

Lifestyle and Home Care Services: First European Conference

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Opening Address

Emmanuel Kessler
Journalist at France Infos and Public Sénat

Good morning everybody, and welcome to the very first European Convention of lifestyle and home care services. That there are so many of you present here today is ample evidence of the importance the sector has in the eyes of the European Union. I am honoured to be chairing these two days, which are certain to prove an occasion for valuable discussion. Without further ado, I shall hand you over to Laurent Hénart, President of the French National Agency for Lifestyle and Home Care Services (ANSP), to which we owe our gratitude for organising this event.

Laurent Hénart
President of the French National Agency for Lifestyle and Home Care Services

Distinguished Ministers, Local Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen, in opening this first day, I should like to explain to you why we thought it necessary to organise this convention around lifestyle and home care services. First of all, the European Union as a whole is confronted with the same economic and demographic realities requiring reinforcement of such services to households. Faced with an ageing population, the European continent is doing its utmost to maintain quality of life for the elderly. In addition, increasing numbers of women are in employment and organisation of professional life is developing, so much so that it is becoming increasingly difficult to combine family life with work. This makes it all the more necessary to develop home-based services, both as regards quantity and quality. For example, lifestyle and home care services must professionalise, especially since households can be extremely demanding.

All European countries must strive to reinforce their lifestyle and home care service sectors. Some countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, have turned to public corporations to provide the impetus, while the Anglo-Saxon model puts the emphasis on the private sector. Mediterranean countries look to family solidarity, while the continental model, adopted in France, supports demand. France has managed to double the rate of job creations in the lifestyle and home care service sector. Quality of service, however, remains of primordial importance in all European nations.

In 2000, the Member States adopted the Lisbon Strategy and committed themselves to strengthening their economies' competitiveness through innovation, know-how, and qualification of the workforce, particularly in sectors exposed to international competition. Activity sectors protected from such global competition must not, however, be left to one side – and such sectors include lifestyle and home care services, which uphold the care economy.

The current economic crisis and the feelings of insecurity that it has engendered must also be taken into account. In the present context, economic development must be reconciled with social needs. The increase in means allotted to lifestyle and home care services by the State could well lead to higher salaries in the sector and creation of more jobs, which would provide a growth vector for the European Union.

This European convention will enable us to pool experience and discuss best practices. It will also be a chance to come up with possible solutions for a sector suffering from an over-simplistic,

stereotypical image in which undeclared employment is often a problem. I very much hope that the sector will be able to assert itself to the full and take its rightful place in Europe.

In conclusion, I should like to thank all of those at the Agency who have organised this event, along with its administrators (associations, companies, and households), and our European colleagues for having accepted our invitation to this first European Convention. We are convinced that the sector's future lies in Community debate. In this respect, it is all-important to tie in local action with developments in the European regulations essential to our sector's dynamism. I wish you all a very productive day's work.

Emmanuel Kessler

I shall now ask you to listen to Vladimir Spidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, who also sees great potential for European development in the sector.

Lifestyle and home care services and Europe

Vladimir Spidla

EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

I should first of all like to thank the French Presidency and the ANSP for their invitation. I cannot, unfortunately, be with you in person today, but this conference has my full support. Lifestyle and home care services currently employ over 1.9 million people in France, and is also the French economic sector with the strongest growth over the last fifteen years in terms of creations of non-relocatable community service jobs. Furthermore, it is a sector certain to develop, as many of the services it provides are considered as serving the general interest. There is no doubt that it plays an essential, cohesive role in European economies, reinforcing as it does individual capacities for development and social integration.

Its role is all the more important in these times of economic difficulty. Modernisation of social services must take new issues into account, such as the continent's ageing population. The European Commission clearly shares French commitment in this particular field, attaching major importance to social services of general interest. Stakeholders are often wary of Community law, regarding it as a threat to the smooth running of social services, but difficulties encountered in applying Community regulations stem from lack of knowledge or misunderstanding in their regard.

With a view to remedying the situation, the European Commission has taken a series of concrete actions designed to facilitate application of Community law. First of all, a questionnaire on State aid and public procurement contracts has been put together, aimed at all sector stakeholders. An interactive information service, up and running since January 2008, enables citizens, public authorities and all other stakeholders to get answers to their questions regarding application of Community law. This pragmatic approach on the part of the European Commission aims to provide a concrete response to the uncertainties and problems arising from regulatory application.

Thank you very much for listening.

