needs of households, especially in the sub-sectors that need them most. However, in some countries there is also a move towards offering subsidies or tax incentives to households when family members take on caregiving functions directly. Since in general it is women who quit jobs or reduce their working hours to care for children or the elderly, these provisions are often counterproductive as regards women's entry into the workforce.

In Germany and Austria, for example, substantial childcare allowances and long periods of paid parental leave (two years) seem to have had the effect of further discouraging women from entering or re-entering the jobs market, because of the limited availability of childcare facilities. Even in France, which has a well-developed network of childcare services, the extension of the parental education allowance to parents with two children when the youngest child is under three, has had the effect among women who are eligible for the benefit of reducing the percentage who work outside the home from 69% to 53%.

Without disregarding the positive aspects of such benefits, we should point out that the development of demand for childcare services is substantially altered when policies actively encourage its provision within the family.

Involvement of the private sector in developing household services

To some extent the process of involving the non-profit or third sector in the provision of household services is under way in all the countries. The same cannot be said for the private for-profit sector, especially as regards medium/large enterprises already in the market. Since private

enterprises are rather reluctant to step into a low-profit sector such as this, mobilising them requires incentives, such as job subsidies or tax incentives, e.g. lower VAT. Even in partnerships at local level, institutions may vary in their willingness to consider the private sector as a partner on the same level as the third sector.

In this regard, we should note that in some countries (the Netherlands, France, Finland, and to some extent the United Kingdom), public authorities have taken active steps to encourage the participation of the for-profit private sector in the development of household services. In others, such as Italy, Portugal, Germany and Austria, there is less action on this front – if any.

Aside from economic factors, this difference in policies may reflect an as yet unresolved political and cultural dilemma. On the one hand, there is the belief that private enterprise has capacity and resources that could be funnelled into this sector; on the other, there is a fear of the consequences of entrusting sensitive tasks such as childcare and eldercare, or helping households with their domestic work, to profit-motivated organisations.

Creating jobs in structured settings

In all countries, the goal of employment policies in the household services sector is to create regular jobs out of either unpaid or undeclared work. However, regular jobs can be created either within the framework of structured organisations such as enterprises, social cooperatives and service agencies, or through self-employment, where the family engaging the worker is the employer and the employment relationship is individualised.

Here it can be noted that some countries (France, the UK, Germany, Portugal and Austria) have tried to create jobs outside of organised structures through tax incentives for households and care allowances which can be used to hire the services of self-employed providers, while in other countries, almost all the support has gone to jobs in organised structures. This was found to be the case in Finland and the Netherlands, where tax incentives and subsidies are only for the purchase of services provided by organisations, and in Italy and Portugal, where such incentives and subsidies are still not provided. (There are also differences between the latter two, however: facing a lack of childcare services, the government in Portugal has displayed some willingness to involve childminders, whereas in Italy childminders are rare and some local authorities are reluctant to include this type of self-employed worker in the childcare system.) There are also differing degrees of acceptance of the service agency model, ranging from greater acceptance in countries like Austria and France to less acceptance in countries like Italy.

This choice has significant consequences from the standpoint of the quality of work in household services. On the one hand, individualised work relations make workers more vulnerable and more subject to stress and tension. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why in the first group of countries we are seeing second thoughts and policy shifts in favour of jobs based in structured organisations (e.g. in France, with the transition from the *Cheque Emploi Service* to the *Titre*



Emploi Service, and in Germany, with the establishment of service pools after the failed experiment with household cheques).

On the other hand, especially for certain types of household services, such as domestic cleaning and domiciliary eldercare, self-employment continues to be more competitive from a cost standpoint (especially if it takes the form of undeclared work) and tends to be the ‘natural’ way the market responds to the unmet needs of households in many countries. Given this, *not* to include it in support policies may widen the divide between the irregular market of low quality jobs and the regular market of higher quality jobs.

Convergence among countries or among policies?

As mentioned earlier, at European level the development of household services is a useful tool for achieving at least three goals: equal opportunities – facilitating the participation in the labour market of women and other caregivers; combating social exclusion – the protection of weaker segments of the population, such as children and the elderly; and job creation – the integration of potentially excluded workers into the workforce. Each of these contexts raises particular issues.

In the context of jobs promotion, emphasis is placed on qualifying people – often people with low levels of employability – to find a job in household services; on the need to match labour supply and demand; and on the fostering of entrepreneurship.

In the context of combating social exclusion, the issues that often arise are the quality of services; the need to professionalise workers in social care; innovation in caregiving practices; the importance of social policy strategies, such as the transition from institutional care to domiciliary care; and the importance of ties between professional services and volunteer activities in the community.

In the context of promoting equal opportunities, emphasis is put on the wide availability of services, their adaptability to workers’ needs, their affordability, and once again, on their quality as an essential requisite for their full utilisation by consumers. We may note that some of these goals can conflict. For example:

- using household services as a tool to bring unskilled individuals into the workforce is potentially in conflict with the goal of professionalising these occupations;
- focusing attention on innovation may lead to concentrating resources and energy on the development of a few pilot projects, rather than on making services widely available;
- targeting vulnerable groups for services may conflict with the goal of promoting their purchase by those who are able to afford them;
- promoting volunteer work is potentially (albeit not necessarily, as we saw in Chapter 3) in conflict with job creation;
- setting quality standards, if done rigidly, may occur at the expense of the development of entrepreneurship in the sector and making the services more widely available.

The differences discussed in this chapter seem, on closer observation, mostly attributable to the way in which employment policy objectives are linked to social protection and equal opportunities policies. They relate to central and controversial aspects of current changes occurring within welfare systems, such as universal access to services, the role of government action, the extent of work regulation and the proper role of the family.

If this is true, it is likely that the transition from diversity to convergence of approach among the various countries will depend on achieving another type of convergence within individual Member States and at European level, namely, convergence between the different policy contexts in which household services are promoted. A coherent framework for the development of household services at European level can be developed so long as certain dilemmas at both national and European level are resolved: these concern the use of household services as tools for job creation, combating social exclusion and promoting equal opportunities. Such an approach will involve recognising the conflicts and contradictions between goals and discussing them openly with stakeholders, in order to achieve a possible compromise that is realistic and feasible.



