



**European Employment Policy Observatory Ad
hoc Request**

Personal and household services

Italy

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1. Presentation of the sector in Italy

In Italy the lack of a national strategy and the competition of a large grey market have weakened the creation of a formal market for personal and household services. As the growth of the PHS sector has never been regulated under a single general policy, different frameworks deal with care and non-care services.

Domestic and care work, in a narrow sense, have been regulated by means of a specific law and a collective agreement since the mid of the 1950s. The national labour contract defines this type of employment as concerning all the activities aimed at the “functioning of family life” (art. 1). Recent labour market reforms considered instead “non care” activities under specific regulations concerning occasional work. In 2003, the Legislative Decree No. 276 of 2003 (the so-called “Biagi law) introduced service vouchers as a new statutorily recognised form of employment to be used, in particular circumstances, to hire specific groups of workers for a limited range of activities. This law stated that “occasional domestic work only covers services provided in an occasional and discontinuous way to meet [the users’] family needs that are related to family care and house work and which are accessory. They include babysitting and dog sitting”. In order to avoid potential overlaps with publicly funded and organized old-age care and child care, such care services were excluded from the voucher scheme and were formally addressed within public old-age care and child care provision measures. Even though the voucher system was not used in practice until 2008, when the Minister of Labour introduced a new experimental project for grape harvesting (Tiraboschi, 2007), since 2008 the use of this system has constantly grown. It has been repeatedly reformed over the years, with the latest round of reforms implemented in 2012.

At the end of the 1990s, different measures were introduced to foster the development of PHS, notably policies to expand services in some sectors, such as childcare (Law 285/97) and elderly care. The most important law, which was introduced in 2000 (n. 328/2000), defines the range of services to be provided locally. In particular, home health and home care services are to be provided by municipal social services managed by the Local Health Agencies (Aziende Sanitarie Locali – ADI). In practice, these services provide almost exclusively home health care support, and the care packages consist essentially of home

nursing. In addition, municipalities provide social care support (e.g. home help and personal care) through their social services departments. In most cases, local authorities use public tendering to provide the bulk of social care services (SAD Servizio di assistenza domiciliare) through social cooperatives. Public procurement is subject to cost and quality control, and the service providers selected are those who submit the “most economically convenient” offers. Traditionally, care service providers belong to the non-profit sector, namely social co-operatives that employ social care operators. In particular, ‘type A’ social cooperatives (which are recognized as welfare organisations that are beneficial to the public benefit) are the first service providers. They account for 7% of the Italian GDP and employ more than one million workers (Fabbri 2011). After a reform of the sector in 1991, today cooperatives can be active also in the field of social and health care for the provision of home-based and residential care.

The number of Italian households that organise the care for their dependent members through a social cooperative is growing. Whereas it was not present until a few years ago, in 2012 this type of employment accounted for 14.3% in the home-care sector at the national level (Ministero del Lavoro, 2013; Lamura, 2013). A recent survey involving 1,500 home-care workers estimated that 6.2% of them currently work through cooperatives (Ministero del Lavoro, 2013).

Despite the long tradition of social cooperatives and their greater involvement in the PHS sector, the diffusion of the “migrant in the family” solution in the ‘90s has almost driven whatever private supply had started to operate (and in particular the social cooperatives) out of the domiciliary care segment, making them to retreat into the residential care segment (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2010). The only funds available for the financing of care, which have been provided through unconditional monetary transfers (either pensions or attendance allowance), have indirectly influenced families to buy care services on the grey market.¹ The recent attempts aimed at tackling undeclared work

¹ The main cash allowance for disabled people, the Attendance Allowance (Indennità di accompagnamento), was introduced at the national level in 1980. It was originally intended for young adult disabled people, but it was extended to cover older people in the mid-1980s. It is a national cash benefit scheme paid by the

through a direct link between cash allowances and the hiring of regular workers (care allowances, vouchers) have produced mixed results. Thus, individual workers dominate the market and large firms work mainly as sub-contractors of the public sector and do not offer care services directly to families (Italia Lavoro, 2014).

2. Main element on jobs in the sector

According to the latest available data (2014) provided by Eurostat, in Italy there are almost 756,2 thousand workers recruited to perform domestic tasks (NACE 97) and 233,4 thousand workers ranged under the category “social work without accommodation” (NACE 88).

An important issue that arises when conducting research in this area is the lack of consistent data for the sector. The problems regarding the data availability include the following:

- The terms used to describe the types of professions differ according to the source of data. Administrative data of social security system collect information about regular domestic and care workers and only recently it is possible to split data according to the occupation (domestic and care workers). Survey data collect this employment category under the general definition of “family services”. Thus information is not properly comparable.
- There is no consistent categorization of the social care sector by type of services offered in survey dataset. There is no data available regarding the share of employees offering services to old people, people with disabilities or to disadvantaged groups (only per capita expenses and beneficiaries covered).
- It is impossible to disaggregate Labour Force survey secondary data by types of occupation (only one digit level) and by nationality from the data warehouse of the National Statistical Institute (www.dati.istat.it).
- Only Labour Force surveys provide updated data. Information about profit

National Social Security Institute to people unable to perform the basic activities of daily life. The beneficiaries are free to spend the money as they choose, and there is no need to agree on a care plan.

and non-profit sector is collected by censuses (the last one was in 2011), while last data available of the social security system is relative to the year 2013.