Emmanuel Kessler

We are going to spend these two days taking a closer look at the concept of lifestyle and home care services, with two plenary morning sessions and workshops to be held this afternoon. This morning, we will be painting a general picture of lifestyle and home care services in Europe, before focusing on four countries individually. We shall also be holding two sessions of exchanges with the floor. May I ask our speakers to come up and join me.

I. A European panorama of lifestyle and home care services

1. The economic side

Emmanuel Kessler

The economist Nicolas Bouzou is Director of Asteres, a company that provides businesses and public corporations with tools for economic analysis and forecasting. What economic weight do lifestyle and home care services have?

Nicolas Bouzou

The economy of lifestyle and home care services is all the more crucial in the present context. The European economy is in recession, and it is essential to find vectors of growth. I should like here to focus on problems linked to demand, and show why the lifestyle and home care services sector is bound to grow. The extent to which the lifestyle and home care services market develops depends on two types of factors:

- Economic and demographic determinants;
- Public policies and changes in the form of the Welfare State.

In this particular sector, supply of services is distinguished by marked overlapping of the public and private sectors. Each country has its own specificities, which is why supply of lifestyle and home care services differ so greatly from one region to another. However, the State takes action to support the sector whatever the model may be.

Lifestyle and home care services were born of a real need that has always existed, but not on the scale we see today. When it first came into being, the sector was stamped with the seal of solidarity. It was also subsidised by the State. With growing needs and the sector's expansion, it was preferable to support demand by improving its solvency and so increase its potential.

In the European Union, purchasing power per person has tripled since 1970. Wealthier households mean increase in consumption of and demand for services, to such an extent that the latter account for a full half of total household expenses. Households are also ready to purchase time-saving services. Other motivating factors are:

- major inequalities in income;
- a high employment rate among women;
- less difference between men's and women's pay scales;
- a high dependency rate, due to an ageing population and increased life expectancy;
- a high fertility rate, particularly in France and Ireland.

Demand potential therefore varies considerably from one country to the next – major in Ireland, Portugal, Belgium, Denmark and France, but remaining low in Spain and Germany.

Emmanuel Kessler

Why is demand potential so low in Germany?

Nicolas Bouzou

It's basically a demographic problem. Europe is seeing increasing convergence of public policies. Although tools employed, including tax deductions, bear upon different fields of activity, such as home-based services or childminding, all countries are implementing a lifestyle and home care services policy, dependent on a Ministry, which seeks to bring about greater involvement of the private sector.

In conclusion, the sector must face up to economic challenges, in particular in terms of visibility of supply of services and professional qualification. Its development is of the greatest importance, not because it creates jobs but because it answers a very real need.

Emmanuel Kessler

Patrick Haddad, Doctor of Economic Sciences and consultant at "Brigitte CROHF Conseil et Associés", will now present an institutional panorama of the sector in Europe.

2. The institutional side**Patrick Haddad**

The concept of lifestyle and home care services was institutionalised in France through the three laws passed in 1991, 1996 and 2005, which established such services as a sector covering three types of activity:

- Services for dependants;
- Family services;
- Home services.

The sector provides answers to three problems present throughout the European Union – an ageing population, the need to reconcile family life and work, and reintegration of the unemployed through economic activity. Let us take a moment to consider the problem of work versus family life. Without lifestyle and home care services to call upon, women would have to give up either their professional careers or their family lives. Moreover, the average fertility rate in Europe-25 fell from 2.3 children per woman in 1970 to under 1.5 in 2003. France and the Scandinavian countries have implemented measures facilitating reconciliation of professional and family life, leading to a higher fertility rate than in Germany, the United Kingdom and Southern European countries.

Institutional approaches differ according to national models. Scandinavian countries have a tradition of social and collective services with action taken by the Welfare State, in particular with regard to the elderly and to childminding. However, private stakeholders of various sizes are also involved in the sector. In the United Kingdom, lifestyle and home care services are more closely linked to the private sector, which has seen little development nonetheless. There is little public financing, and Great Britain has set up a voucher system similar to French CESU prepaid vouchers. Services provided are largely private and local, although a number of large groups do play a part in the sector.

Southern European countries base their approach largely on strong family solidarity, and the Welfare State is little developed as far as they are concerned. Finally, continental European countries have put forward compromises of their own. In the Netherlands, for example, part-time work for women enables them to balance their professional and family lives. In France, there is intensive State support for demand.