Chapter 8

Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter, drawing on the empirical findings of the present study, offers some conclusions and recommendations for policy makers on including household services on the European agenda. It discusses what the various actors can do to develop employment in this sector in a way consistent with equal opportunities policies, the struggle against social exclusion and the strengthening of social protection.

Conclusions

This report is the result of an effort to analyse and synthesise information about household services from the eight national reports and from additional documentation and literature. Against a background concern to find a new balance for men and women between employment, family and community activities, the aim has been to document the current situation in employment in household services and to identify emerging trends and all relevant actors, policies, best practices, and other factors which might facilitate the achievement of such a balance, as well as the obstacles standing in the way. The study confirmed that throughout Europe there is a trend towards transforming the work that is done without pay within the family into paid household services jobs. Analysis of the causes and consequences of this process has led to some preliminary conclusions about the implications for policies on employment development, equal opportunities, social exclusion and social protection. Some of these conclusions require further verification through research which was beyond the scope of the present study.

Developing jobs in household services

A first set of conclusions derives from an analysis of employment trends in household services

and the role that public, private and third sector actors have played in developing them in the countries covered in the study.

- Expansion of services and employment in the household services sector is occurring everywhere, but it is not a uniform development as regards the types of services, nor does it apply equally to all countries.
- Almost everywhere, childcare and food services are the two sub-sectors in which employment growth is most evident. In several countries there is also a less marked, but noticeable, increase in eldercare and work in domestic cleaning. Change in the provision of household and domestic maintenance services is difficult to assess and probably varies from country to country.
- Many household services jobs continue to develop as undeclared work. The strong competition offered by the informal sector constitutes a stubborn barrier, and measures taken to reduce undeclared work have been more successful in some countries than in others.
- Despite recent progress, there is still a large unmet need for household services which will continue to grow as a result of social and demographic trends. The extent of this unmet need in the different sub-sectors, e.g. childcare and eldercare, varies from country to country, depending on the previous level of service provision.
- It cannot be taken for granted that these needs will be met by the emergence of new services and the creation of new jobs. There are many economic, sociocultural, policy/regulatory and organisational obstacles to the development of such services and jobs, and so far these have been only partially overcome. Many of the measures taken, moreover, have been implemented only recently and it will be years before their effects can be definitively assessed.
- While the cost of services is a real obstacle to transforming latent demand into real demand, there are also cultural barriers: the notion that domestic and caregiving work can be contracted out to non-family members is not yet universally accepted in most countries.
- On its own, an approach focused solely on supporting demand for services (with tax incentives or subsidies) is insufficient, nor will it be enough simply to encourage supply (through incentives for the establishment of enterprises or the entry of existing ones into this market). To date, no suitable mechanism to reconcile supply and demand seems to have been found.
- There is substantial overlap between job creation in household services and the growing role of the third sector in creating jobs and providing services. Changes in the third sector include the development of new providers with innovative organisational and legal forms (such as social cooperatives) and an increasing acceptance of operating methods used in the private for-profit sector. Some evidence indicates that the third sector is capable of combining job creation with development of the volunteer sector, although there are signs of decline in the latter in some services undergoing professionalisation, especially in childcare and eldercare.
- Apart from catering, the involvement of the private for-profit sector in the provision of household services is still limited, and it is more developed in some countries than in others. Services are mostly provided by small and medium-sized enterprises. The study did uncover a few instances of large companies (including multinationals) operating in this market, especially in domestic cleaning. Incentives such as subsidised jobs and fiscal measures (e.g. lower VAT) seem to have a positive effect in promoting private sector involvement.
- Some private companies are also beginning to purchase or develop household services for the benefit of their own employees. Though still fairly rare, this phenomenon is interesting because it draws on new financial resources that can be mobilised to bridge the gap between

the high cost of services and households' limited ability to pay, a difficulty which can only partly be addressed through public funding.

- The study showed that forming local partnerships between public, private and third sector actors is a successful way of developing household services. Such partnerships make effective use of existing resources and skills, as well as making it easier to link supply and demand.

The quality of jobs and the social protection of workers

A second set of conclusions stems from the analysis of working conditions in household services which was conducted on the basis of statistical information and literature as well as through interviews with a sample of workers in the cleaning, childcare and eldercare sectors.

- The study uncovered a number of problems in the quality of jobs in childcare, eldercare and cleaning services. Working conditions vary in these sub-sectors, where some kinds of jobs and work settings offer decent working conditions, and others do not.
- Work in household services (especially personal services) is satisfying and rewarding for the more motivated workers. The most valued aspect is the opportunity it gives them to develop meaningful relationships, help those in need and use their own creativity.
- Those who work in household services, however, are also exposed to the risk of physical and mental stress. Self-employed workers have greater difficulty handling such stress because they are more isolated; however, even those individuals who work in specialist facilities often receive inadequate support. The study nevertheless identified several examples of good practices that, with little effort, can provide workers with a support network.
- Low wages are a problem in household services jobs, especially given the level of skill and responsibility they often require. Low pay creates the need to work long hours and is associated with the over-representation of women, workers with less pressing economic needs, and those willing to accept precarious jobs, e.g. students and immigrants. This is partly the cause and partly the consequence of both the relatively low status of the social professions and the economic factors. The study also found disparities and inequalities in the levels of pay for the same jobs, as well as in the ways of calculating the amount of work done. Efforts are under way in some countries to develop standardised systems.
- Turning to job security and the level of social protection offered to workers, we find a division between some relatively well protected workers (mostly those working in the government and third sectors, especially in childcare and to a lesser extent in eldercare) and workers with low levels of protection: mainly the self-employed, throughout the household services sector. Some countries are experimenting with measures that fall halfway between self-employment and employment, through service agencies, for example. This can ensure a minimum of social benefits and a steady income. The latter, however, still depends largely on the sensitivity and commitment of employers.
- Part-time working is very common in household services. With few exceptions, workers (mainly women who have other family income sources, in countries where part-time work is widespread) see the low hourly wages of part-time work as a limitation rather than a choice. Indeed, in some countries, those workers who are able to choose the hours they work tend for financial reasons to take on several jobs, resulting in very long weekly hours, often at the expense of the quality of their family and social life.
- Career prospects in household services are rather poor, mainly because there are no formal routes offering career progression. Skills gained through experience or training tend to receive little recognition, and self-employed workers tend to have numerous employers,

sometimes simultaneously. Also, few opportunities exist for career progression from a less qualified to a more qualified job, or by moving from one sub-sector to another in household services. There is, however, some potential for career development in taking on coordination and management responsibilities, and here the experience of social enterprises seems particularly promising.

