

## Personal and household services in Poland Improving working conditions and services through industrial relations

### PERHOUSE project



The project is funded by the European Union; Ref. 101052340.

### Policy Brief

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### The main characteristics and challenges of the personal and household services

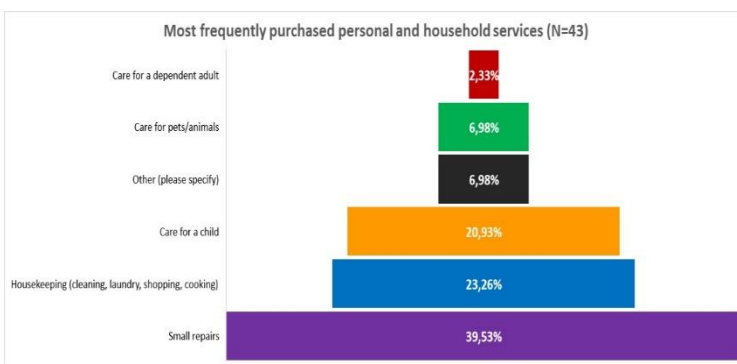
#### CHARACTERISTICS

- **The domestic labour market in Poland is poorly regulated** (Klakla et al., 2023, p. 3) and based on two systems: health care and social assistance (Ad-PHS, 2020).
- **Personal and household services in Poland are usually undeclared.**
- Those working in the **shadow economy** were most often employed in **construction or installation repairs and renovations** (18.7%), and gardening and agricultural work (14.9%). It was estimated that **408,000 households used undeclared work throughout 2022** (Główny Urząd Statystyczny/Statistics Poland, 2024).
- According to the subjective assessments of the respondents (15-89 years of age), the most common jobs performed in the shadow economy were **renovation and construction and installation repairs** – 46.7%, **construction and installation services** – 34.0%, **tutoring** – 25.0%, **housework** (e.g. cleaning) – 25.3% and **caring for a child or an elderly person** – 25.0% (Główny Urząd Statystyczny/Statistics Poland, 2024, p. 16).
- The European Labour Authority (Guzi et al., 2022) report on undeclared work in PHS indicates that **the sector is dominated by women** (75-90% across the EU-27, with the exception of repairs), which is the case for care services.

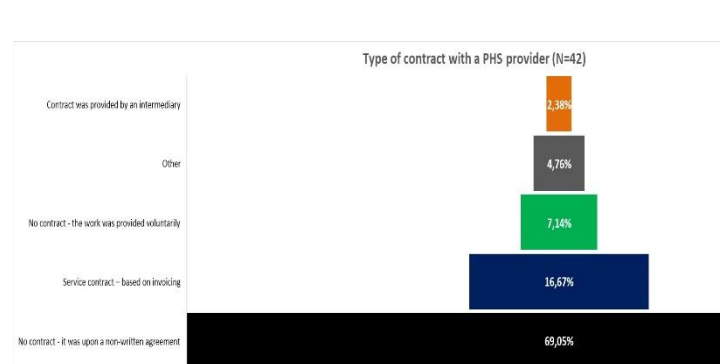
#### CHALLENGES FOR PHS IN POLAND

- **Precarious working conditions and poor job quality** (income, job security, social security, working time, autonomy at work, collective interest representation).
- Large share of **undeclared work**.
- Low compliance with existing legislation.
- **Low investment/budget** for public services.
- Large share of **vulnerable workers** (migrants, women).
- **Low level of unionisation** (due to the dispersion of workers, the nature of the activities and significant share of workers with insecure residency status).
- **Lack of social dialogue**.
- **Care drain/**the need for **professionalisation**.

Graph 1: Most frequently purchased personal and household services (based on the PERHOUSE social demand survey)



Graph 2: Type of contract with a PHS provider (based on the PERHOUSE social demand survey)



*A fundamental challenge to the PHS sector in Poland is that it remains in the so-called shadow economy.*

## Key findings on social dialogue in personal and household services

- Simply **identifying the most relevant social partners** involved in the personal and household services sector in Poland **was a challenge**.
- For the purposes of the project, we considered **the partners in the social dialogue** to be the stakeholders who expressed an interest in the PHS sector or who had institutional affiliation with it: **trade unions** (The Domestic Workers Committee of the All-Poland Trade Union “Workers’ Initiative”; Confederation of Labour of the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions; NSZZ “Solidarity”; and the Trade Unions Forum); **employers’ organisations** (the Polish Confederation Lewiatan; Employment Agencies Association) and by default **state institutions** (i.a. Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Health).
- It is highly disturbing that **there is no effective social dialogue on PHS in Poland, despite the presence of the Social Dialogue Council**, as can be demonstrated by indications of bypassing social partners/social consultation in the legislative process.
- Given the limited social dialogue concerning the PHS sector and the fragmentation of social actors, **the identified challenges are not yet subject to a systematic and effective social dialogue**, which is the most significant barrier to improving the working conditions of domestic workers in Poland.
- **None of the stakeholders referred to the Care Strategy (2022)**, promoting high quality, accessible (also in financial terms) childcare services (under 3 years of age; up to school starting age) and long-term care services, as well as: better working conditions for care providers.
- **Only one trade union was aware of Poland’s position on International Labour Organisation Convention no. 189 (2011)**, concerning domestic workers, which has not yet been ratified.
- **Nonetheless, the national workshop organised under the PERHOUSE project, entitled Personal and household services (PHS): the role of social dialogue in the context of challenges for the sector in Poland (26 January 2024, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University) enjoyed considerable interest, bringing together over 30 representatives of trade unions, employers’ organisations, government and public institutions, private entrepreneurs and NGOs.** The main lesson learned was that such initiatives should continue.

*The identified challenges to the PHS sector are not yet subject to a systematic and effective social dialogue, which is the most significant barrier to improving the working conditions of domestic workers in Poland.*

## Solutions and policy implications

- Regarding care services, the primary recommendation is to create an **integrated long-term care system** and to **increase employment in the sector** that matches the current and projected demand for this type of services. Essential elements of this system should be **services provided in the home setting as registered work**, thus safeguarding the elementary rights of workers and regulating the expectations of both parties to the contract as to its scope.
- Given that a significant proportion of service providers are in the shadow economy, and that the greatest challenge is posed by services provided by individuals to households, every effort should be made to **simplify the rules allowing for contractualisation that takes into account the specificities of the services and registration for social security, e.g. in an online form**, which in turn would safeguard workers’ social security.
- **Modernisation of labour market institutions** is urgent and unavoidable.
- The operation of **intermediary agencies requires verification**, e.g. by means of a certification procedure (employers’ organisations proposal).
- As foreigners providing personal and domestic services—care and non-care—are in a **vulnerable position** of cross discrimination, it is **imperative to examine the system for legalising stay and working in Poland** (EFFAT et al., 2022) and **build greater public awareness**.
- Considering the current state of play in Poland, and the recommendations from the OECD report (OECD, 2023), **establishing a forum for national social dialogue** to discuss issues and find shared solutions for challenges in PHS is **a task for the government** (UNI Europa, 2023).
- We trust that “**social dialogue and collective agreements** are effective instruments to tackle many challenges in PHS, **from reducing isolation and tackling undeclared work, to strengthening wages and working conditions** and identifying new professional profiles and necessary qualification standards” (Ad-PHS, 2021, p. 9).

## Project information

Project outputs include a comprehensive report on personal and household services and social dialogue in Poland and a comparative report for 12 Central European Countries.

All project outputs are available at <https://celsi.sk/en/projects/detail/209/>

*Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union.*

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