An approach seeking to orientate demand towards free choice of supplier, including towards the lucrative private sector, is therefore common to all countries. Questions arise, however, regarding the quantity and quality of services on offer. Quantitatively speaking, they are insufficient, resulting in major stress on the workforce. Average salaries are low and the high turnover in personnel can be put down to the sector's lack of career prospects. Qualitative progress must come through the sector's professionalisation, via training, improvement of management skills, and innovation.

II. Lifestyle and home care services: similar needs, different names

Emmanuel Kessler

We can see that the French have a wide-reaching vision of lifestyle and home care services, and that models differ from country to country. Jean-Pierre Yonnet is a consultant for ORSEU, the European Office for Advice, Research and Training in Social Relations. Does the sector have a common language?

Jean-Pierre Yonnet

The linguistic question is most certainly an important one in this field. We have compared lifestyle and home care services in five European countries – France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain – and have therefore had to choose a term that is comprehensible in all of them. In France, consensus on “services à la personne” is fairly recent. The Borloo plan more or less officialised the expression. Such services have characteristics in common. First of all, they are supplied on an individual basis to households. The workforce is very considerable, and what it does involves major human interaction, hence the notion of relational services.

Other European countries have not taken a shared approach enabling standardisation of vocabulary. There does, however, exist a common awareness of the issue of services for households. Everywhere, male/female equality is an essential spur to outsourcing household tasks. Even so, lifestyle and home care services are rarely subject to an overall approach, as they are in France.

Services for children and the elderly are, however, a matter of concern in all countries. The United Kingdom made a U-turn in its approach ten years ago, with its “*A fair chance in life for every child*” policy. More recently, in Germany, the need to increase employment rates among women has led to forceful measures being taken with regard to childminding services, giving rise to sharp reactions on the part of the German episcopate.

What, then, should such services be called? Each country has a different designation for the sector. In Italy, the term “*Servizi sociali*” encompasses all services supplied to children and the elderly, although the expression “*Servizi alla persona*” is also used. Home services are often designated by the English term “*Facility Management*”, which, in Anglo-Saxon countries, is more usually used to

refer to a bouquet of services designed for companies. Specialised nursing homes, such as those for people suffering from Alzheimer's disease, are known as "*Casa protetta*".

In German, lifestyle and home care services translate as "*Personenbezogene Dienstleistungen*", but this technical term is rarely actually used. The word "*Wohlfahrt*" (well-being) is a great deal more common. However, the name given to each service depends on what it offers, using Social Security-type nomenclature. The expression "*Seniorenwirtschaft*" (senior citizen economy) was coined recently. It is not yet an established term, but it nonetheless testifies to a change in approach. Lifestyle and home care services may not yet be highly developed in Germany, but the future would seem to hold change in that respect.

In English, the most frequently used term is "*care services*". This covers the French idea of medical care, but also of care in the sense of "taking care of". The term "*relational services*" is also widely understood, while "*home care services*", as the name suggests, covers services carried out within the household. The expressions "*personal services*" and "*lifestyle services*" are rather more ambiguous, however. They smack somewhat of hedonism – beauty salons, spas, sports clubs and the like. Office concierge services are also included in the "*lifestyle*" category.

It is therefore necessary to fix upon an overall concept that would be comprehensible in several languages. It must correspond to a societal vision, be short, and yet be able to encompass a whole range of different services. We have used the term "*services relationnels*" in our study, which may be one solution. This conference might well be the right occasion to find a term we can all accept.

Emmanuel Kessler

In your opinion, is acceptance of the French term "*services à la personne*" the most widespread?

Jean-Pierre YONNET

Yes, although it could be more so. The term is gradually becoming established in France and is comprehensible in other countries, even though it is little used by Anglophones.

III. Finding a balance between professional and family life: a European challenge

Emmanuel Kessler

Development of lifestyle and home care services is closely linked to the ability to reconcile professional and family life. This is exactly the field being researched by Nuria Chinchilla, who teaches at the ISE in Barcelona.

Nuria Chinchilla, Professor of organisation and management

Finding the right balance between professional life and private life presents a real challenge throughout Europe. We need to take the too often neglected subject of what I call human ecology into consideration. As in the plant world, each human must carry out a type of photosynthesis, breathing in polluted air and breathing out clean air for those around them. It is also all the more

necessary to reconcile professional and family life as the employment rate among women in Europe rose by 16% between 1994 and 2005. Women are becoming increasingly active in the workplace, employed in companies designed by men for men, and which must become more flexible if professional life is to be balanced with family concerns.