- Working in household services does not present more obstacles to reconciling work and family life than any other employment sector. It is often possible to choose one's working hours, and in some cases, how many hours one will work, although this choice is often influenced by the low rates of pay and by the time available for paid work. Those workers who are forced for economic reasons to work long or atypical hours often fill niches left uncovered by the market; and these workers are the most likely to experience conflict between work and family.
- More positively, some employers and workers in household services experience an organisational culture which in comparison with other work settings encourages greater consideration and respect for workers' needs. The study documented various instances of enterprises that were flexible (on occasion actively supportive) in their response to the family needs of workers, often through informal arrangements: for example, by allowing workers to utilise the childcare and eldercare services offered by the enterprise.
- For the same reason, some household services' providers (mainly but not exclusively in the third sector) pay special attention to the training of workers, using continuing education to compensate for otherwise inadequate professional standards within the sector.

Equal opportunities implications

Analysis of the composition of the household services workforce, and of the policies implemented in the various countries, leads to some conclusions about the implications of the development of these services for equal opportunities.

- Household work, a private part of family life which women have traditionally had to manage on their own, is becoming the focus of public and private investment. This is without doubt a positive development in terms of promoting equal opportunities. Indeed, there is a consensus in most countries that the male breadwinner model is no longer sustainable and that society has to take responsibility for finding new ways of managing this important aspect of social life.
- That much investment in household services occurs in the context of employment and social policies rather than those directed at equal opportunities, is positive insofar as it shows that these services are viewed as a necessity and as providing an opportunity to promote not just gender equality, but also wider economic and social development. There are nevertheless some disadvantages.
- First, cultural barriers to the use of household services still have to be tackled. A belief persists that families – which normally means women – should handle their own domestic and caregiving duties. Alongside the many other economic and organisational problems, this represents a barrier to the transformation of unmet needs into true demand and into real functioning services.
- A second, related problem is that because services are often established in the context of social and employment policies, they are not always planned on the basis of a real understanding of the needs of working women and other socially excluded groups. A welcome development here is the introduction of new, innovative services that are tailored and flexible and which supplement more traditional services.



- A third difficulty lies in the highly segregated and female-dominated nature of the jobs market in household services. There is a vicious circle here, based on according a higher value in caregiving work to traditional female attitudes than to skills acquired through training; according low status and low wages to household services occupations; and men's tendency to avoid work in this sphere.
- Promoting men's entry into the household services sector does not receive the same attention in equal opportunities policies as enhancing women's access to male-dominated activities. The low status of the family care and domestic work sectors is part of a deeply entrenched social situation (perhaps even among supporters of gender equality) that is hard to overcome.
- Given the strong feminisation of the sector, it is important to stress that the promotion of entrepreneurship in household services can be a tool for the empowerment of women. Women who would have difficulty in entering the jobs market, or in re-entering it after a long absence, can achieve greater economic independence and self-esteem by becoming independent household services' providers.
- The current widespread employment of immigrant workers in the household services sector is also problematic from the point of view of equal opportunities. In some countries, many of the less skilled jobs in household services are performed by non-EU immigrants. These workers find it particularly difficult to obtain better qualified jobs because of language difficulties, restrictions on residency and work permits, and the lack of recognition of their educational qualifications. The prospect of an enlarged European Union makes it crucial that this problem be tackled (many immigrant workers come from Eastern European countries), and it can be noted that some promising pilot projects were identified in which qualified immigrant workers had established household services enterprises.

Policy dilemmas

The evidence in this report poses some important dilemmas for European policy makers. These are summarised in this section.

The choice between professionalisation and large-scale job creation

While the only way to increase the social status of household services jobs may be through professionalisation (through training and formal systems of qualification), this may conflict with the aim of using household services as a route into employment for unqualified workers. The aim here must be to identify how far career routes can be formalised while keeping the work accessible to unqualified workers; and what needs to be done to encourage provider organisations to draw such workers into household services.

Quality of services versus social integration of unqualified workers

While the household services sector remains dominated by poorly qualified workers it is likely to be difficult to raise either the quality of services or their capacity to satisfy demand. Yet many private households continue to employ unqualified workers, as in the widespread practice of directly hiring undeclared workers. It will be important to find effective ways of monitoring quality and improving standards even where workers have low qualifications.

Specialised or integrated services

While it is important to promote specialisation in household services jobs, drawing on an understanding of the psychological/educational and social/health issues, services also need to

respond flexibly to households' needs. This will require better communications and coordination systems between providers, and more support for those provider organisations that can work in an integrated and complementary way (eldercare, childcare, catering, etc.).

Promotion of female employment/desegregation

While household services offer an immediate means of expanding female employment and entrepreneurship, this carries the risk of making the sector even more female-dominated. To deal with this 'dilemma', we need to know which kinds of equal opportunities policies – for example, those oriented toward career advancement or those that focus on reconciling work and other aspects of life – are most likely to reduce the over-reliance on female labour in household services. We also need to develop appropriate accreditation and qualifications' systems for household workers without creating a glass ceiling for women in the sector.