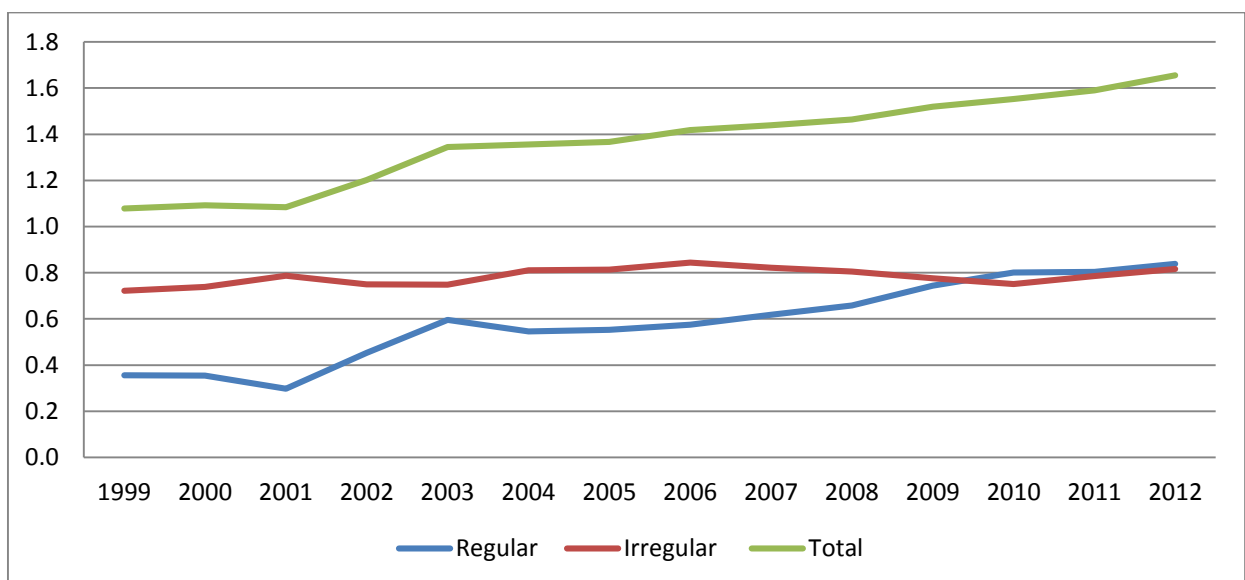
Relevant information about the evolution of the sector can be obtained from the National Institute of Social Security (INPS), which provides information about the number of regular care and domestic workers since 2004. A first key element to be highlighted is that domestic and care work still persists as a highly feminized activity, regardless of the nationality of the workers. A clear and lasting gender segregation dominates the sector. In 2013 the share of women was equal to 83,1% (791 thousand units) and recorded a decrease of 5 percentage points as compared to 2004 (88,9 percent) due to the increase during the same period of the number of men (+131.8% against +66.3% of women), who grew from 55 to 153 thousand units. The proportion of male workers out of the total increased from 11,2% in 2004 to 16.2% in 2013. Yet, the rate of female workers decreased only in 2009, when many men registered as domestic workers in coincidence with the migrant workers' regularization. It should be stressed that the trend observed in the group of migrant men employed as domestic workers is probably related to the evolution of migration policies. Indeed, greater possibilities for legal entry or regularization in the domestic sector have pushed many migrant men to register as domestic workers, although this was not always their actual occupation.

If the gender composition of domestic work has remained a constant feature of the PHS sector, one of its most significant changes is related to the ethnic composition. The great expansion of the Italian PHS sector has been almost exclusively fed by relevant inflows of migrant workers, especially women. Migrant workers outnumber Italian workers after the "great regularization" of 2002. The number of migrant workers from Eastern Europe, which accounted in 2004 for 39.7% of the total, increased by almost five percentage points in 2013 (44.9%), while in absolute value their number has almost doubled (+114%, amounting to +226 thousand units). Such sub-group has experienced a relevant growth, notably in 2007, when Romania (and Bulgaria) entered the EU, thus leading to an overall increase in registered domestic workers. Conversely, the proportion of Italian workers fell by more than seven points (from 27 per cent to

20 per cent) although in absolute terms their number increased (+45.1%, amounting to +60 thousand units). Those coming from East Asian countries (China, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) grew by nearly three points (from 4,9 per cent to 8,3 per cent) in the same period (+219%, amounting to +54 thousand units). Between 2004 and 2013 the amount of South American workers increased from 54 to 69 thousand, although their incidence decreased from 19.9% to 7.3%. In the same period, workers coming from the Philippines increased in absolute term (+24 thousand) while their share changed from 9.8% to 7.7%. The share of domestic workers from North Africa went up by almost two points and their number tripled (+202.2 thousand).