The main reasons for tension, whether at home or at work, stem from working hours being incompatible with the requirements of family life, and in lack of flexibility within companies. Conflict here depends largely upon the way in which people reconcile the two, which is why we wrote the book "*Maîtres de Notre Vie*" (Masters of our Lives), with a view to educating people in this respect. We should all be able to live in harmony with ourselves.

While carrying out a study in Spain in 2004, we observed that 79% of women change companies in the hope of better reconciling their professional and family lives, compared with only 35% of men. In addition, over 60% of women saw themselves as doing a double day's work, while 22% of them saw their husbands as a responsibility. At home, they might have the help of a cleaning lady. There are no subsidies from the Spanish authorities in this area. What is more, the law, which is supposed to encourage reconciliation of professional and family life, is orientated towards companies rather than the women themselves. For example, companies should obtain extra points for public bid invitations.

The lack of any effective system for balancing professional and family life has had an impact on the birth rate, which stands at only 1.32 in Spain, lower than the population renewal rate, and is the cause of stress-related health problems. Development of lifestyle and home care services would improve the fertility rate. Moreover, increasing numbers of women are to be found in the workplace, and household work should be taken into account, children's upbringing in particular. I would also like to point out that the skills and values required by companies are precisely those implemented on a daily basis within the family circle, which is why it is essential to work on the notion of the family-responsible company.

In conclusion, our research centre has a self-diagnosis tool available to find out whether companies take human ecology into consideration. It would appear that only 6% of them make any efforts to do so, while 33% are "pollutant" to some extent, but are nonetheless heading in the right direction. It is therefore necessary to reinforce lifestyle and home care services, above all for the family as a whole.

Emmanuel Kessler

Is the Spanish government considering public action by the State in this regard, or is it looking to the private sector for provision of services?

Nuria Chinchilla

At present, the State is trying to take action itself, which is giving rise to funding problems. The independence and reconciliation law lacks means. Sanctions are provided for, but there are increasing numbers of court actions. It would be more worthwhile to seek support from companies by awarding them extra points in State bid invitations.

IV. Exchanges with the floor

Emmanuel Kessler

What real impact do lifestyle and home care services have in terms of employment?

Nicolas Bouzou

The sector creates some tens of thousands of jobs a year, and is not suffering from the consequences of the present economic crisis. This being said, many of the jobs are part-time only, which is typical of an emerging sector. Government measures have only been implemented recently, and the sector must develop at its own pace.

Patrick Haddad

The lifestyle and home care service sector certainly creates jobs, and also encourages professional integration of people in difficulty. It's true that part-time employment is fairly widespread and partly inevitable. Such problems, however, are not insurmountable. It is possible to improve job quality through training, protection of employees' rights, and improvement of management skills.

Emmanuel Kessler

In the early 1990s, creation of family jobs sought to regularise the sector, which was employing large numbers of undeclared workers. Is this still the case?

Nicolas Bouzou

It is still partly the case. However, the sector needs developing, above all because it meets a demand.

Jacques Malardo, President of the European Federation of Services to Individuals

We have created a European federation entitled the "*European Federation of Services to Individuals*". The term was chosen because lifestyle and home care services are not only carried out in the home. French legislation seeks to reinforce interaction between companies and their employees, through family tax credit. France is setting up an overall policy of aid to services in order to strengthen social balance and reconciliation of professional and private life, which is why we chose the term "*Services to Individuals*".

Jean-Pierre Yonnet

The designation is one possibility. The important thing is to find a unifying theme for Europe as a whole.

Georges Constantin, President of the Association of Lifestyle and Home Care Services
Paris, 12 November 2008

Mediators

Our speakers have insisted on the quality of services provided by the sector. Can you tell us anything about training and quality reference systems developed in various European countries?

Jean-Pierre Yonnet

Situations regarding quality reference systems vary greatly. Tensions exist between quality and price. Services are partly subsidised, and subsidisers must decide between quality requirements and price. In Spain, for example, price prevailed over quality within regional communities, and also causes quality problems in France. In Germany, services are few in number but high in quality. The country is currently looking to develop the sector while lowering prices. This being said, all players are aware that quality of service is important, particularly with regard to reduction of risks. Besides which, quality is a differentiating factor.

Emmanuel Kessler

Quality is therefore a guarantee of safety.

Jean-Pierre Yonnet

It also enables strengthening of the formal economy, to the detriment of the informal sector based on undeclared employment. In Italy, there has been no apparent general move to eradicate the informal economy.

