



EFFAT

ORGANISE, FIGHT, WIN!

# Domestic Workers in Europe: Getting the Recognition they Deserve





## Our future in Europe: looking very hopeful



“Trade unions in Europe have been instrumental in the making of the IDWF. The first ever world conference of domestic workers was hosted by the FNV in the Netherlands in 2006. In 2013, five trade unions representing domestic workers joined domestic workers unions from other parts of the world to found the IDWF. Quietly and yet persistently, the IDWF in the region has grown. This is not just about membership but also the breadth and depth of its programme to protect domestic workers’ rights for all.

The IDWF has been very fortunate to have the support of EFFAT since the beginning. Thanks to its steadfast commitment to the shared goals and the process, the domestic workers’ sectoral structure within EFFAT is now consolidated. Wendy Galarza of FILCAMS-CGIL in Italy and Grace Papa of ACV-CSC Food & Services in Belgium, are the elected members of the IDWF Executive Committee for Europe. Wendy is now the Chair of the EFFAT Domestic Work Sector and Grace EFFAT’s newly-elected Political Secretary for the Domestic Work Sector. Under their leadership, our future in Europe is looking very hopeful.

My deep appreciation goes to Karin Pape, our Regional Coordinator for Europe. Seconded from WIEGO, she has tactfully and patiently used her trade union knowledge to connect the IDWF and its affiliates. She has made a big difference to the life of the IDWF.”

**Elizabeth Tang**

**General Secretary, International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)**



This booklet was prepared by Georgia Montague-Nelson and Celia Mather from the Global Labour Institute ([gli-manchester.net](http://gli-manchester.net))

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EFFAT

# Domestic Workers in Europe: Getting the Recognition they Deserve

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## Working relentlessly to put the domestic work sector on a solid footing

"It is not acceptable that in Europe workers are excluded from existing social protection schemes, get wages below a living-wage standard, and are sometimes even living in slavery-like conditions. This is unfortunately still the reality for hundreds of thousands of domestic workers. EFFAT's primary goal is to bring domestic workers into the formal labour market.

That is why EFFAT, for more than 10 years, has been working relentlessly to put the domestic work sector on a solid footing, with the objective of ensuring strong trade union representation of domestic workers in Europe. We have been building a sectoral structure within EFFAT, with a new leadership, Chair and Vice-Chairs, with a strong domestic worker background, and a newly recruited Political Secretary.

Our political objectives are clear: we have to ensure that domestic workers are covered by all EU labour and social legislation, including occupational health and safety regulations, that they enjoy equal rights and protection, including those who provide services in non-standard forms of employment or via platforms, and we have to pay particular attention to (undocumented) migrant domestic workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which made the vulnerability of domestic workers all the more visible, showed that we have to fight even more strongly to ensure that domestic workers are recognised as essential workers, have access to sick leave and healthcare, work under clear health and safety protocols and have access to PPE, are covered by job retention / income substitution schemes, and have priority access to COVID-19 testing and vaccination.



We call upon EU Member States to ratify and - even more importantly - to implement ILO Convention C189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers; and also to support the setting up / strengthening of social dialogue structures in the domestic work sector at European level."

**Kristjan Bragason**

**General Secretary, EFFAT**

# 1.

## Who are Europe's Domestic Workers and Why are They Important?



The adoption of C189 at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2011 put an end to the history of domestic workers that is deeply rooted in colonialism and slavery. “We are slaves no more” said Myrtle Witbooi, who is today the President of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), when speaking at the final Workers’ Group meeting there, acknowledging what had been collectively achieved. It reflected the shared sentiments of the domestic workers present that this ILO Convention was the beginning of a fundamental shift to accept domestic workers as workers who have rights.

Domestic workers are workers who make a massive contribution to our lives and to the economy. They are the ones who work in our homes, cleaning, cooking, caring for our loved ones – our children, our sick or disabled, our elderly, our pets – enabling the rest of us to go out to work as well as to socialise. Some of them live in the homes where they work; others work part-time, often for multiple employers. They deserve and are entitled to our respect and their rights to a safe and rewarding working life.

Domestic work – also known as Personal and Household Services (PHS) – is a growing sector across Europe:

- With an ageing population, there is ever more need for the care of and support to elderly people in their own homes: the proportion of over 80 year-olds in the EU is projected to increase from 5.4% of the population in 2016 to 7.2% in 2030.
- As more women go out to work, they employ someone else to come in and clean their home or care for their children.

This means that many of us who consider ourselves as workers and trade unionists will at some point in our lives also be employers - of domestic workers.

Because of the scale of the sector, there are large numbers of migrant workers working in it, both documented and undocumented (i.e. without an official work permit). According to data of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Europe has 22% of all migrant domestic workers in the world. Undocumented migrant domestic workers can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation; it is a key sector in Europe where slavery still exists.

### As of 2018, in the European Union:

- PHS comprised 8 million jobs, representing 4% of total employment (approximately the same percentage as for agriculture and hospitality sectors).
- It is estimated that 5 million additional jobs could be created in the sector in the coming years.
- 91% of PHS workers are women; this means that one woman out of 13 works in the PHS sector, i.e. 7.5% of women’s total employment.
- Some 70% of domestic work is done by ‘undeclared’ (informal) workers.
- Over 50% of these jobs are done by migrant domestic workers (documented and undocumented).

For more information: <https://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/domestic-workers>



‘PHS Industry Monitor: Statistical Overview of the Personal and Household Services Sector in the European Union’, European Federation for Services to Individuals (EFSI), April 2018:

[http://www.efsi-europe.eu/fileadmin/MEDIA/publications/2018/PHS\\_Industry\\_monitor\\_April\\_2018.pdf](http://www.efsi-europe.eu/fileadmin/MEDIA/publications/2018/PHS_Industry_monitor_April_2018.pdf)

However, it is difficult to have precise statistics as the data gathered varies greatly between countries, because of the different ways that the sector is defined and acknowledged in law and also in practice.

# 2.

## ILO C189: Decent Work for Domestic Workers – in Europe too!



16 June 2011 was a very significant moment for the lives of the 70 million domestic workers across the globe. Finally, they had won the right to be recognised as workers, with the same basic rights as all other workers. That day, the International Labour Organisation – the part of the United Nations which deals with labour standards – agreed to adopt a new Convention No.189 Decent Work for Domestic Workers which sets out their rights. As a result of immense effort by domestic workers' organisations and their supporters worldwide, history had been made.