Using Istat data, it is also possible to trace the evolution of irregular employment in the field of the activities of households as employers of personal domestic personnel (Figure 1). The overall number of domestic workers increased from 1 million units in 1999 to 1.6 million units in 2012. In the same period, irregular workers grew from 722,1 to 816,8 thousand, while regular workers rose from 355,9 to 838,9 thousand. It should be noted that the share of non-regular workers out of the total decreased from 67% in 1999 to 49.3% in 2012, probably due to the regularisation of immigrant workers.

Figure 1 Households as employer of domestic personnel (thousand).



Source: Istat, Economic Accounts

As far as salaries and wages are concerned, the national collective agreement classifies eight levels of profiles, each one having a specific salary. The levels

range from A, for domestic workers with no experience, to super level D for trained and skilled family assistants who take care of non-sufficient persons. Family assistants' profiles correspond to the following levels:

- super level B (assistant to self-sufficient individuals, monthly salary for the year 2015: € 845,80),
- super level C (individual assistance to non self-sufficient individuals, unskilled, ns, monthly salary for the year 2015: € 958,58)
- super level D (individual assistance to non self-sufficient individuals, trained and skilled, monthly salary for the year 2015: € 1184,12).

There also are specific minimum wage tables for in-house workers, from which no deduction can be made for in-kind payments such as housing and board. Indeed, a reimbursement is foreseen for in-house workers for the days in which they cannot make use of housing and board.

Cohabitant assistants can work up to a maximum of 54 hours per week and for extra hours an overtime pay is due, while non cohabitants can work up to 40 hours per week. Each working agreement has different economic conditions, which must not however be in contrast with the collective agreement. In particular, the parties cannot agree on a salary lower than that established by the collective agreement. Working hours, vacations, weekly days off and weekly half days off must be indicated. The collective agreement specifies the paid hours (40) that can be used by assistants to attend vocational training courses, rules job sharing (which allows two workers to be employed in the same job, thus sharing working days and hours) and the compensation for dismissal, resignation or expiration of temporary working contract.

3. PHS approaches and their impact on job creation and employment levels

Given the impressive development of the market of home-based care services, and particularly of elderly care, massively provided by migrant women, and in the light of the problems that arise by the often irregular character of this work, the public authorities have tried to tackle some of their most serious challenges

both at national and local level. In 2004² a tax benefit for families employing domestic workers was introduced in order to reduce undeclared work through an incentive to buy vouchers. Funding was provided by the state (through tax exemptions), the regions – which are responsible for personal services and employment policy – and the national social security system (INPS). Although there have been important developments in the scheme since 2010, its impact has been rather limited. In 2009, the action plan “Italia 2020” aimed at improving the work-life balance and the integration of women in the labour market (Ministero del Lavoro, 2009). The idea behind this plan was to build a welfare state on the basis of family needs and responsibilities, and to promote different options of family support, through taxation schemes, family allowances, universal vouchers and personal services.

Even though social care and household services are expected to grow significantly in the future, a comprehensive set of policy measures aiming at supporting the development of personal and household services, the reduction of undeclared work, and the creation of a formal and structured economy for this sector is still lacking. As pointed out above, the development of the personal and household services sector has not been considered under a single overall policy: the regulation of “employment and occasional work” has been carried out through the establishment of a voucher scheme (Biagi law), which regulates occasional activities ranging from household services to agricultural work; occasional work in family businesses, housework, gardening, cleaning and maintenance of buildings, roads, parks and monuments; sporting events (also in favour of government entities); door-to-door and street vending of newspapers and magazines; private and extra tuition.

A decree enacted on 22 December 2012 formally introduced an experimental mini-package to support employment of women for the next 3 years, including vouchers for 6 months to be used at the end of maternity leave as an alternative to the parental leave. The 2012 National Plan for Families included measures to

² 4Quality! Project - European project for quality of jobs and services in personal care and household services (2015), “Quality of jobs and services in the Personal care and Household Services sector in Italy” Report.

increase the availability, quality and affordability of childcare and long-term care services and to better reconcile work and family life (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2012). The Cohesion Action Plan also includes measures to promote access to childcare and elderly care facilities in Italian Southern regions and to accelerate the development and implementation of projects funded by Structural Funds. The yearly monitoring of the Plan, presented in November 2013, showed that a billion euro were allocated by the Plan to promote childcare services but not all resources were used, and only 55,000 additional places were created (Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica, 2013). In August 2013 an Agreement between the State and regional and local authorities was signed to improve child care services. In view of improving the working conditions in the PHS sector, Italy was the first EU member state to ratify the C189 ILO Domestic Workers Convention in 2011, which entered into force in September 2013. Finally, the Italian Parliament is currently discussing a universal voucher bill with the purpose of providing the PHS sector with an overall policy scheme through the introduction of a specific voucher system.

Having provided a general description of policy developments, national and local initiatives can now be separately described (Ministero del Lavoro, 2013).

3.1 The national level

At the national level, the most important measures adopted to foster the development of the PHS sector focussed on fiscal incentives, the voucher scheme and migrant workers' regularization. The specific measures can be summarised as follows.

a) Tax refund

The Italian financial law envisages tax deductions for expenditures related to domestic services bought from family assistants on the regular market. There are two types of tax benefits depending on the family employer's income.