Third sector/private enterprise

It seems desirable to encourage the development of household services by the third sector, because of its lower costs, its use of volunteer workers and its focus on community needs. There is a risk, however, that favouring third sector providers may exclude private for-profit enterprises, which can be an important source of skills and technologies. The solution to any conflict between the third sector and private enterprise lies primarily in measures that strengthen and expand the household services market, which would create the conditions for diversification in demand for services and thus a diversification in supply.

Supporting demand and promoting supply

Supporting demand should foster quality and cost competition between service providers, and promote the development of services that families need. On the other hand, better structuring of supply is equally important, and accreditation of providers is often the only way of ensuring respect for workers' basic rights. Any action taken that promotes employment, social protection or equal opportunity must be accompanied by a careful evaluation of both the intended and unintended effects on the household services market.

Tensions between national policies and local initiatives

While the development of household services seems to need both legislative action on taxes and social protection, as well as additional public investment at national level (or regional level, in the case of federal systems), it is often in local and community initiatives that innovation is greatest and the demand and supply of services can most easily be reconciled. We need to know what tools to use to coordinate national policies and local initiatives so that the former do not harm the latter, and above all, in order to promote bottom-up innovation so that it becomes general and systemic.

Approach to improving working conditions and the quality of services

The failures and counterproductive effects of certain measures raise questions about the value of pursuing better working conditions and higher quality standards through legislative and regulatory measures, or whether and how far they should be left to local negotiations or self-



regulation by providers, backed up by more informal dissemination and replication of good practice.

Part time and full time employment

The widespread use of part-time work in this sector encourages the employment of women, since it allows them to reconcile work, family and social life. When part-time employment is involuntary, however, it tends to reinforce gender segregation and leads to lower levels of qualifications. This problem affects not just the household services sector but the European jobs market as a whole. In general, then, we must consider what further measures can turn part-time jobs from ‘semi-work’ (as it is often seen now) into ‘real’ jobs that may have different characteristics but enjoy similar levels of recognition and social protection as full-time work.

Prior training/on-the-job training

It is an open question whether training in household services should occur on the job, perhaps with the support of updating and continuing education, or whether the process of qualification should precede employment. Debate continues about how much training is required to perform many household services, and more research is probably needed here. The lack of specific studies on careers and training needs in the sector makes it difficult to tailor the training on offer to the actual circumstances prevailing in household services.

Individual/collective employment

Another question concerns the extent to which job creation in provider organisations (enterprises, associations, agencies, etc.) should be promoted rather than direct employment (or self-employment) in families and households.

Positive versus indirect action to draw in men

Given the need for the greater involvement of men in household services, there is a choice to be made between specific positive action to encourage male employment, or reliance on indirect interventions, such as upgrading the qualifications needed to enter the various occupations.

Recommendations

In relation to the issues set out above, it is possible to identify three central policy objectives relating to household services. These are:

- to create good quality jobs in household services (in the context of employment-creation policies);
- to improve working conditions in household services (including offering a means to reconcile work with family and community activities³², in the context of policies modernising social protection);

³² A number of workplace measures to improve reconciliation are also suggested at the end of Chapter 5.

- to promote equal opportunity of access to qualified occupations in household services, in the context of mainstreaming equal opportunities in all policies.

A broad strategic approach to achieving these objectives will need to be adopted, centred on the following: improving knowledge and information; raising awareness; developing accreditation and qualifications; fostering innovation; protecting rights; establishing partnerships; and securing convergence. Some more specific recommendations about the actions required are given below, grouped to demonstrate how they will take forward the three central objectives.

Knowledge and information

Better information is critical to the development of relevant policies. While this report has drawn together a wide range of relevant evidence, important gaps remain. Recommendations are as outlined below.

Employment

- Promote an improved and standardised classification of household services jobs at European level, in order to facilitate more accurate monitoring of employment trends. This could be accomplished by national statistical institutes and Eurostat in the context of harmonisation of national statistics.
- Research families' and households' willingness to pay for household services, and identify the socioeconomic and organisational obstacles to the use of household services. This could be accomplished at EU level through equal opportunities programmes, and at national, regional and local levels by equal opportunities/social welfare bodies and departments
- Conduct studies on the willingness of employers to fund and provide household services for their own employees. This could be accomplished both at EU level, for example in the context of the Equal Opportunities Programme (DG Employment and Social Affairs) or the (DG Research) and by employers' associations, which could play a role in promoting such studies, perhaps in the context of corporate citizenship).

Social protection

- Gather more information on undeclared work in household services, on the different sub-phenomena relating to it, and on the reasons for the success or failure of policies to reduce it. This could be accomplished at European Commission level (e.g. DG Employment and Social Affairs), as well as through national labour ministries, and regional labour/employment departments. Trade union support in achieving this would be valuable.
- Support scientific and technological research aimed at improving working conditions in the domestic and caregiving sectors, e.g. by using information technologies in eldercare and stress management and support networks for workers. This could be accomplished in the context of the fifth framework programme – the Quality of Life Programme – and through the Foundation's research.

Equal opportunities

- Conduct studies on cultural barriers limiting women's and families' use of household services. Such studies could be promoted by equal opportunities bodies and women's associations and networks at EU, national, regional and local levels.



- Assess the effects of care allowances on willingness to make use of household services. This could be accomplished by the European Commission (e.g. DG Employment and Social Affairs), relevant European networks on work and the family, and national government social affairs/welfare departments.
- Support research on the attitudes of boys and girls to domestic and caregiving work, both as unpaid work and as a profession. This could be accomplished in the context of European Commission programmes, e.g. Equal Opportunities and TSER.

Raising awareness

At present there is limited awareness of the scope for developing employment in household services, improving working conditions in the sector, or addressing equal opportunities issues. It is therefore proposed that the action to be taken should follow the recommendations listed below.

Employment

- Mobilise private enterprise to supply household services, providing information on the market's potential. This could be taken up by employers' associations and regional and local authorities in the context of public/private partnership promotion.
- Raise the awareness of enterprises about the importance of household services in terms of increasing workforce productivity. Employers' associations could take the lead in this action.
- Conduct information campaigns targeted at potential consumers about existing services. This should be done mainly by local authorities and partnerships.