### What ILO Convention C189 says

ILO C189 affirms that domestic workers, regardless of their employment or immigration status, have the same fundamental rights as all other workers to:

- freedom of association and collective bargaining
- elimination of all forms of forced labour
- effective abolition of child labour, and
- elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

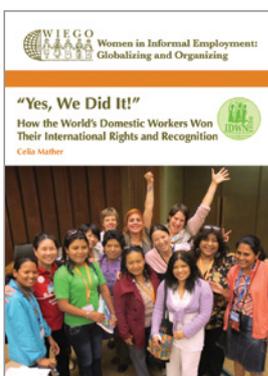
It tells governments to make sure, for example, that domestic workers are protected from all forms of abuse, harassment and violence, and to put a special emphasis on ensuring the application of ILO C189 on migrants through cooperation between the sending and receiving countries. Governments should ensure that domestic workers (non-exhaustive list):

- have the same normal hours of work, overtime compensation, periods of rest (including a weekly rest of at least 24 hours), and annual leave as other workers
- are covered by minimum wage legislation
- have the right to a safe and healthy working environment
- are protected from exploitation by private employment agencies
- are informed of the terms and conditions of employment, preferably through written contracts
- are free to reach agreement with their employer on whether or not to reside in the household
- are entitled to keep in their possession their travel and identity documents
- have access to the courts, labour tribunals or other dispute mechanisms.

### What ILO Recommendation R201 says

The accompanying Recommendation (R201) gives governments guidance on how to support decent employment for domestic workers: not what they 'must' do but what they 'could' (and should) do.

It includes such things as promoting model employment contracts and health and safety training for domestic workers, and providing information to migrant domestic workers in a language they understand.



### For more on ILO C189

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C189](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:P12100_ILO_CODE:C189)

'Yes We Did It! How the World's Domestic Workers Won their International Rights and Recognition', Celia Mather, WIEGO, October 2013:

[https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/Mather\\_Yes%20we%20did%20it!\\_2013.pdf](https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/Mather_Yes%20we%20did%20it!_2013.pdf)

'C189: Conventional Wisdom', video by Prof. Jennifer N. Fish and Sisi Sojourner Productions, 2012:

<https://vimeo.com/41958928>



## Next step: ratification

Ratification is when a government agrees to put the contents of a Convention into its national legislation. It is then legally bound to respect and implement those rights, and to report on its progress to the ILO.

### European countries which have ratified C189 (as of June 2021)

|             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| Italy       | January 2013   |
| Germany     | September 2013 |
| Ireland     | August 2014    |
| Switzerland | November 2014  |
| Finland     | January 2015   |
| Belgium     | June 2015      |
| Portugal    | July 2015      |
| Sweden      | April 2019     |
| Malta       | May 2021       |



This means that there are still **35 countries in Europe yet to ratify C189**.

Some governments remain hostile to doing so.

For example, the Government of **Netherlands** claims its national laws already offer enough protection for domestic workers. However, as Natalia Robledo-Contreras from the FNV Migrant Domestic Workers Network there explains, this is not the case:

*"After the Convention was adopted, domestic workers started campaigning for ratification. We held our first demonstration with undocumented domestic workers to promote the cause. We received a lot of attention from the government, even being invited to speak with government representatives who were carrying out research on ratifying C189.*

*But then the Government decided not to ratify because they believed it was unnecessary. In the Netherlands, we already have a regulation on house services and the Government thinks that this is good enough. But that regulation does not include any labour rights, and workers still have to negotiate for everything with the employer because nothing is guaranteed. Still ten years later, we have not won anything. The Government has not ratified or implemented any part of C189 and there is no legal support for domestic workers.*

*Many of us come to the Netherlands in the hope of a better life. But now we find that the home countries that we left are ratifying and implementing C189, while the Netherlands is not. We are continuing to fight but sadly we are still at step zero because the Government does not want to listen to domestic workers."*

Some other countries which do have a long history of engaging positively with the ILO, such as France, are still yet to ratify. An important point to note is that there is a strong correlation between countries ratifying C189 and trade unions there actively organising domestic workers.

This is why '**Ratify C189**' is a significant and on-going campaign in Europe and worldwide.

## The impact of ILO C189

Most countries in Europe already had some laws and practice in place relating to domestic work, some of those dating back decades. However, many were not yet up to C189 standards and so legal improvements were needed in order to ratify. Some countries have continued to do so after ratification too.

Since 2004, **Belgium** has a government-supported 'service voucher' scheme which means that domestic work is an official sector. Employed by companies that provide cleaning services in private households, domestic workers are officially recognised as workers and enjoy the same labour and social security rights as other workers: to organise in trade unions, to be represented in tripartite commissions, and to have collective bargaining agreements signed with associations of household employers, to undergo professional training.

As Grace Papa, from ACV-CSC Food & Services – one of the trade unions organising and representing domestic workers there – highlights: *"We are very representative. Shop stewards have official meetings every month with the employer to talk and negotiate for their colleagues, solving individual problems as well as collective issues. Thanks to the shop stewards, we have been able to improve working conditions and increase salaries in companies."*

Then, in 2015 Belgium ratified ILO C189. And three years later it passed a new law which grants domestic workers working in foreign embassies and missions in the country the same rights as other workers. Previously, they had only needed to provide the working conditions and salaries of their own countries.



Meanwhile, **Spain** has not yet ratified, but it has made positive changes to its national legislation on domestic work over the past decade, and this is most likely as a result of ILO C189 being won. In 2011, a campaign involving the UGT and CCOO unions alongside migrant rights networks, feminist groups and other civil society organisations such as Caritas and the Red Cross succeeded in convincing the Government to pass a Royal Decree which brought in weekly hours of work and weekly/daily rest times for domestic workers (not including professional care workers, who are covered by a different law, or 'au pairs'). Then in 2012, a new law was passed to include domestic workers in the social security system. And in 2019, another new law included a provision that establishes a minimum wage for live-out domestic workers who are paid at an hourly rate. There is hope that Spain will soon ratify ILO C189.

**'Progress on Domestic Workers' Rights, but Gaps Remain'**, film by Sisi Sojourner Productions for IDWF, Human Rights Watch, WIEGO and ITUC, June 2021:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKfSHyDygV8>

Keine Hausarbeiterin ist illegal  
 Aucune employée de maison n'est illégale  
 Nessuna collaboratrice domestica é illegale



## Some Key Challenges We Face

It can, of course, be a big challenge to gain the necessary legal changes to meet the standards of an ILO Convention.

And another well-known challenge is to get whatever legislation does exist actually implemented as governments often do not have adequate labour inspection services. In the domestic work sector, this is particularly difficult, with the workplace being the private home. When the Government of the **UK** refused to vote 'yes' for ILO C189, one of its main arguments was that it is unrealistic to commit to sending labour inspectors into private homes. We often see this argument being used, indicating a lack of political will, even to inspect for occupational health and safety risks.

However, there are good practices in countries such as **Austria, Finland, France, Spain and Sweden** from which others can learn if they are willing to do so. In some countries, for example, it would be possible to check if a domestic worker is registered with the mandatory social protection schemes, without needing to enter the private home. Or the tax office could assume that, at a certain level of income, it is likely that person or family employs a domestic worker, and then sends them a form for registration that includes a clause to self-declare whether or not a domestic worker is employed.