- For employer's annual income up to € 40,000, there exists a deduction from taxable income equal to 19% of the costs being sustained up to € 2100, which is equivalent to a maximum tax credit of € 399 (2100 x 19%, that is the flat tax rate for that level of income).

- For employers with income above that threshold, the deduction from taxable income of the social security contributions can reach a yearly maximum of € 1,549.37. The tax benefit varies with the income tax rate and it may range from a minimum of € 356 (for an income tax rate equal to 23%) to a maximum of € 666 (for the top income tax rate, which is equal to 43%).

The benefit can only be in the form of a tax credit. Hence, elderly people on low pensions, who usually do not pay the income tax, cannot benefit from the tax break. In this case, family members usually recruit family assistants, in order to take advantage of the tax benefit. Unfortunately there are not studies about the impact of the tax refund on job creation or reduction of informality, but it is clear that the extremely low amount of tax benefits, also in comparative terms, does not cover the pay difference between regular and irregular carers, which remains high, particularly in the case of co-residence. A carer on a regular contract would cost about 40 percent more than an irregular worker, a percentage that however varies depending on tasks, nationality, working time, and the conditions prevailing in the black market.

The condition of irregularity can be preferred also by the migrant carer, who may want to exchange a regular position for a higher wage. A regular contract is searched for when the residence permit has to be renewed, since the latter is linked to a regular work contract. Even in the case of regular employment, it is common to under-declare the hours of work to evade social contributions. Indeed, a work permit requires a foreign worker to pay social contributions for a minimum of 25 hours per week. To declare this minimum level, even when the carer works more hours, represents a mutual advantage, since both parties can gain by evading social contributions and sharing this illegal rent.

b) Childcare voucher for mothers using parental leave

This measure was introduced by Law 92/2012 and was implemented between 2013 and 2015. The measure allowed women to exchange paid parental leave for vouchers to be used for childcare services. The benefit can consist in the following alternative provisions: i) contributions to finance the expenditure of public childcare services or private accredited services; ii) vouchers to purchase baby-sitting services.

The amount of the contribution is € 600.00 per month and is granted for a maximum period of six months. Several analyses show that only a third of the € 20 million allocated for this policy was spent to purchase childcare vouchers (e.g., Prioschi, 2013). It is still to be determined whether this is due to too strict eligibility criteria or to the low number of potentially interested parents. The low number of vouchers can also in part be related to the application procedure to be followed by childcare institutions, which may have been too complex and to be completed within a very strict time limit. This may have led to the participation of only a few number of institutions out of the eligible ones (Prioschi, 2013). Moreover, as underlined by Cardinali (2013), the measure's focus on women could have led to the replication of the still existing unbalanced division of care responsibilities within Italian families.

c) Amnesties

The first regularization of migrant workers, which occurred in 1979, regarded only domestic workers. In 1991 a legal derogation to the so-called Martelli Law stated that non-EU citizens could apply for work permit (before immigrating) to establish an employment relationship only for domestic activities³. The 2002 amnesty was initially scheduled only for housekeepers and family assistants and only in a second moment it was also applicable to other employees. Moreover, in recent years the “flow decrees” have guaranteed increasing regular admission quotas (up to 70% between 2002 and 2008) to domestic and care workers (Sarti, 2010). Data reported by Colombo and Martini (2007, p. 126) confront national and foreign-applicant employers according to the economic sector for which the work permit was requested during the period 2005-2007. It emerges that foreign employers from Ghana, Senegal, the Philippines and Peru massively requested work permits concerning the domestic sector (respectively in 95.6 per cent, 86.3 per cent, 83.4 per cent and 69.6 per cent of cases). These requests were probably used for the reunification of family members rather than responding to

³ The Martelli law (Law n. 39/1990) treated the immigration issue by narrowing the flow of immigration, setting a pre-determined number of accesses (quota) and linking them to the job market. The persons entering the Country with regular documents but remaining after the expiration of the permit, or those exceeding the quota, are considered “illegal immigrants”. Illegal and irregular immigrants, as well as the ones who do not have the required qualifications, are expelled. The aim of this law was the regularization of immigrant workers who were exploited as irregular workers.

a real labour demand in the domestic sector.

In May 2008, the right-wing coalition government agreed on the adoption of a complex set of legislative measures that are often referred to as the Security Package. This law allowed facilitated expulsions, the transformation of irregular immigration into a crime and the extension of the period of detention for irregular immigrants⁴. In the aftermath of its introduction, the Minister for Families proposed an amnesty to regularize the “good” migrants who have a job in homes and carry out domestic activities. Even though the proposal raised very harsh reactions by other members of the government, the proposal was accepted and in 2009 a new amnesty was introduced only for migrant care workers.

Generally speaking, any institutional attempt to control or to close national borders to immigration has so far left the door open to domestic and care workers. Irregular workers belonging to this category thus only rarely run the risk to be punished as undocumented migrants and generally have a better chance to regularise their employment relationship as compared to those working in other sectors. This exception has not however always meant transforming undeclared work into regular employment.