Social protection

- Inform smaller provider organisations of low-cost measures they can adopt to foster the reconciliation of work and family life and improve working conditions for employees. This could be accomplished by government-sponsored equal opportunities bodies and by the umbrella provider organisations, especially third sector organisations.

Equal opportunities

- Include household services as a high-profile occupation in the course of career guidance activities. This could be accomplished in the context of European Social Fund programmes and redeveloped national employment services.
- Raise the awareness of educational agencies concerning the sharing of household and care responsibilities, both paid and unpaid, between men and women. This could be accomplished at national, regional and local level by equal opportunities bodies and non-governmental organisations as part of adult education programmes. At EU level, the Socrates programme could support experiments and exchanges of experiences.

Qualifications and accreditation

At present there are serious weaknesses in training, qualifications and accreditation for household services. These limit career opportunities, hinder equal access to jobs and restrict service quality. Recommendations for action to remedy this are given below.

Employment

- Support training in transferable skills in business set-up, management, fund-raising and human resource management in household services. This could be accomplished at EU level

in the context of programmes to support small and medium-sized enterprises, the Third System and Employment programme and the European Social Fund programmes; and at national level, by umbrella provider organisations funding smaller organisations.

Social protection

- Create an inventory of household services professions at European and/or national level.
- Harmonise educational and vocational training curricula and qualifications standards. Both the above actions could be delivered at EU level by CEDEFOP, and at national level by the bodies responsible for vocational qualifications systems.
- Establish and formalise possible career paths in the household services sector that allow advancement through various sub-sectors and with different employers, and provide the re-qualification necessary for each step. This could be accomplished by national education/vocational training systems; pilot experiments could be promoted in the context of European Social Fund programmes.
- Develop accreditation frameworks that recognise experience acquired on the job or through continuing education. This would need to be negotiated, mainly at national level, between the social partners. Associations representing private households/families who use household services should be included in these consultations.

Equal opportunities

- Challenge the view that only those with appropriate family experience can perform caregiving work. The leading household services' providers, together with umbrella provider organisations, could campaign to eliminate such prejudice.
- Promote the recognition of the professional qualifications of non-EU workers. National governments should do this in the context of equal opportunities policies, and immigrants' associations could advocate such recognition.

Innovation

The report has identified some valuable examples of successful innovation in household services. To extend this, the following recommendations are made.

Employment

- The market potential for integrated and innovative household services (in terms of flexibility, hours, etc.) should be tested. Provider organisations could do this, with the encouragement of their umbrella associations.
- Efforts should be made to bring supply and demand for household services into line (service platforms, service pools, one-stop shops, etc.). These experiments, and any good practice outcomes from them, need to be widely disseminated. Local and regional authorities could promote this, and European Regional Development Fund programmes could support transnational exchanges and networks.

Social protection

- Good practice examples of household service providers who offer workers job and income security, support and supervision, and the reconciliation of their work and family and social life, should be identified and disseminated. This could be promoted by trade unions and employers' associations and by umbrella provider organisations, with support from the EU and/or national equal opportunities bodies.

- Childcare and eldercare services which are geographically accessible, affordable and suited to the working hours of household services workers need to be made more widely available. This could be accomplished by national, regional or local authorities according to the different administrative systems of the Member States, as well as by private providers.

Equal opportunities

- Experiments should be undertaken to encourage greater male participation in the household services workforce. This could be accomplished by provider organisations with the encouragement of their national umbrella organisations, and support from EU equal opportunities programmes.
- Efforts need to be made to encourage and enable women to establish household services enterprises. This could be accomplished at European, national and regional level by all bodies which implement programmes supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and female entrepreneurship.

Protecting rights

Many workers in household services currently have weak levels of social protection, while both the users and providers of care services lack necessary rights in respect of competition and service quality. To rectify this situation, the following recommendations for action are made.

Employment

- Eliminate access barriers to the household services market for potential entrepreneurs, caused by restrictions on commercial licences and similar impediments in trade regulations. This should be done by national authorities regulating trade and industry.
- Ensure a level playing field for all types of providers (public providers, small, medium and large private enterprises and third sector organisations) in accessing the public and private market for household services. This is a policy that should be endorsed mainly by local and regional authorities which create partnerships or contract out services. Framework conditions could be created by national governments. Employers' organisations could advocate this.

Social protection

- Establish uniform wage scales that ensure 'like pay for like work', thus reducing disparities in the criteria utilised to set wages. This should be done through collective bargaining and agreements, mainly at national level, according to the industrial relations' systems existing in each country.
- Simplify procedures to fulfil social security obligations vis-à-vis household workers. National governments could study conditions for replicating already existing and successful experiments (e.g. the *Chèque Emploi Service* in France).
- Compare and disseminate information on experiences of collective agreements for work in the household services sector at European level. The European social partners' organisations could play a role in this.
- Through dialogue between the social partners, establish a set of basic rights for workers in household services as regards paid holidays, sick and maternity leave, parental leave and so on, ensuring that they meet the need for flexibility in the services. This should be done through collective bargaining and agreements, mainly at national level, according to the industrial relations' system existing in each country.

- Promote measures aimed at regularising undeclared work in a way that does not punish or penalise the workers. This could be accomplished by national social security bodies, ministries of labour and social partners, with extensive consultation with workers and employers and building on a basis of sound information.

Equal opportunities

- Promote agreed implementation of quality standards in household services by involving all the stakeholders. This should be done at national, regional and local level by all actors, and the EU could support an exchange of best practices.
- Discourage discrimination against men who would like to work in the household services sector.
- Discourage discrimination against immigrant workers and ethnic minority workers in accessing higher quality jobs in the household services sector. Umbrella provider organisations and providers in general could take responsibility for both these measures; equal opportunities bodies could encourage non-discriminatory practice.

Establishing partnerships

Effective partnerships lie behind many of the successful examples of the development of household services found in this report. It is evident that forming appropriate partnerships is an important key to the successful expansion of employment in this sector. The following actions are recommended.