Targeted controls could then follow. So there are solutions – where there is political will.

Meanwhile, in those countries where high legal employment standards do exist, many of the informal and migrant workers in the sector are less likely to know their rights under law and practice, particularly if they are not yet organised in trade unions. This not only puts them at risk but also can undercut the standards for other workers in the sector. For more on how such challenges are being taken up by trade unions across Europe, see Sections 2 and 3.

For more information see: **'Domestic Workers In Europe: Getting Organised!'**, Celia Mather, EFFAT-EU, February 2015:

<https://effat.org/uncategorized/decent-work-for-domestic-workers/>



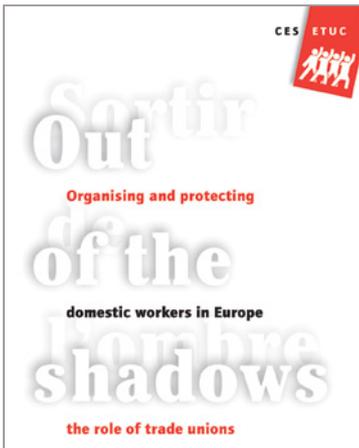
# 3.

## European Trade Unions Get Involved



Until 2005, there was little, if any, coming together at a European level to discuss the relationship between the trade union movement and domestic workers, to look at their situations in the different countries and what more could be done to improve their working – and often living – conditions – and to gain recognition and respect for their contribution to society. There was, however, increasing awareness that it is a growing sector in the economy, and mostly carried out by informal workers, largely women and many from a migrant or ethnic minority background, who are often subject to exploitation.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) took the initiative and organised the first ever conference on this, in collaboration with the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), and the International Restructuring Education Network Europe (IRENE). This began to reveal more about the scale of the sector, the very different circumstances in each country with regard to legal recognition and social protection for domestic workers, but also the growth in self-organising particularly among migrant domestic workers, and the need for trade unions to engage with this more.



**'Out of the Shadows: Organising and Protecting Domestic Workers in Europe: the Role of Trade Unions'**, ETUC, November 2005:

[https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/Rapport\\_domestic\\_workers-3\\_1.pdf](https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/Rapport_domestic_workers-3_1.pdf)

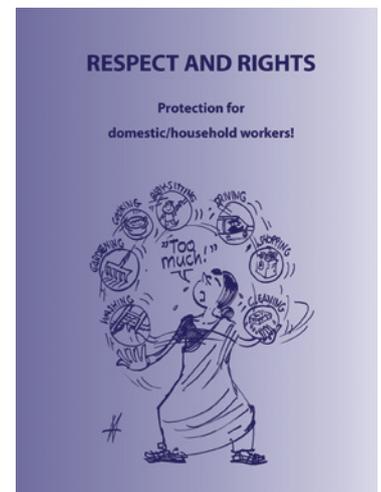
This led to the first ever global conference for domestic workers' organisations and supporters. Held in November 2006, it was hosted by the FNV union in the Netherlands, again in collaboration with IRENE and PICUM, plus a wide range of global bodies including the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organising (WIEGO), and the Global Labour Institute (GLI). Those taking part included domestic workers' self-organisations as well as officially established trade unions for domestic workers from across the world. There, they shared their stories of success and failure, and their deep frustration at the widespread lack of respect and even abuse, despite the essential work they do. It was the first time we in Europe had learnt

of the strong organising of domestic workers in some other continents, particularly Latin America.

It was at this conference that the idea came up to fight for an ILO Convention specifically for domestic workers' rights, and also to use this as a way of building even more and stronger domestic workers' organisations, at home and internationally. Also present were officers from national trade unions including Denmark and Spain, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), plus labour/migrant/women's support networks and academics. This laid the foundations for a collaboration which became essential to building the international domestic workers' movement and achieving the Convention.

**'Respect and Rights: Protection for Domestic/Household Workers'**, report of the global conference, Amsterdam, Netherlands, November 2006:

[http://www.idwfed.org/en/resources/report-of-the-international-conference-respect-and-rights-protection-for-domestic-workers/@@display-file/attachment\\_1](http://www.idwfed.org/en/resources/report-of-the-international-conference-respect-and-rights-protection-for-domestic-workers/@@display-file/attachment_1)



## How EFFAT took it up

After the 2006 global conference, and with essential support from the IUF, WIEGO and the Global Labour Institute (GLI), it was agreed to continue to work together and strengthen the networking among domestic workers' organisations. So an initial Steering Committee was set up to take it forward.

Meanwhile, the decision was taken at the ILO to put discussions for a Convention and/or Recommendation on domestic work onto the agenda of its annual International Labour Conference (ILC) starting in 2010. This meant that detailed reports had to be compiled of law and practice in countries across the world, and trade unions in all countries needed to be alerted to this process.

In June 2009, domestic workers' leaders from all regions participated in the ILC in Geneva, to learn about the procedures and to get connected to key decision makers so that they could meaningfully participate the following two years when their Convention would be negotiated. Being together then, they also decided to form the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) and developed a set of rules and agreed on office bearers. They decided that only trade unions and other membership-based organisations had decision making powers, although all other support organisations and individuals were welcome. All regions of the world were represented in the IDWN – except for Europe.

So a few months later, that October, the IDWN held a side event during the EFFAT Women's Conference in Berlin, with key support from the German Commission of Justice and Peace, a religious body that has long been a supporter of workers' rights: <https://www.justitia-et-pax.de/> From this point on, EFFAT became instrumental in promoting domestic workers' organising in the European trade union movement, and fighting for what became ILO Convention C189. This was particularly led by the EFFAT Women's Committee, where domestic workers became a regular item on the agenda and was then taken to the EFFAT Executive Committee, giving clear steerage to the organisation.



Through 2009-2010, EFFAT affiliates were sent regular alerts on the upcoming ILC discussions in Geneva, and urged to support the process and put pressure on their governments to win a strong Convention. They were also encouraged to engage more with domestic workers' self-organisations in their countries and enable their presence – and their voice – at the discussions. Some included a domestic workers' leader as a member of their country's Workers' Delegation to the ILC, even with the official status to vote for the Convention.

MARISSA BEGONIA FROM JUSTICE FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS (NOW CALLED VOICE OF DOMESTIC WORKERS) IN THE UK WAS ONE OF THE DOMESTIC WORKERS' LEADERS AT THE ILC IN 2011 WITH OFFICIAL STATUS AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE FOR ILO C189.