Four years after the beginning of the current economic crisis, another amnesty was approved. Despite the optimistic announcement of the Government, the 2012 amnesty regularized 134.576 foreign workers, of which 86% claimed to be domestic or care professionals (Ministero dell’Interno, 2012)⁵.

For the people who illegally resided in the country, the regularization was the chance to obtain the permit to stay they had so much longed for: many of them had already given up the possibility to get it. For families, the only gain was to quit an unlawful situation. But it seems that for many of them this aspect was not so relevant. According to the ACLI (the Cristian Association of Italian Workers), between 30% and 40% of families interested in regularization gave up with the

⁴ The Security Package was composed of a series of laws broadly covering those categorised as EU citizens, third-country nationals (TCNs) and, most particularly, Roma. Third-country nationals are those not holding the nationality of a EU member state and therefore not falling within the status of European citizens as defined in Art. 17(1) of the EC Treaty.

⁵

http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/24/2012_10_17_Emersione_2012_-_Report_conclusivo.pdf

application. Several reasons explain this behaviour, including low income levels. More in details, for families, that were supposed to bear most of the cost, the requirements looked reasonable if individually considered, but as a whole they made a difference:

- i) the € 1000 lump sum to be paid represented a strong psychological deterrent;
- ii) the minimum of 20 working hours per week in a single family excluded the relevant, and increasing, share of the market based on hourly work. This obligation was actually strict: for the application to be accepted, the employer had to declare to have been hiring a maid or family assistant for at least 3 months, and for at least 20 weekly hours. This limit was easily reached by family assistants who work with non-self-sufficient people requiring a lot of care in terms of hours, but was uncommon for maids who seldom work 20 hours a week within the same family;
- iii) the complexity of the procedure played an important role;
- iv) the obligation to comply with social security contributions and the system of rules, rights and obligations.

It has been argued that amnesty measures are far from affecting the domestic work sector for at least two reasons. Firstly, even though families may have a low perception that that they exploit immigrant workers when they irregularly employ them as family assistants, most of the issue is about the low risk of controls, complaints and penalties associated to non-regular employment. Secondly, as already mentioned above, there is an interweaving of mutual convenience to work irregularly and remain underground, for example by the registration of only a part of the hours worked (IWAK, 2011; Picchi and Simonazzi, 2014). Consequently, the failure of the last amnesty concluded in 2012 was largely predictable and perhaps politically acceptable.

As of today, risks are high for those who did not apply for regularization. According to the Security Decree (n. 81/2008), employers hiring an irregular worker can be convicted for favouring illegal immigration and receive administrative sanctions worth tens of thousands of Euros. Maids and family assistants without a residence permit can be convicted for illegal immigration

and stay in Italy (fines from 5 to 10 thousand Euros) and expelled from the country. On the other hand, those who have filed an application in 2012, have waited for a long time before getting the approval of their application. Indeed, the Single Desks for Immigration and the local police headquarters have given priority to immigration flows and family reunifications, thus further delaying the procedure.

Table 1 provides data about ethnic composition of the workers regularly registered in the Social Security system. There is evidence that according to the years of the different amnesties (2009 and 2012) the workers traditionally not employed in the sector (North Africa and West Asia) have gained incidence as compared to other more representative nationalities (East European, national workers). The data provided by the Ministry of Domestic Affairs confirms this view: 13,000 requests for regularization from Moroccans, almost 12,000 from Bangladesh citizens and “only” 10,000 from Ukraine people.

It is also interesting that since the beginning of the economic crisis, the incidence of native born domestic and care workers registered with social security authorities increased by 20%. Moreover, the number of male domestic workers substantially decreased in the two years following the regularization campaign, supposedly because of a change of the sector of activity after the obtainment of the legal status.

Table 1. Domestic workers registered in the Social Security system by global region of origin

	2 0 0 6	2 0 0 7	2 0 0 8	2 0 0 9	2 0 1 0	2 0 1 1	2 0 1 2	2 0 1 3
Italy	2 8. 3 7	2 2. 5 8	2 1. 9 0	1 7. 0 6	1 8. 5 3	1 9. 8 4	1 8. 7 2	2 0. 7 3
West Europe	0. 3 5	0. 2 9	0. 2 8	0. 2 2	0. 2 4	0. 2 6	0. 2 4	0. 2 5

	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	8.	7.	8.	3.	6.	7.	4.	4.
East Europe	6	3	0	7	3	9	3	9
	4	7	2	7	1	2	4	7
North America	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Central America	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.
	3	1	1	2	3	3	3	4
	9	8	7	9	1	6	9	1
South America	1							
	0.	8.	8.	8.	8.	8.	7.	7.
	0	4	0	5	6	4	6	3
	9	4	4	2	8	7	2	7
Middle east Asia	0.	0.	0.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.
	2	2	3	0	0	0	3	3
	5	7	6	2	3	7	4	3
Asia: Philippine	1							
	0.	8.	8.	7.	7.	8.	7.	7.
	4	6	4	0	4	0	5	7
	4	7	0	1	5	2	3	4
West Asia				1				
	5.	5.	5.	0.	8.	6.	9.	8.
	0	7	8	6	3	6	8	3
	0	0	9	0	7	0	8	3
North Africa	2.	3.	3.	7.	5.	3.	6.	5.
	7	1	3	6	3	9	1	3
	2	5	8	4	9	3	5	1
Central-South Africa	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.
	7	3	5	8	6	4	7	5
	0	1	3	2	4	8	3	0