Employment

- Support the creation of partnerships between public, private and third sector entities, such as platforms and service pools, as a way of promoting the development of household services at national, regional and local level, and in the context of territorial employment pacts.

Social protection

- Promote ‘round tables’ between employers and workers (and even informal groups of workers, in less unionised fields) in order to improve working conditions in those household services jobs where working conditions are poorest.

Equal opportunities

- Provide opportunities for consultation on the development of household services, bringing together both equal opportunities bodies and those responsible for social, employment and vocational training policies.
- Promote the involvement of immigrants’ representative associations in the establishment of policies concerning the development of household services at European, national, regional and local levels. This should be done by all bodies which implement employment policies, as part of the mainstreaming of equal opportunities. Social partners could encourage such involvement.
- Ensure balanced participation of both genders in the bodies charged with promoting the development of household services at European, national, regional and local levels. This should be done by all bodies which implement employment policies, as part of the mainstreaming of equal opportunities.



Common financial incentives

Employment in household services needs to be appropriately supported as an activity within the Single European Market. To this end, certain steps are desirable, as recommended below.

Employment

- Encourage the adoption of tax breaks on expenditure for household services in all the Member States. This could be done by the EU in the context of the local development and employment strategy, and also by taking into account equal opportunities programmes.
- Encourage the inclusion of the household services sector among those benefiting from lower VAT rates in all Member States.

STRATEGY/ACTIONS	OBJECTIVES	ACTORS
Knowledge and Information		
Improved and standardised classification of household services.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National statistical agencies Eurostat
Surveys on families' willingness to pay for household services.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal opportunities bodies (all levels) Social welfare bodies (all levels)
Studies on employers' willingness to fund/provide household services for employees.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU (e.g. DG Employment & Social Affairs) Employers' associations
Studies on undeclared work in household services.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU (e.g. DG Employment & Social Affairs) Ministries of Labour Regional labour departments
Research on working conditions.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU (e.g. RST programme) European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions
Studies on cultural barriers to women/families availing of household services.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal opportunities bodies (all levels) Women's associations
Acquire information on the effects of care allowances on willingness to make use of household services.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU (e.g. DG Employment & Social Affairs) Relevant European Networks on Work and Family National welfare and social affairs departments
Research on attitudes of boys and girls to domestic and caregiving work (paid and unpaid).	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU (Equal Opportunities and TSER Programmes)
Mobilise private enterprise to supply household services.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers' associations Regional and local authorities
Raise the awareness of employers on importance of household services to increase workforce productivity.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers' associations
Information campaigns targeted at potential consumers of existing services.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities Private/public partnerships



STRATEGY/ACTIONS	OBJECTIVES	ACTORS
Raising Awareness		
Information to smaller providers on low-cost measures to foster reconciliation of work and family life.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunities bodies • Umbrella provider organisations
Include household services as a high-profile occupation in the course of career guidance activities.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Social Funds • National employment service
Raise awareness of educational agencies on sharing of household/care responsibilities between men and women.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunities bodies • NGOs • EU (e.g. Socrates programme)
Qualifications/Accreditation		
Support training designed to impart transverse skills regarding enterprise creation, management, fund-raising and human resource management in household services.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU programme to support SMEs and Third System and Employment Programme • European Social Fund • Umbrella provider organisations
Inventory of household services professions at European and/or national level.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEDEFOP • National bodies in charge of developing vocational qualification systems
Harmonise educational and vocational training curricula and qualifications standards.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEDEFOP • National bodies in charge of developing vocational qualification systems
Establish and formalise possible career paths in the household services sector.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National education and vocational training systems • European Social Fund
Support recognition for career purposes of experience acquired through continuing education and on-the-job training.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social partners, mainly at national level
Combat the received wisdom of the importance of family experience in performing caregiving work.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading household service providers • Umbrella provider organisations
Promote the recognition of the professional qualifications of non-EU workers.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National governments • Immigrants' associations
Innovation		
Test the market potential for household services that are integrated and innovative in terms of flexibility, hours, etc.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household service providers • Umbrella provider organisations

STRATEGY/ACTIONS	OBJECTIVES	ACTORS
Experiment with and disseminate good practice in bringing supply and demand for household services into line (service platforms, service pools, one-stop shops, etc.).	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities Regional authorities European structural funds
Identify and disseminate good practice among household service providers in giving workers job/income security; support/supervision; reconciliation of work, family and social life.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade unions Employers' associations Umbrella provider organisations Equal opportunities bodies (all levels)
Promote availability of childcare/eldercare services that are geographically accessible, affordable and suited to the working hours of household services workers.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National, regional or local authorities, according to the different administrative systems of the Member States Private providers
Test and assist incorporation of men in household services workforce.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provider organisations EU equal opportunities programmes
Empower women to establish household services enterprises.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private and public bodies supporting SMEs Private and public bodies supporting female entrepreneurship
Eliminate access barriers to household services market caused by restrictions on commercial licences and similar impediments in trade regulations.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National authorities regulating trade and industry
Protecting Rights		
Ensure a level playing field for all types of providers in accessing the public/ private market for household services.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and regional authorities which create partnerships or contract out services National governments Employers' organisations
Establish uniform wage scales that ensure like pay for like work.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial relations' system of each country
Simplify procedures to fulfil social security obligations vis-à-vis household workers.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National governments
Compare and disseminate experiences on collective agreements for work in household services at European level.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European social partners organisations