Nuria Chinchilla

Small companies can provide services for large groups to improve the balance between their employees' professional and family lives. Undeclared employment is a problem, and all regions are doing what they can to put the sector in order.

Nicolas Bouzou

The workforce employed in the sector is qualified, in childminding and computer skills in particular. Lifestyle and home care services should not be regarded as a sector doomed to take in jobseekers, leaving manufacturing industries in crisis. This being said, prices are high for many people, and it is only by developing the market that they will fall.

From the floor

I'm the director of an association providing lifestyle and home care services, located on the Belgian border. How can I get information on possible aid or partnerships enabling us to expand into Belgium? In my opinion, it is essential to remember that the sector requires employees qualified in a wide range of fields.

Jean-Pierre Yonnet

The Belgian service-voucher scheme is still in its early stages of development, and covers less than the French prepaid voucher system.

Denis Stokkink

I am one of the founders of the European network of lifestyle and home care services. Belgian law requires going through a third-party with recourse to salaried employment. Karel Baeck will be able to answer your request for information during his presentation. Our European network handles neighbourhood services, in line with Jacques Delors' vision. We also work on training in order to improve service quality. A recent study has shown the differences in this area by type of company. Associations give their employees more training than companies or temping agencies do. In conclusion, I would like to stress the fact that lifestyle and home care services are women's work just as much as they are men's.

Nuria Chinchilla

Of course. But women still work in companies governed by male rules. There's a need for change here.

From the floor

We are seeing the emergence of trade services, which is worrying. What's more, the entrepreneurs concerned are not adequately qualified. Provision of aid to dependants requires a range of skills, and specialised sectors should be established.

Emmanuel Kessler

Some people should certainly be prevented from gaining financially from advantageous conditions available to the sector while providing poor-quality services.

From the floor

Germany has set up a quality reference system, and a training reference system shared by seven European countries also exists. Programmes are available for public scrutiny.

Public policies implemented in Europe

I. Belgium

Karel Baeck

In late 2004, Belgium set up a service-voucher system to aid the private sector, seeking to create jobs in various service sector fields for under-qualified workers, combat undeclared employment, provide quality, supervised service, and offer jobs with ordinary work contracts. The user buys a service voucher from Sodexho for seven euros. He then calls upon an accredited company, which provides him with a worker for an hour, and pays with the voucher. The company sends the voucher back to Sodexho, which sends it on to the Belgian Employment Office, ONEM. The Office pays 13.8 euros to Sodexho, which then pays 20.8 euros to the accredited company. Workers are paid according to their contract.

Emmanuel Kessler

How much do they get?

Karel Baeck

Normal wages, which may come to as much as 1000 euros a month. However, various different parity committees exist, and wage depends on sector. Service vouchers finance housecleaning, washing and ironing, small sewing jobs, and preparation of meals. Services outside the home may also be rendered, such as ironing services, household shopping, and organisation of transport adapted to the needs of people with reduced mobility.

Authorised users are natural persons resident in Belgium, and the activity involved must be a private one. A service voucher for one hour's work costs 7 euros, but sums paid out are entitled to a tax reduction amounting to 30% of their total, with a ceiling of 2,400 euros. The net taxable cost to the user is therefore 4.90 euros. The ONEM pays 13.80 euros per voucher to Sodexho, which also receives 0.10 euro per voucher to cover operating costs. Natural persons or legal entities can request accreditation from the ONEM, which in its turn submits the request for the opinion of a parity committee made up of social partners, and for final decision by the Minister of Employment. An accredited company must have its head office in Belgium. There were 2,050 accredited companies at the end of September 2008.

Anybody who has the right to work in Belgium can carry out such services. They may not, however, be beneficiaries of the system, members of the user's family, or live at the same address as the user. The issuing company makes service vouchers available, in either paper or electronic form, and reimburses them in accordance with hours worked. It also keeps system stakeholders informed via a call centre and a website.

The system has undergone major expansion since 2006, with a total of 730,882 users by the end of September 2008, and just under 47 million service vouchers reimbursed. Such growth has required us to take steps in order to keep on top of the system. The goal of creating 25,000 more jobs in three years has been reached, with 87,000 different people recruited over the course of 2007, and 62,000

working people have been registered. The figures largely concern part-time work. Over half of all users are aged between 30 and 50, making use of the system in order to reconcile their professional and private lives. Almost one in three users are over 60. The system has led to a degree of regularisation of undeclared employment, although it is impossible to say to what extent, given the lack of accurate information and the sensitive nature of the subject. In 2009, the system should cost the State a billion euros, and the question of how long it will last arises. It may become a victim of its own success.