	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oceania	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2

Source: INPS, Osservatorio Statistico sui Lavoratori Domestici

[available

at:

<http://www.inps.it/webidentity/banchedatistatistiche/domestici/index01.jsp>]

The Italian Parliament is discussing the introduction of a universal voucher, with the aim of maximising the effectiveness of spending by social care policies through a measure of fiscal equity that allows for a partial but significant deduction of the hiring costs. The second objective is to fight against the emergence of undeclared work and, therefore, to create regular jobs in the PHS sector. The emergence of irregularities is linked to the development and professionalization of this employment sector, and with respect to this issue the legislative proposal is clear in stating that "it is necessary to implement policies to qualify care and domestic work by introducing homogeneous standards and giving full recognition to the professional figure of the family assistant".

There are four possible recipients of vouchers: families, employees, social security services and small and medium-sized enterprises. All of them will be able to buy or receive vouchers, which will be used to purchase care services for children, elderly people or people with disabilities, as well as to pay for domestic activities.

The same mechanism can be used by public administrations to simplify and accelerate social policy interventions. The voucher should be transferable and may not be sold or used for the purchase of services other than those listed in the legislative proposal. The Government is responsible to define, in agreement with the Regions, the common requirements of regional registers of domestic workers and personal assistants. The legislative proposal also establishes a national register of enterprises, organisations and associations authorized to offer such services. The main purpose of the register would be the selection of the organisations ensuring high quality of the service.

The legislative proposal also identifies a single accreditation scheme for those entitled to deliver the services paid with vouchers operating nationally, while

Regions are responsible to certificate the quality of those that operate locally. According to the article 11 of the legislative proposal, the Government should establish the General Directorate of the PHS system. It should be responsible for developing the minimum standards relating to different professional profiles and defining the duration and the training content for each profile, including a skill certification system. The National Institute of Social Security should manage the provision of the vouchers through an online system and a fund for the financing of measures should be finally established. In order to counter the black market, the legislative proposal would introduce also a tax deduction equal to 33% of the expenses incurred by the taxpayers, up to a maximum amount ranging from € 6,000 to € 8,000.

According to a survey carried out by Censis (Censis, 2014), the public cost of this measure would amount to about € 1.3 billion for the first year, but it would subsequently fall to about 640 million thanks to the direct benefits (greater tax revenue linked to the emergence of irregular work, estimated at approximately € 305 million). Taking into account the indirect benefits (tax revenues arising from employment on the sector, VAT on additional consumption of families and workers etc.), public spending should be further reduced to € 273 million. The legislative proposal also foresees to finance this expenditure through the European Structural Funds (mainly resources devoted to fostering female employment). According to Censis, after 5 years of implementation of such scheme, families able to access this new system would amount to 482 thousand units. The final effect would be the emergence of undeclared work (approximately 326 thousand units) and job creation (approximately 315 thousand units). This ambitious program is not however exempt from ambiguities. In particular: i) the proposal does not take into account the existing measures, and in particular the attendance allowance; ii) the role of the non-for profit sector and its involvement in the program is unclear.

3.2 The local level

At the local level, several measures have been introduced since the early 2000s and they have been financed by different institutions: the European Social Fund, Equal programme, Regional funds, Provincial funds, Municipality funds. In general, they have sought to address both sides of the market of care services,

namely the demand represented by families and the supply, mostly provided by migrant women workers. It has to be underlined that these measures have concerned almost exclusively family assistants caring for elderly or disabled people, while much less has been done to addressing the domestic workers providing home-care or child-care services. Furthermore, actions in this field is largely subject to territorial characteristics, linked to significant differences in the availability of public funds, fundraising capacity of local actors, social policy planning and institutional framework, among other factors. The plethora of measures implemented by regions and municipalities can be synthesized into three main types of interventions, sometimes combined with the others and other times carried out as isolated action: i) care allowances; ii) services desk; iii) registers; iv) vocational training aimed at qualifying home care work. These policies are here described in details.

a) Care allowances

Although care allowances have been introduced at the national level in 2000, only regions and municipalities are responsible for their management and financing. This local arrangement has led to very significant variations in the rate of uptake across regions, ranging from 3.5% of the older population in the Bolzano Province to zero in some Southern regions. Approximately 0.6% of the older population receive this type of support, receiving on average € 98 per month. Access to care allowances is both needs and means tested, and requires the presence of an informal care support network or the commitment to hire a professional caregiver with the resources allocated. It was originally conceived as a measure to compensate family caregivers (mostly wives and daughters), but in the past decade care allowances became a mechanism for remunerating privately contracted care workers, especially in order to facilitate the regularization of their contractual position. Most Italian regions have in fact linked the allowance to the regularization of family caregivers to a work contract of at least 25 hours per week. Care allowance can also be provided as a voucher for home care services. The level entitlement can be fixed (for example, in Emilia-Romagna and Sardinia it is set at € 160 and € 250 per month, respectively) or variable depending, for example, on the care burden and on the user's income, (for example between € 50 and € 260 per month in Veneto, and

between € 120 and € 200 per month in Friuli-Venezia Giulia). Although recipients are theoretically entitled to an individualized care plan, the Italian local authorities have experienced significant problems in implementation due to the lack of appropriate need assessment processes and the poor monitoring of care plans following assessment.