STRATEGY/ACTIONS	OBJECTIVES	ACTORS
Establish a set of basic rights for workers in household services (paid holidays, sick and maternity leave, parental leave, etc.)	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial relations' system of each country
Promote measures aimed at the regularisation of undeclared work in a way that does not punish or penalise the workers.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National security bodies Ministries of Labour Social partners
Promote the consensual establishment and application of quality standards in household services by involving all the stakeholders.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National actors Regional actors Local actors
Discourage discrimination against men who would like to work in the household services sector.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Umbrella provider organisations Providers
Discourage discrimination against immigrant/ethnic minority workers in accessing higher quality jobs in household services.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Umbrella provider organisations Providers
Establishing Partnerships		
Support the creation of partnerships between public, private and third sector entities.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public, private and third sector actors involved in household services.
Promote round tables of employers/workers to improve working conditions in certain household services.	Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National private and public actors
Improve coordination of development of household services: bring together equal opportunities bodies/actors responsible for social, employment and vocational training policies.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal opportunities bodies Employment/vocational training bodies
Promote involvement of immigrants' representative associations in establishing policies on development of household services at European, national, regional and local levels.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All bodies implementing and designing employment policies Social partners
Ensure balanced participation of both genders in bodies charged with promoting development of household services at European, national, regional and local levels.	Equal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All bodies implementing and designing employment policies Social partners

STRATEGY/ACTIONS	OBJECTIVES	ACTORS
Common Financial Incentives		
Encourage the adoption, by all the Member States, of tax breaks on expenditure for household services.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU (local development and employment strategies) • EU (Equal Opportunities programmes)
Encourage the inclusion of household services among the sectors benefiting from lower VAT in all Member States.	Employment	EU (DG Employment)




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Annex

Note on methodology

National studies

The basic theoretical framework for the project and the national studies is set out in the introduction to this report. Additional information on the phenomena studied and the methodology employed is given below.

The national studies comprised three main elements:

- (i) a review of national level statistics on employment in household services;
- (ii) a study of two localities;
- (iii) a study of workers in household services.

The methodology used had both limitations and strengths. The limitations included a scarcity of reliable statistical data on employment trends and working conditions in household services, and the incompatibility between the classification systems used and the level of detail collected in the different countries. This seriously limited the scope for detailed comparative analysis between the countries. To address this problem, locality studies were also undertaken. However, even here the existing data were inadequate: either mirroring the limitations of the national statistics; or covering only particular sectors or occupations; or giving only indirect evidence of employment growth; or offering subjective expert evaluations. Furthermore, resource limitations permitted study of only small samples of workers and enterprises in the localities. This meant that it was possible to undertake qualitative, but not statistical, analysis of the study of workers in household services.

A great merit of the study, however, was its use of multiple sources (documents, interviews with key informants and experts, interviews with workers) about specified issues in household services employment. This made possible an approach combining quantitative and qualitative aspects, and exploring household services employment from a variety of different angles, including the subjective perceptions and evaluations of the actors involved – which is particularly important when a relatively unexplored field is being investigated.

Review of national level statistics

The review focused mainly on:

- the national historical context in terms of the role of the state in the development of household services and the relations between the state, the family, and the private and volunteer/third sector;
- jobs growth in household services over the previous decade;
- the relationship between formal employment and other types of paid work in household services;
- information about working conditions in household services;
- evidence about changes in men’s and women’s involvement in family activities, and the relation of this to household services;
- key policy developments.

The following were the main sources:

- policy papers
- research papers and statistical datasets
- unstructured interviews with qualified informants and experts such as researchers, policy makers, social partners, business associations, professional organisations, women’s organisations and other non-governmental organisations.

Locality studies

The study of localities was designed to yield the following:

- a more detailed picture of the situation in household services and related employment at local level: concrete examples of new types of services or innovative arrangements between the various actors;
- information on barriers to and opportunities for the development of services and jobs, including local policy initiatives and actions taken by providers and others.

Two localities in each country were pre-selected for the case studies (see below). The major criterion used in their selection was that they be characterised by a significant number of jobs having been created in household services. Preference was given to urban settings, and to selecting localities where the researchers could gain information from a variety of sources within a tight time-frame.



Country	Localities
Austria	Vienna; Linz
Germany	Berlin (Wedding); Berlin (Friedrichshain)
France	Lyon; Toulouse
Finland	Espoo; Tampere
Italy	Rome; Florence
The Netherlands	Purmerend; Zaanstad
United Kingdom	Leeds; Sheffield
Portugal	Cascais (Oeiras); Loures (Vila Franca de Xira)

The following information sources were consulted for each locality:

- documentation: statistical datasets, directories, research reports, policy papers, documents from provider organisations;
- unstructured interviews with key local informants, qualified informants and experts such as researchers, policy makers, social partners, business associations, professional organisations, women’s organisations and other non-governmental organisations.
- interviews with managers and entrepreneurs in the household services sectors.

Studies of workers

The studies of workers focused mainly on working conditions, questions of equal opportunities and the reconciliation of work, family and social life for household services workers. Interviews with workers were conducted in three subsectors of household services: childcare, eldercare and cleaning. The approach adopted was essentially qualitative.

Sources

In each country, interviews were conducted within a small sample of organisations, selected to include the following:

- a) workers for enterprises or cooperatives, or self-employed workers, operating at least *prima facie* in work settings of good quality (the criterion of innovation);
- b) workers in settings where a large number of jobs were known to exist or to be emerging (criterion of volume of employment);

The workers contacted in the first group (a) were working in enterprises or organisations which were also studied as examples of good practice.

The research design specified that in each locality an average of nine workers in innovative enterprises or organisations and nine employed or self-employed workers in fields with a large number of jobs should be interviewed. Thus 18 interviews were to be conducted in each locality, and 36 in each country.

The sample of workers was ultimately composed as shown in tables A1-A3.

Table A1 Interviews with workers by sub-sector of household services

Sub-sector	No. workers	%
Childcare*	87	31.0
Eldercare**	116	41.2
Cleaning***	78	27.8
<i>Total</i>	281	100.0

* childminders, nannies, playgroup workers, out-of school club workers, nursery nurses, nursery teachers, owners of childcare facilities.

** home helps/home carers, day care centre staff, care assistants, practical nurses, entrepreneurs in eldercare services, other staff.