## International Network to Global Union Federation

After the success of winning ILO C189 in June 2011, the global movement of domestic workers continued to grow in numbers and strength. In October 2013, the IDWN network became a formal Global Union Federation (GUF), the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), with its founding Congress held in Uruguay, attended by 180 domestic workers' representatives from some 56 organisations in over 40 countries. It is the first ever GUF to be led by women, and largely from the global South.

### For Europe:

- Giuliana Mesina from the FILCAMS-CGIL union in Italy was elected onto the IDWF Executive Committee, with Anacoreta de los Reyes of FNV-Bondgenoten, Netherlands, as her Alternate.
- Karin Pape, a long-standing German trade unionist who had been seconded by WIEGO to be the IDWN Interim Coordinator, now became the IDWF European Regional Coordinator.

At its founding, the IDWF had five European affiliates: ACV-CSC Food & Services Belgium, FILCAMS-CGIL Italy, FNV-Bondgenoten Netherlands, SIT Switzerland and UNIA Switzerland.

At the time of writing, this had grown to ten affiliates from Europe, now also including: FGTB Horval Belgium, FGTB Centrale Générale Belgium, NGG Germany, IMECE Turkey, and Voice of Domestic Workers UK.



## Gaining ever greater representation

Over the 10 years since winning ILO C189, the domestic work sector has strengthened its recognition and official representation within EFFAT:

- From 2013, domestic workers became a permanent item on the agenda of the EFFAT Executive Committee.
- In 2014, the EFFAT Congress agreed to create a special 'Platform for Domestic Workers'
- From 2017, each year EFFAT held a special one-day meeting on domestic workers. In 2018, this became an IDWF Europe regional meeting to prepare for the second IDWF Congress later that year. Elections were held for the European representatives on the IDWF Executive Committee, and Grace Papa of the ACV-CSC Food & Services union in Belgium became the Committee member for Europe, with Wendy Galarza Quinonez of FILCAMS-CGIL in Italy as her Alternate.

**Motion EFFAT Women's Committee:  
Strengthening the Domestic Work Sector in EFFAT**  
Adopted by EFFAT Congress on 6 November 2019 in Zagreb

The EFFAT Congress instructs the EFFAT Executive Committee to develop, without delay, an implementation plan to prioritize the domestic work sector for the next five years.

- Domestic workers will be mentioned in the EFFAT Statutes as a sector which needs special attention, with a view to developing a more sectoral structure.
- The objective is to support EFFAT affiliates in their efforts to better organize domestic workers, among them many migrants, and to represent domestic workers' interests at European level.
- EFFAT shall be the driving force in establishing a Domestic Workers' Liaison Committee with other European Trade Union Federations whose member organisations are also organizing domestic workers, such as the European Federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU) and UNI Europe, the European Services Workers Union.
- A Working Group shall be established between EFFAT, the IUF and the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), to clarify the inter-organizational relationships, which includes a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of each of the organisations involved.

**Justification**

Domestic work is a sector which is clearly in the jurisdiction of EFFAT.

Domestic work is a growing sector throughout Europe. An aging population and the increasing female participation in the labour market are the main driving forces for this phenomenon. It is estimated that 5 million additional jobs could be created in the sector in the coming years<sup>1</sup>

Personal and Household Services (PHS) comprise currently 8 million jobs in the EU, this represents 4% of total employment. Among them, over 50% are migrant domestic workers (documented and undocumented). In comparison: the hospitality sector comprises 6% of total employment, agriculture 4.4%.

91% of PHS workers are women. In the EU, 1 woman out of 13 works in the PHS sector, which represents 7.6% of women's total employment.

Estimates show that 70% of domestic work is delivered by undeclared workers (informal employment). Taking into consideration the current informal nature of the work and the estimated

<sup>1</sup> All figures with regard to domestic work in this document are based on the "PHS Industry Monitor", April 2018 [http://www.effat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PHS\\_Industry\\_Monitor\\_April\\_2018.pdf](http://www.effat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PHS_Industry_Monitor_April_2018.pdf), published by the European Federation for Services to Individuals (EFSI). We align ourselves with the methodology used by EFSI for the report. The statistical data are based on NACE (European statistics), ISCO (International Standard Classification of Employment) figures from the European Federation of Chemical Industries (EFCI), European Union Labour Force Surveys (EU LFS), Eurofound and Eurobarometer surveys and data published by OECD.

- In 2019, the EFFAT Congress agreed to strengthen the domestic work sector further in the organisation. (see more on pages 13-14).

For more information, see **Annex 1 of Motion from the EFFAT Women's Committee: Strengthening the Domestic Work Sector in EFFAT**, adopted by the EFFAT Congress, 6 November 2019:

<https://5congress.effat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Motion-on-Domestic-Workers-EFFAT-Congress-2019-11-06-EN.pdf>



## Understanding the sector better

As mentioned, it is not easy to get a full picture of the domestic work sector across the region, with so many differences in law and practice, trade union approaches to organising these workers, etc., in the different countries, which is also due to the various occupations of domestic workers, such as cleaning and home care. Over the past decade, EFFAT has also been part of/initiated several important research projects on the scope and challenges of domestic work, as well as how domestic workers' organisations and trade unions are responding:

- **2012: ILO-EFFAT-ETUC project 'Decent Work for Domestic Workers in EU Member States'**

With regional meetings and a final conference in Turin, Italy, this project began the process of uncovering and documenting the very different laws and practices relating to domestic work, as well as the current state of organising of domestic workers by trade unions in the different countries.

**'Decent Work for Domestic Workers: The state of labour rights, social protection and trade union initiatives in Europe'**, ACTRAV/ITC-ILO, ETUC and EFFAT, 2012:

<https://www.etuc.org/en/publication/decent-work-domestic-workers-state-labour-rights-social-protection-and-trade-union>

- **2014-2015: EFFAT-EU project 'Promote industrial relations in the domestic work sector in Europe'**

This was the first extensive review of the laws and regulations relevant for domestic workers in the EU countries. It also gave a first overview of the employers' organisations in this sector, social dialogue structures, and national collective agreements. It revealed the big differences between countries, for example the state-run service voucher schemes in Belgium and France, compared to the largely informal nature of the sector in the UK and Germany.

It also documented the impressive but also very different ways in which domestic workers are organising, often supported by EFFAT affiliates but again in very different ways. Also highlighted was the connection between government support and more effective organising.

**'Promote Industrial Relations in the Domestic Work Sector in Europe'**, Anna Basten, EFFAT-EU, February 2015

**'Domestic Workers In Europe: Getting Organised!'**, Celia Mather, EFFAT-EU, February 2015:

<https://effat.org/uncategorized/decent-work-for-domestic-workers/>



## Intensifying Support for Domestic Workers

Despite all the many activities that EFFAT had carried out in support of domestic workers over the years, by 2019 it had become clear that domestic workers still did not have the institutional representation they required. EFFAT needed to make a political, institutional, and financial commitment to strengthen trade union engagement with domestic workers in Europe.

