

More countries must ratify the ILO convention 189 - Decent work for Domestic Workers



(31 October 2023) On 9 October EPSU attended a hearing organised by EFFAT at the European Parliament where a panel discussed what the EU can do for domestic workers. Issues such as working conditions, protection of domestic workers, and the low rate of ratifications of the ILO convention 189 were raised. The Convention and Recommendation are founded on the fundamental premise that domestic workers are neither “servants”, nor “members of the family” nor second-class workers.

The panel consisted of:

- Dana Bachman, Head of unit Directorate-General for Employment Social Affairs & Inclusion
- Malu Villanueva, FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging) - Migrant Domestic Workers Union
- Nancy Seutin, shop steward ACV - CSC (Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond -

Confédération des Syndicats chrétiens) – Titres-Services

- Adriana Paz, IDWF (International Domestic Workers federation) Representative
- Kristjan Bragason, General Secretary EFFAT (European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism).

The domestic worker can be invisible to the rest of the world, since they work alone at home, which means that a lot of difficulties they face can go unnoticed as well. For example, there is no one who regulates the environment they work in or the instruments they use to make sure it is safe for the worker. There also needs to be risk analyses in place to protect domestic workers. It is also difficult for domestic workers to prove that their diseases are in direct relation to Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) or their work and therefore they often do not have the same right to compensation.

There are about 9.5 million domestic workers in the EU and the majority of them are women (90 %), and migrants, of which many are undocumented (3.1 million). It is difficult to be an undocumented domestic worker in a digital world since they cannot open bank accounts and fewer people use cash nowadays, which limits their accessibility to work.

The ILO convention 189 aims to protect the rights of domestic workers and improve their working conditions. This convention provides a strong framework for the recognition of domestic work, their value and protection. However only ten countries in Europe (eight in the EU) have ratified this convention: Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Earlier this year Spain also ratified it, but it is not yet in force as that will happen in February of 2024. The panel unanimously agreed that this is not enough, we need more countries to ratify the convention to ensure the protection and recognition of domestic workers. Together with social dialogue which is a fundamental pillar of the European social model, domestic workers could get the recognition they deserve.

- [Log in](#) to post comments
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

Policies

[Health and Safety](#)

[Quality employment](#)

Sectors

[Health and Social Services](#)