b) Service desks

Many Regions have introduced ad hoc service desks aimed at facilitating the match between supply and demand in the private care market between families in search of care workers and (qualified) family assistants (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2009; Demarchi and Sarti, 2010). Some offer information for families, others offer guidance, tutoring, ongoing support. Available evidence suggests positive responses (NNA, 2012) despite the fact that only few regions have implemented these programs.

c) Registers

At the local level, official registers of qualified family assistants are often matched with the service desks to provide an additional source of information and to reduce informality in the job-matching process (NNA, 2012). Despite the greater involvement of Regions and Municipalities in the programming and management of the PHS sector, there exist no relevant studies that analyse the benefit and cost of these local policies.

4. Workers in PHS – current and future employability in the sector

National legislation on domestic work dates back to 1958 (Law n. 339) and the first collective agreement was signed in 1974. Both these instruments cover the full range of domestic workers' tasks, from care work to babysitting, housekeeping and related care services. In particular, Law 339 defines workers' rights, such as work tasks, rest times, holidays, salaries and wage increases related to years of services. In Italy, collective agreements bind both employers and employees of a respective sector independently from their affiliation with an employers' association or trade union. Collective agreements are negotiated between the sectoral branches for trade and services of the three main national trade union confederations (Filcams-CGIL, Fisascat-CISL, Uiltucs-UIL) and the two employers' associations Fidaldo and Domina.

An important collective agreement was introduced in 2007 stipulating hourly wages and bonuses for overtime, night and holiday work, as well as different work tasks and respective skill and pay levels. Even though Italy has one of the oldest labour legislation in this field, these workers are discriminated with regard to dismissal from work. There is an obligation for a written contract as well as the right to have the monthly salary paid 13 times per year. Regulations of working and rest times are equal to those of other workers, with a maximum of 40 hours of work per week, presence times and breaks included (54 hours per week in case of in-house arrangements), 11 hours of daily and 36 hours of weekly rest, as well as 26 days of paid holidays per year. Moreover, minimum conditions for cohabitant workers are determined, such as the requirement for a decent autonomous room, as well as the right to two hours of rest each afternoon and to free Sundays. There is no need for employers to comply with the possible reasons for dismissal as they are defined by the Italian law, nor are they obliged to provide a written dismissal statement, which is however a precondition for workers to obtain unemployment benefits.

Despite the advanced labour legislation, Italian immigration policies have also contributed to affect employment and working conditions in the sector. Even though the law recognises the general principle of equality of treatment between Italian and regularly resident foreign workers with respect to labour and civic and social rights (as well as duties), migrant workers are subject to great vulnerability respect to their legal status. According to the current immigration law, migrant workers' legal and employment status are closely related: the duration of the residence permit for employment is usually linked to the duration of the job contract and even in case of open-ended contracts the duration of permits cannot exceed two years. Only after five years of regular residence in Italy (and other conditions), migrant workers may be granted a permanent residence permit. As a consequence of these provisions, migrant workers are frequently in a weak position and thus more inclined to accept sub-standard working conditions in order to be able to maintain their legal status.

A key requirement for the public accreditation of social cooperatives concerns the skills of the social workers. Qualified workers need to hold a specific diploma as social operators, which corresponds to specific training followed by an

examination. Although training is compulsory for social care workers, there is no such requirement in the case of domestic and care workers. In 2013, the national collective agreement included compulsory trainings only for foreign workers to renew their residence permit. Some associations provide training and some municipalities also carried out initiatives to improve qualification and skills of personal assistants. However, such training was targeted only at regular migrant workers (Pasquinelli and Rusmini, 2010).

Regional training is one of the most frequent actions undertaken with the aim of fostering the emergence of the regular private PHS market. Regional training courses have generally three aims: i) to ensure basic skill levels; ii) to standardize training levels; iii) to professionalize and improve the quality of services. Actually only fourteen regions have defined the terms and contents of the training course for family assistants: Abruzzo, Molise, Umbria, Puglia, Piedmont, Tuscany, Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venetia Giulia, Liguria, Lazio, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardy and Marche (Acli colf 2013). The following table provides information about the minimum standard of hours of family assistants' training. Trade unions have denounced that these standard requirements are time consuming and hardly compatible with working and family commitments (e.g. care workers cannot leave alone the elderly person for many hours) (Acli colf, 2013).

Table 2. Minimum training standards in the different Italian Regions.