EFFAT's Women's Committee has always been the driving force, pushing for greater engagement by the Federation with domestic workers. On 5 November 2019 in Zagreb, Croatia, the EFFAT Women's Conference reinforced its support by unanimously approving the Motion 'Strengthening the Domestic Work Sector in EFFAT' to be put up for endorsement by the EFFAT Congress.

The following day at the 5th EFFAT Congress, the Motion was adopted unanimously, intensifying EFFAT support for domestic workers and giving domestic workers clear rights in EFFAT. This was a huge step forward in trade unions in the region recognising domestic workers' organisation.



EFFAT

### Motion 6: EFFAT Women's Committee: Strengthening the Domestic Work Sector in EFFAT

The EFFAT Congress instructs the EFFAT Executive Committee to develop, without delay, an implementation plan to prioritize the domestic work sector for the next five years.

- Domestic workers will be mentioned in the EFFAT Statutes as a sector which needs special attention, with a view to developing a more sectoral structure.
  - The objective is to support EFFAT affiliates in their efforts to better organize domestic workers, among them many migrants, and to represent domestic workers' interests at European level.
  - EFFAT shall be the driving force in establishing a Domestic Workers' Liaison Committee with other European Trade Union Federations whose member organisations are also organizing domestic workers, such as the European Federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU) and UNI Europa, the European Services Workers Union.
  - A Working Group shall be established between EFFAT, the IUF and the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), to clarify the inter-organizational relationships, which includes a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of each of the organisations involved
- The motion will be implemented through the following steps:**
- a) contact other European Trade Union Federations whose member organisations are organizing domestic workers and to establish a European Liaison Committee on Domestic Workers;
  - b) establish a Working Group, consisting of EFFAT, IDWF and IUF, to clarify the inter-organizational relationships;
  - c) provide resources for the implementation of the motion which are adequate and in line with provisions for other EFFAT sectors.

**Motion from the EFFAT Women's Committee: Strengthening the Domestic Work Sector in EFFAT**, adopted by the EFFAT Congress, 6 November 2019:

<https://5congress.effat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Motion-on-Domestic-Workers-EFFAT-Congress-2019-11-06-EN.pdf>



## How domestic workers are officially included in EFFAT

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The Motion adopted by the 5th EFFAT Congress in November 2019 means that domestic workers are now included in EFFAT Statutes, Political Framework, and Action Plan. Furthermore, the sector has an allocated budget.

### EFFAT Statutes

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- **PREAMBLE:** EFFAT/IUF-Europe is an organisation of independent and democratic trade unions representing all workers in the Food, Agriculture, Tourism, **Domestic Workers** and related sectors, services and activities in Europe.
- **Article 3 – Tasks:** to coordinate and cooperate with other ETUF's in case workers of a certain sector are organised in various branch trade unions, e.g. **domestic workers**, food delivery riders, fish, forestry, etc.
- **Article 21 – Sector activities:** Sector Assemblies shall be formed in the Food, Beverages and Tobacco sector, in the Agriculture sector, in the Tourism sector and for **Domestic Workers**.
- **Annex 1 to the EFFAT / IUF-Europe Statutes:** Sectors and branches 6. **Domestic workers**.

### EFFAT Political Framework

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#### 78 Address non-standard forms of employment

83 EFFAT will continue and strengthen its work for **domestic workers** who are among the most vulnerable workers. To this end, EFFAT will set up and lead a European Liaison Committee for **domestic workers** in order to organise close cooperation with other European Trade Union Federations who also represent **domestic workers**.

### EFFAT Action Plan 2020-2021

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#### B.1 Organise, fight & win: A recipe for a stronger EFFAT

Organise to build union power: Promote new organising techniques and exchange good practices in organising workers, including most vulnerable groups and workers with non-standard forms of employment, e.g. youth, migrants, disabled, seasonal, **domestic** and platform **workers**.

#### B.2 Stronger and more widespread collective bargaining

Ensure better health and safety: Implement the EFFAT Recommendations on "Fighting sexual harassment and violence at work in the agriculture, food, tourism and **domestic work** sectors", e.g. by discussing them in the sectoral social dialogue meetings.

#### B.3 Our commitment for a fairer Europe for workers and a sustainable food supply chain

Fight against precarious work: Strengthen our engagement for **domestic workers** who are among the most vulnerable workers. To this end, EFFAT will promote the establishment of a European Liaison Committee for **domestic workers**.



## Collaboration Means Strength

Increased support for domestic workers at the European level has also meant increased cooperation between trade unions, employers, and other stakeholders to improve the rights of domestic workers.

### At the European Policy Level

At its 2014 Congress, EFFAT committed itself to supporting European trade unions and domestic workers' movements to take up with EU institutions and governments: the need to ratify ILO C189, to amend EU Directives which discriminate against domestic workers, and to ensure that standards are properly implemented. Over the years, despite limited resources, EFFAT has used its presence within EU institutions to do just this and, in collaboration with the IDWF European Regional Coordinator, has responded to numerous discussions, reports and opinion statements.

EU institutions and bodies have also shown a strong commitment to advancing the rights of domestic workers:

- In 2013, the European Parliament and Commission agreed to encourage EU Member States to ratify and implement ILO Convention 189.
- In 2014, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) released an opinion calling for reform and professionalisation of services and jobs in private family homes.

**Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Developing services to the family to increase employment rates and promote gender equality at work**, EESC, 2014:

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/134aa873-9c89-11e4-872e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

- In 2016, the European Parliament adopted a report - with input from EFFAT/IDWF - calling on the EU Commission and Member States to develop policy instruments to ensure domestic/care workers have genuine workers' rights and social protection. It also highlighted the need to re-evaluate the exemption of domestic workers under Directive 89/392/EEC on Safety and Health at Work.

**Report on women domestic workers and carers in the EU**, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament, 2016:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2016-0053\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2016-0053_EN.html)

- In 2016, the EESC released an opinion about the rights of live-in care workers - with input from EFFAT/IDWF. A report followed which highlighted findings about live-in care workers across several European Countries, also making recommendations for improving working conditions.