*** cleaning workers and domestic helps, ironing workers, carpet cleaners, window cleaners, meals-on-wheels workers.

Source: CERFE, 2000

Table A2 Interviews with workers by gender

	No. workers	%
Female	249	88.6
Male	32	11.4

Source: CERFE, 2000

Table A3 Interviews with workers by country

Country	No. workers	%
Austria	34	12.1
Finland	30	10.7
France	36	12.8
Germany	33	11.7
Italy	43	15.3
The Netherlands	36	12.8
Portugal	36	12.8
United Kingdom	39	13.9
<i>Total</i>	281	100.0

Source: CERFE, 2000

The questionnaire

Workers were interviewed using a questionnaire structured on the basis of the same set of items for each country, shown below. The questionnaire was administered face-to-face by interviewers (apart from a form on personal data which interviewees sometimes filled in themselves). The questionnaire contained numerous open questions; where possible, interviews were recorded and transcribed.



Information sought in questionnaire used to interview workers

General

- Age?
- Sex?
- Ethnicity?
- Educational background?
- Household composition?
- Marital status?
- Number of children (specifying number of pre-school children)?
- Employment status of other members of household?
- Member of a trade union?
- Is this respondent's main job? How many jobs does respondent have?

Nature of respondent's work

- Description of duties and responsibilities. What does job involve? Health and safety issues? Does respondent have any say in how job is organised?
- How was job found?
- Reasons for taking up employment?
- Previous main job?
- How long does it take to get to work?

Working conditions and quality of work

- Pay, wages, salary? Does job offer a reasonable income?
- Benefits: holidays, sick leave, maternity leave or parental leave, payment of social security contributions?
- Job security and existence of job contract: what sort of contract?
- Working hours: part-time, full-time, flexibility. Is respondent happy with working hours?
- Training: experience in last year? Was it sufficient?
- Job satisfaction: is this the sort of job respondent wants? Likes/dislikes about job?
- Job outlook: pay, security, career? Does respondent hope to be doing this job in five years? What changes would improve respondent's quality of working life?

Equal opportunities issues

- Women's opinion on men's integration and scope for taking up employment in this field?
- Description of men working in a traditional female-dominated sector?
- Existence of opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes in the company; involvement in initiatives aiming at improving quality?
- Perception that being a woman/man influenced (positively or negatively) type of job and way in which work is done?
- Horizontal segregation: differences in type of tasks performed by men and women?
- Vertical segregation: presence of women among managers; entrepreneurial opportunities for women?
- Sexual harassment at the workplace?

Reconciliation of family and working life

- Living arrangements, difficulties in balancing work with family and community activities: how does job fit in with family commitments? What does family think of worker doing this kind of job?
- Sharing responsibilities, changes in distribution of work at home, support in managing such difficulties: who helps with respondent's own housework?
- Role in family care of other members of household?
- Use of childcare/eldercare services? How are children cared for when the respondent is at work?
- Involvement of respondent in voluntary and community activities? Consequences of taking up employment as regards involvement in other activities?
- What would be the best way to reconcile work and family life?

Each research team produced a full national report covering the following main topics: analysis of employment in household services at national level; analysis of employment in household services at local level, including innovation in household services' provision; analysis of employment in household services at worker level; conclusions and policy options. Each report was supported by detailed statistical annexes and bibliographies.

European synthesis report

The analysis of national reports is based on identifying the aspects set out below for each of the main areas covered by the project, which are: the current rate and recent growth patterns of employment in household services; trends in demand; public policy measures; local experiences in the development of household services; quality of work and quality of services; the reconciliation of work with family and community activities; men and women in household services; ethnic minorities and immigrant workers in household services.

For each of these, the aspects identified are:

- the general trends and situations;
- the actors (companies, organisations, institutions, social groups, etc.) who have an influence on these trends and situations;
- the policies adopted by these actors;
- experiences and examples of good practice;
- obstacles and aids;

The synthesis of the material was carried out in three stages.

In stage one, the national reports were considered parts of the same study yielding information on the same phenomenon, often in a complementary way. This was made possible by the relatively high level of convergence between the conclusions and information contained in the various national reports, which was established on a first reading of the material, and, of course, by the fact that the project was conducted using a common theoretical and methodological framework.

Stage two involved emphasising differences between countries and distinctive features in each country, especially insofar as they could be related to the implementation of distinct policies or initiatives carried out at national or even local level.

At stage three this information and the lessons learned were examined in the context of relevant European policies (combating social exclusion, promoting social protection and employment, mainstreaming equal opportunities) in order to identify issues, obstacles, opportunities and aids as regards the quantitative and qualitative development of employment in household services.

The main sources for the work were of course the eight national reports. To facilitate analysis of the information contained in the reports, a grid was developed to ensure that all the key elements referred to above were identified. The evidence in the national reports was supplemented by



documents and publications of the European Commission and other European organisations, and by studies and surveys on household services in Europe conducted by various bodies (see references).

The work for the European synthesis report thus involved the following activities:

- a) reading the eight national reports;
- b) preparing a detailed analysis grid based on a close reading of the reports;
- c) contacting national researchers for clarification;
- d) developing a general structure for the report;
- e) discussing the national reports (researchers' meeting of 16 March 2000) with the authors;
- f) reviewing policy and other documents in order to obtain supplementary information on the situation in other Member States and identify the European policy sectors to which the research findings can be referred;
- g) preparing a first draft report;
- h) discussing the first draft report at a coordination meeting held in Rome (25-26 May 2000);
- i) preparing a second draft report;
- j) discussing the second draft report at a researchers' meeting in Brussels (16 July 2000);
- k) preparing the final version of the report.

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Employment in household services

This report gives an overview of the household services sector in the European Union, showing how the transformation of unpaid work traditionally carried out in the home is increasingly seen by policy makers as having potential for job creation. It looks at the current experiences of paid workers and examines trends, policies and best practice in this domain. Five main spheres are covered: childcare, eldercare, domestic cleaning, home maintenance and catering. The findings are drawn from research carried out in eight Member States: Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom. The report addresses concerns about the quality of employment and working conditions in household services, as well as implications for equal opportunities and social inclusion. The conclusions present a sound basis for future policy initiatives in this field, which would lead to improved working conditions and training and career prospects for workers, as well as the provision of better quality services.

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