Region	Hours of training
Abruzzo	400
Campania	120
Emilia Romagna	120
Friuli Venetia Giulia	200
Lazio	120 short course + 300 standard course
Liguria	200
Lombardy	160 first level course + 100 second level course
Marche	100

Molise	200
Piedmont	200
Puglia	400
Tuscany	220
Umbria	150+ stage
Aosta Valley	120

Source: Acli colf, 2013

Some findings indicate critical issues about these training programs:

- i) high dropout because workers often perceive training as time taken away from paid work and families have difficulties (and lack of interest) in giving up the presence of the assistant even for a few hours;
- ii) poor participation by family assistants with short-term migration projects; those mostly interested in undertaking a training program are workers with long-term migration projects, especially those who aspire to work in the service sector, in nursing/resting houses and hospitals;
- iii) as far as babysitters' training is concerned only few Regions, mostly in the North of the country have financed initiatives in this field.

Although the interest in care workers' training has increased over the years at regional level, only trade unions have raised the debate about the necessity to introduce a nationwide system of qualification with common rules about content, duration and certification. The problem of the cost of qualification was not at the centre of this debate since each region, according to the subsidiary principle, is responsible of the funding. Broadly speaking, the issue of training and more in general of quality of service have interested the public opinion only during the period of amnesties.

The Action System for the Development of Integrated Services to the Individuals (Azione di Sistema per lo sviluppo di sistemi integrati di Servizi alla Persona project – AsSaP) has been launched at national level within the framework of the 2007-2013 European Social Fund, aimed at implementing active policies for employment as well as vocational training in the field of domestic and care

services. Promoted and financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the project is implemented by Italia Lavoro in four Regions: Campania, Puglia, Calabria and Sicily. In addition, the regions may decide to grant money transfers to families hiring workers who have participated in the AsSAP project and have completed their training courses. The project targets unemployed and/or inactive people and unskilled workers who are or could be employed in personal and household services as cleaners and caregivers. PHS' users can either be private families or entrepreneurs, as long as they want to hire PHS workers through permanent or fixed terms contracts for a minimum duration of 12 months.

Training vouchers have been implemented as an incentive system to promote professional qualification in the sector. They are allocated to trainees and potential workers in order to ensure them access to jobs offered by the intermediation agencies involved in the project. The training vouchers are paid to the agency only if the worker has completed the course and has signed a permanent or a fixed term contract for a minimum duration of 12 months. Two different cash incentives are offered:

- € 2,000 for each participant who attends a course of at least 64 hours and signs a fixed or open ended contract as a basic professional (domestic helper, caregivers);
- € 2,500 for each participant who attends a course of at least 80 hours and signs a fixed or open end contract as a highly qualified professional.

In 2013 a total of 4,682 people participated in training courses, out of whom 3726 have signed work contracts with private stakeholders, co-operatives societies and other users. 435 "AsSaP" desks (i.e. personal and household services desks) have been opened, employing 584 desks operators who have been trained to access to an interactive platform, called Wiki for self-training. This platform was created and managed by Italia Lavoro and it is coordinated by a central contact centre providing an email helpdesk service. As a result of its success, the project has been expanded in other North–Centre Regions.

5. Feasibility for EU action in PHS

The professionalization of the PHS sector is not recognised as a priority and very few actions have explicitly tackled this issue in the regional operational plans 2014 – 2020. The improvement of the PHS sector is treated as a

transversal issue entailing the promotion of women's employability, or the availability of social health care services, rather than professionalization or job creation. Therefore, European funds can have a relevant impact in addressing the issue of qualification in terms of financial support, transparency and accountability. Their potential depends also on the capacity to finance projects able to gather best practices of previous successful programs. Indeed, the Italian PHS sector needs a change of approach, from the "temporary" to "systemic" actions. In order to make sure that European funds support sustainable development of the PHS sector, it is necessary to examine the impact of existing tools and arrangements and try to define better the respective roles of Government, private providers, NGOs and other stakeholders in order to create favourable conditions for a greater consensus and debate about the recognition of a coherent career. In relation to the issues set out above, it is however possible to identify several policy objectives relating to PHS sector and to provide some specific recommendations about the measures to be implemented:

- divide the employment categories of housekeeper and family assistants service, recognising the latter as part of social care provisions, of their coordination at local and national level, within the network of social services, by introducing contractual rules and standard competences at national level.
- develop accreditation frameworks that recognise the experience acquired on the job or through continuing education;
- guarantee the availability, adequacy and continuity of financial resources at the national and the local levels;
- promote the recognition of the professional qualifications of non-EU workers acquired in their countries of origin.
- help the regions to set up the supply chain of social services supporting the creation of partnerships between public, private and third sector entities, such as platforms and service pools;
- the introduction of a system to certificate qualifications and expertise acquired

- greater coherence between regional interventions and national immigration policies;
- training programs should be accompanied with the provision of matching services between demand and supply coordinated at national level to foster workers' mobility
- create a recognised professional career of care worker, with a list of tasks and sub categories of jobs that are included in the category;
- consistently update training by making available the provision of in home training, such as web training and e-learning,
- supervision of the training provided by accredited organizations.
- greater coordination with employment services,
- provide information on funding and incentives available for employers for training.

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