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'The rights of live-in care workers', EESC, 2016:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52016IE0941>

**The Future of Live In Care Work in Europe**, EESC, 2019: [https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/report\\_on\\_the\\_eesc\\_country\\_visits\\_to\\_uk\\_germany\\_italy\\_poland\\_0.pdf](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/report_on_the_eesc_country_visits_to_uk_germany_italy_poland_0.pdf)

- EFFAT has also represented domestic workers at the European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work of the European Commission:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1299&langId=en>

## Advancing Personal and Household Services (Ad-PHS) Project

The European Commission was the driving force in bringing together key stakeholders in Personal and Household Services (PHS) to carry out a project funded under a European Parliament pilot project “Promotion of domestic worker cooperatives and service voucher schemes” in 2018. EFFAT cooperated in the project alongside six other partners including trade unions, employers, European associations for cooperatives and for the disabled, and academics. Focusing on 21 target countries within the EU, the project analysed the states of PHS sectors/systems. It identified successful approaches and highlighted gaps in protections and working conditions for PHS workers. A set of recommendations were developed to help public authorities to strengthen the rights of PHS workers. A final conference of the project was held in December 2020 where the outcome of the project was presented. The results can be found at: <https://ad-phs.eu/>



The project has helped to strengthen collaboration around PHS within Europe:

- The national workshops held within the project enabled collaboration amongst different players at the local level, many of whom had not had the opportunity to collaborate before.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the group released joint statements, which put forward proposals to address the challenges of the pandemic for PHS, and highlighted the need for PHS workers to be given priority for COVID-19 vaccination:
  - <https://effat.org/uncategorized/effat-efte-efsi-uni-europa-joint-statement-on-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-personal-and-household-services-phs/>
  - <https://effat.org/in-the-spotlight/effat-efte-efsi-uni-europa-joint-statement-on-personal-and-household-services-workers-require-priority-access-to-covid-19-vaccine/>
- A ‘European Multi-Stakeholder Alliance’ has been developed between ILO, European Commission, employers’ organisations, and trade unions, including EFFAT. On 28-29 June 2021, the group will host an online conference to celebrate 10 years of the ILO Convention 189 and discuss ways to advance the fight for domestic workers’ rights and protection.

## Stakeholder Group on Migrant Domestic Workers

EFFAT recognises the urgent need to fight for the rights of migrant domestic workers and has long been collaborating with the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), an NGO network which aims to promote the rights of undocumented migrants in Europe, including domestic and care workers:

<https://picum.org/>

Together with other European trade union bodies, EFFAT, ETUC, ITUC, PICUM, European employers’ federations and NGOs have formed an Ad Hoc Stakeholder Group on Migrant Domestic and Care Work. Coordinated by PICUM, the group promotes cooperation amongst key stakeholders in the domestic/care sectors related to migrant employment.

In February 2018, the group issued a joint pamphlet ‘**Shared Concerns and Joint Recommendations on Migrant Domestic and Care Work**’. It highlighted the challenges faced by migrant domestic/care workers: the lack of recognition, poor regulation and social protection, poor access to justice and services, violence, and discrimination, and made recommendations to address these challenges:

[www.picum.org/Documents/Publi/2018/concerns\\_recommendations\\_migrant\\_domestic\\_care\\_work\\_February2018.pdf](http://www.picum.org/Documents/Publi/2018/concerns_recommendations_migrant_domestic_care_work_February2018.pdf)





## Collaboration with European Employers' Organisation

EFFAT and other European Trade Union Federations have built a constructive relationship with the European Federation for Services to Individuals (EFSI), an organisation that brings together employers' national federations, associations, and organisations, PHS providers and private companies involved in PHS in Europe. They are proactively working together to secure fairer working conditions for PHS workers:



<http://www.efsi-europe.eu/home/>

EFSI also provides useful tools to tackle the under-representation of the PHS sector, for example, by publishing the PHS Industry Monitor. PHS Industry Monitor, EFSI, April 2018:

[http://www.efsi-europe.eu/fileadmin/MEDIA/publications/2018/PHS\\_Industry\\_monitor\\_April\\_2018.pdf](http://www.efsi-europe.eu/fileadmin/MEDIA/publications/2018/PHS_Industry_monitor_April_2018.pdf)



EFFAT has also started to work with the European Federation for Family Employment and Home Care (EFFE), an organisation made up of employers' associations, trade unions and training institutions in the PHS sector in France, Italy, and Spain:

<https://www.effe-homecare.eu/en/>



### WIEGO: A 'Hidden Ally'

WIEGO has long been a supporter of the representation of domestic workers, in Europe and worldwide.

WIEGO gathers data on the domestic workforce, migrant domestic workers, legal improvements, including social protection, wage levels, the gig economy, and the economic contribution of domestic workers:

<http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/occupational-groups/domestic-workers>

WIEGO also provides vital resources: language interpretation, training tools, support in forming and running democratic member-led organisations, awareness-raising publications and more recently a toolkit on ILO C189.

Your Toolkit on ILO Convention 189 – The Domestic Workers' Convention, WIEGO, October 2018:

<https://www.wiego.org/resources/DWToolkit>

In Europe, WIEGO has been a strong supporter in promoting the demands of domestic workers, including advocating for the adoption of the EFFAT Motion in 2019 (see page 13). For well over a decade, WIEGO has also provided human resources, in particular seconding Karin Pape to be the Interim Coordinator of the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) (see page 10), and then, upon the founding of the IDWF, to be its European Regional Coordinator, working closely with EFFAT.

## 4. Building for the Future

### Organising Domestic Workers in Europe

The ageing population and increased demand for support in the home mean that domestic work is a growing sector across Europe. Globalisation and fragmentation of the workforce has led to even more precarious and informal working conditions in the sector, leaving workers vulnerable. The growing demand for domestic workers in European countries is also attracting many migrants to do domestic work. But with limited rights, legal protection, and information, they are often left unable to access decent work opportunities or escape abusive and exploitative situations. But domestic workers make a huge contribution to our lives and the economy. They deserve their rights and respect.

Becoming part of the trade union movement is important for domestic workers: it provides them with resources, formal representation, and an institutional voice to fight for their rights and the protections they need, including to ensure that labour regulation to formalise the sector and to improve working conditions is properly implemented. Improvements are best achieved when domestic workers are organising themselves and are supported by the trade union movement to do this. The main goal of trade unions is to organise workers to develop their collective strength. Building and sustaining trade union membership among domestic workers will help to achieve this and will also positively increase the power of all workers. Membership numbers in trade unions in Europe, and globally, are stagnating, only reinforcing this urgent need. In some countries, organising domestic workers has enabled trade unions to grow significantly.

#### Moving Beyond Barriers

There are huge challenges in organising domestic workers, and until relatively recently, there was little trade union action to organise domestic workers in many European countries. The unique nature of the worker-employer relationship, the fact that domestic workers work is isolated and spread out, and the informal nature of much of the work can all pose barriers to organising, particularly using traditional approaches. Some trade unions continue to see domestic work as 'unorganisable'. Some simply do not have the knowledge and resources to reach out to new affiliates. Domestic workers often organise in ways that trade unions might not recognise, for example in mutual self-help groups, faith groups, women's groups, civil society, or local community groups:

In **Turkey**, a trade union for domestic workers came out of women's community-based organisation, the Women's Research and Solidarity (KADMER), which was founded in 2001 to mobilise women in Istanbul to fight for their rights. It originally focused on violence against women as well as the paid and unpaid labour of women but, after learning about the large numbers of accidents among domestic workers, it decided to form a cooperative called IMECE. Although the rights of domestic workers are still not officially recognised in Turkey, IMECE Domestic Workers Union managed to find a loophole and became officially recognised as a trade union in 2012. It now has about 400 members.



Becoming part of the trade union can also be complicated: payment of membership dues may be hard, and the services that domestic workers need may be outside traditional trade union activities. There can also be resistance in trade unions through fear that domestic workers may change the culture, balance of power, or way of operating in the organisation.

Difficulties also come from the side of domestic workers, particularly those who are migrants. They may be afraid to contact trade unions in fear of losing their jobs. Undocumented workers may be reluctant because of fear of deportation. They may have little knowledge

of trade unions, particular those in their host country. They may have unrealistic expectations of what trade unions can do. On low pay and with little time off, they might often find it difficult to pay trade union fees or participate in trade union activities.

But the changing labour market means that trade unions need to adapt to include domestic workers and other vulnerable groups among their ranks. Without doing so, they risk becoming irrelevant. Despite difficulties, trade unions across Europe are overcoming hurdles, some are building alliances through outreach to self-organised groups:



In **Belgium**, the ACV-CSC Food & Services reaches out to domestic workers through their local national communities, particularly where they congregate in faith-based groups. On Sunday mornings, ACV-CSC attends church services and gives presentations to inform domestic workers about the benefits of the trade union.

In the **Netherlands**, the FNV has been helping to organise undocumented migrant domestic workers by reaching out to their self-help community organisations and helping to strengthen them, most of which are based on the countries from which they come, such as the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union - Netherlands (IMWU-NL), the Filipino group United Migrant Domestic Workers and Otradella, a group of Latin American domestic workers. Domestic workers are now an official subsector within the FNV, and are given official membership cards, an important piece of recognition for undocumented workers. As a result, domestic workers are now much more visible in the trade union and in society.



Some trade unions are actively changing their structures, or the services they offer, to be more inclusive of the needs of domestic workers. This has included, for example, opening trade union buildings to provide domestic workers with a space to meet and hold gatherings, including them in trade union education and training, and having representative structures for domestic workers to give them a seat at the table.

In the **UK**, the Voice of Domestic Workers was established in 2009 as an organisation largely made up of migrant domestic workers. Since its beginning, the national union Unite the Union has supported its work in many ways. Unite has provided meeting rooms for gatherings and events, education classes on important topics, political lobbying support, training for members to become occupational health and safety representatives, and more. Domestic workers are also encouraged to become members of Unite and are given a membership card. Unite is building a domestic workers section within the trade union.



There are also many other good practice examples in Europe where domestic workers are an integrated part of the trade union, or where good collaboration exists:

In **Italy**, FILCAMS-CGIL has been organising domestic workers for many decades. The union has built a network of welfare and tax assistance centres to which domestic workers can turn for assistance, including help with applications for resident permits and citizenship, and family and unemployment allowances. Working in partnership with the IDWF and Domina (a national employers' association of Domestic Labour), FILCAMS has launched an information campaign for migrant domestic workers planning to travel to Italy for work. FILCAMS also fights for collective agreements for the sector, the first concluded in the 1970s, and the most recent, in 2020.



For more information see: '**Domestic Work in Italy**': A good practice and a good model:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-q8frLpkUU>

In **Switzerland**, the Syndicat interprofessionnel de travailleuses et travailleurs (SIT), a local inter-professional trade union in Geneva, has focused on organising sectors and groups of migrant workers, including undocumented migrant domestic workers. SIT has built strong alliances with migrant grassroots organisations, and has won some protections for migrant domestic workers, including the right to a minimum wage and access to social security. As a result of an agreement with the authorities, they have created a voucher system through which employers can register their domestic worker, including undocumented domestic workers. The workers are then entitled to certain benefits and can access them without fear of deportation. In 2017, 'Operation Papyrus' was initiated – a regularisation scheme that formulates criteria for undocumented people to be able to gain legal resident status in Geneva. SIT has been supporting undocumented domestic workers to apply for residence permits to become regularised citizens using the scheme.



## Strengthening Organising

At the time of writing, IDWF has 10 affiliates in Europe. All of them except IMECE in Turkey (see page 18) and SIT in Switzerland (see page 19), are also EFFAT affiliates:

|             | EFFAT AFFILIATES                                                 | IDWF AFFILIATES                                                  |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Belgium     | ACV-CSC Food & Services, FGTB Horval, and FGTB Centrale Générale | ACV-CSC Food & Services, FGTB Horval, and FGTB Centrale Générale |
| Germany     | NGG                                                              | NGG                                                              |
| Italy       | FILCAMS-CGIL                                                     | FILCAMS-CGIL                                                     |
| Netherlands | FNV MDW                                                          | FNV MDW                                                          |
| Switzerland | UNIA                                                             | UNIA and SIT                                                     |
| Turkey      |                                                                  | IMECE                                                            |
| UK          | Unite/Voice of Domestic Workers                                  | Unite/Voice of Domestic Workers                                  |

Domestic workers should be more integrated to the European trade union movement, and better organising is needed to achieve this. However, organising methods and structures vary widely across countries, and there is also still a lot to learn about how domestic workers are organised and how EFFAT can further support their organisation. This means that trade unions and domestic workers' organisations need the opportunity to learn from one another.



## Domestic Workers in Europe

IDWF is undertaking the project “Domestic Workers in Europe” co-funded by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) running between May 2020–April 2022. Working in target countries (Italy, Spain, France, Sweden, and Denmark), the project aims to use mapping research to build an understanding of domestic worker organisation. This will enable IDWF to reach out to new self-organised groups and associations of domestic workers currently outside of official trade union structures, particularly migrant domestic workers. The project will also consider how ILO C189 is being and can be better used as an organising tool. National meetings will take place and a European domestic workers conference will be held to present the findings. The European Conference at the end of the project aims to bring together “old” and “new” groups, associations and trade unions of domestic workers to sharpen the strategies of domestic workers and further improve the coordinated approach of IDWF and EFFAT.

## Building Trade Union Power to Create a Fairer Europe

EFFAT is involved in the joint project with ITC-ILO “Building Trade Union Power to Create a Fairer Europe”. Running from 2021-2022, it will focus on improving the competencies of national trade union representatives, with migrant and domestic workers being target groups. Project participants will develop and implement action plans focused on building trade union power among these groups. There will also be a conference to share knowledge and successful practices. EFFAT expects the project to strengthen domestic worker membership within its newly established sectoral structure.

# What next for Domestic Workers in Europe?

## Strengthening the Sector

EFFAT has made a solid commitment to ensure better representation of domestic workers and has since taken steps to strengthen the sectoral structure. The first General Assembly of the EFFAT Domestic Work Sector was held in December 2020 and will now meet annually.

On 19 May 2021, the second General Assembly was held. 60 participants attended to exchange experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the situation of domestic work across Europe. They also decided on future EFFAT activities in the sector: target areas will be the rights of (undocumented) migrant domestic workers and platform/gig economy workers. There was also strong interest in holding thematic webinars to enable domestic workers to share good practices and learn from one another. Leadership for the sector was elected, further consolidating domestic workers' position in EFFAT:

- Wendy Galarza from FILCAMS-CGIL in Italy was elected as Chair of the Sector.
- Marissa Begonia from Unite/Voice of Domestic Workers in the UK, and Malu Villanueva from FNV Migrant Domestic Workers in the Netherlands were elected as Vice-Chairs.
- Grace Papa, currently Regional Secretary of ACV-CSC (Belgium) in charge of domestic workers, was appointed as the Political Secretary for the Domestic Work Sector, Gender Equality, Diversity, and cross-sectoral projects in EFFAT. She will be fully in her post by September 2021.



This means that domestic workers now have equal rights to other sectors in EFFAT – a huge step in trade unions in Europe recognising domestic worker organising. The next step is to strengthen organising, as Wendy Galarza, the Chair of the EFFAT Domestic Work Sector emphasises:

*"Now domestic workers have the same rights as other sectors within EFFAT. But the most exciting part is still in the making. One of the biggest challenges that still remains in Europe is organising and reaching out to already established domestic workers' organisations which are currently not part of trade union structures. With this new sector in EFFAT we can now start to reach out to these groups at the European level!"*

## IDWF-IUF-EFFAT Working Group

Domestic workers are now officially represented at the European level in both EFFAT and the European regional structure of the IDWF, potentially meaning two parallel structures with overlap of regional elected members. IDWF, IUF and EFFAT have formed a Working Group to clarify responsibilities and other questions which arise in working together more closely.

## Building Solidarity among Trade Union Structures

Domestic workers are defined by their place of work rather than their occupation, and they carry out many different types of tasks and roles. In some countries, some of this work falls within the public sector whereas elsewhere it is organised by private companies or is simply individual households employing individual workers. This means that different types of trade union organisations represent domestic workers, within countries as well as across the region.

In adopting the Motion in 2019, EFFAT committed to be the driving force in establishing a **European Liaison Committee on Domestic Work** with the other European Trade Union Federations whose affiliates are organising amongst domestic workers. This will include the European Federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU), and UNI Europa, the European Service Workers' Union.

EFFAT sees this is an opportunity to strengthen the cause of domestic workers and maximise the impact on their rights. The Liaison Committee is intended to be a space for these federations to meet, share best practices, learn from one another, and build a common trade union agenda. It is being established with a view to building a stronger European sectoral social dialogue. It is hoped that it will also encourage trade unions at the national level to strengthen their collaboration.

Close collaboration is already happening at the global level. For example, the IDWF, IUF, PSI, EI and UNI, together with the ITUC (and their European counterparts), have created a 'Global Taskforce on Care' to work together more and to amplify the call for a just care system. On 29 October 2020, they ran a joint **Invest in Care Now! Global Day of Action:**

<https://idwfed.org/en/campaigns/invest-in-care-decent-work-for-domestic-workers>

### COVID-19's disproportionate impact on domestic workers

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the essential but undervalued work of domestic workers, who have been central to the fight against it. Without basic rights and protections, including inadequate personal protective equipment, they have faced a disproportionate risk of contracting the virus. They also have experienced increased workloads without overtime pay or paid sick leave. Most are not covered by job retention or income support schemes, leaving them with no choice but to risk their lives by working or lose their livelihoods. Many have lost their jobs and, with no access to unemployment insurance, have been left in desperate situations.

The pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for government action to provide basic labour rights for domestic workers, and for trade unions and other key stakeholders to work together to strengthen the rights of domestic workers. To facilitate cross-border exchange and solidarity during the pandemic, EFFAT established a dedicated web page outlining the impact of COVID-19 on the EFFAT sectors and collecting national best practices and agreements to tackle the emergency:

<https://effat.org/uncategorized/covid-19/>

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- [www.ccoo.es](http://www.ccoo.es)




Several joint statements were released by key stakeholders in the domestic work sector during the pandemic, supported by the IDWF.

- EFFAT – EFFE – EFSI – UNI-Europa Joint Statement on the COVID-19 Pandemic in Personal and Household Services (PHS), 2020:  
<https://effat.org/uncategorized/effat-effe-efsi-uni-europa-joint-statement-on-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-personal-and-household-services-phs/>
- EFFAT – EFFE – EFSI – UNI-Europa Joint Statement on Personal and Household Services Workers Require Priority Access to COVID-19 vaccine, 2020:  
<https://effat.org/in-the-spotlight/effat-effe-efsi-uni-europa-joint-statement-on-personal-and-household-services-workers-require-priority-access-to-covid-19-vaccine/>





## Domestic Workers on the Global Union Agenda

At the global level, the IUF and the IDWF continue the fight for decent work for domestic workers. This has importance for the work in Europe:

- The IDWF continues to be the major player in the global fight for decent work for domestic workers, with 81 affiliates from 63 countries, representing over 590,000 members. For the next five years, IDWF's work in Europe will focus on membership growth and increasing support for migrant domestic workers. It plans to build joint strategies with EFFAT to achieve these goals.
- The IUF continues to support the international organising of domestic workers, as it has done from the beginning, for example, by urging its affiliates to collaborate with domestic workers' organisations, particularly in capacity-building activities, and lobbying for legal changes and implementation.
- Many EFFAT members working to organise domestic workers play an important and active role at the international level in both the IUF and IDWF. Taking part at the global level gives them a seat at the table in the global debate, as well as providing invaluable opportunities to learn from other domestic workers.





**EFFAT**

EFFAT

**European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions**

EFFAT brings together 120 national trade unions from 38 European countries. It represents these trade unions and their members at the European level, towards European institutions, and in negotiations with employers' associations and transnational companies. It is the European regional organisation of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF). EFFAT is a member body of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), which is the European regional organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

[www.effat.org](http://www.effat.org)



IDWF

**International Domestic Workers Federation**

The IDWF is a membership-based global organisation of domestic and household workers which aims to build a strong, democratic and united domestic/household workers global organisation to protect and advance domestic workers' rights everywhere. It grew out of the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) and was formally established at an international Congress in Montevideo, Uruguay, in October 2013.

As of April 2021, the IDWF has 81 affiliates from 63 countries, representing over 590,000 domestic/household workers' members. Most are organised in trade unions and others, in associations, networks and workers' cooperatives.

[www.idwfed.org](http://www.idwfed.org)