II. Great Britain

Oliver Mills

National policies must be designed to meet the demographic challenge as well as changes of behaviour in European countries. There will be twice as many elderly people in ten years' time, and one person in ten will have to look after a family member. In 50 years' time, the ratio will be one in two. The British government has therefore initiated a public debate on lifestyle and home care services, entitled "*care and support*" and bearing on the roles of family and State in this field.

Our national strategy is orientated towards self-sufficiency and access to care. Major needs exist, and those whose needs are the greatest must come first. We have developed a strategy with priority given to the individual. People in need of support must receive personalised service. Access must be universal, and those concerned must be able to obtain information easily. It is also necessary to reinforce communities and associations, where the State cannot act alone, and facilitate access to care and services. We must therefore assess skills and costs, and set up services adapted to existing needs.

We plan to prioritise support services for those coming out of hospital, with a view to helping the elderly regain their independence. We need to use all existing techniques, such as alarm systems bringing assistance in to the home, and distance medical consulting. Finally, we need to assess the productivity and effectiveness of our services. The question of risk is raised with ever increasing frequency, and we must take it into account in the way in which services are regulated.

Emmanuel Kessler

It would be interesting to return later on in the discussion to how lifestyle and home care services are to be financed.

III. Italy

Marina da Forno

The inquiry carried out by national institutions and the Minister of Employment regarding forecasting of employment figures shows that lifestyle and home care service needs increased by some 300,000 units between 2003 and 2008. Recruitment forecasts for 2008 in the sector amount to some 100,000 units, out of a total of 700,000 working in it. Services required are those provided by home helps, but also include childminding and provision of care.

Care and assistance services are provided by small companies and sometimes by social cooperatives, along with self-employed workers, immigrants and women. In 2007, the predicted recruitment of immigrant staff by small companies with between one and nine employees came to 86,730 units, clear evidence of a major operational need with regard to lifestyle and home care services.

Development of policies and services to help reconcile family and work has also had a considerable effect on the number of women in employment. According to an Istat enquiry carried out in 2005, the need to look after their children was a major obstacle to women's access to and upkeep of employment. 3 million women do not look for work because of maternity or childminding-related problems. A fifth of all employed women leave their jobs after a child is born.. 84.6% of single women and 76.5% of childless women have jobs. The percentage drops to 55.1 % for couples with a single child, and to only 37.4% for women with two or more children. It also appears that 564,000 women would seek employment if they could make use of social services, while 159,000 women are ready to change from part-time to full-time work under the same conditions.

According to 2006 Eurostat data, the employment rate for women in Europe-25 is 57%, with major differences between countries – from around 73% in Denmark and 71% in Sweden to 46% in Italy and as low as 35% in Malta. Italy's lifestyle and home care services network is expanding, but still has a long way to go. Historically, assistance in Italy comes from the family and informal networks. Nonetheless, in 2004, spending on the family accounted for 1.1% of the GDP and 4.4% of social expenditure.

In 2003, the Biagi Reform cleared the way for new forms of flexibility and types of contract. New systems were introduced aiming to increase numbers of jobs and bearing not only on contractual relations between employer and employee, but also upon institutional relations between the different bodies governing the job market. The reform also introduced an "occasional work" contract, an instrument that had already been successfully tried out at European level, and which encourages the development process and social cohesion. In particular, it enables regularisation of often irregular forms of occasional work, reduction of undeclared work and professionalisation of lifestyle and home care services, especially with regard to activities bearing on care of the elderly, children, and the disabled. It also encourages reintegration of disadvantaged groups of the population into the world of work and combats long-term unemployment.

Such actions are the result of active policies. Work services must be of a "*purely secondary and occasional nature*" and represent thirty days per year for an income less than or equal to 5,000 euros per year or 10,000 euros for family businesses. The system applies to the following fields:

- domestic work;
- gardening, cleaning, and upkeep of buildings, streets, parks and monuments;
- supplementary private teaching;
- sporting, cultural and charity events, and emergency or solidarity work;
- holiday periods for young people under 25 years of age;
- seasonal agricultural activities and family businesses.

Under the system, a ten-euro voucher is supplied, the cost including insurance and social security contributions, as well as the payment made to the body acting as agent for the work service. Up until now, the system has been most widely used in the agricultural sector, at grape-harvesting time, but should soon include the business and assistance sectors. Employers had used over 500,000 cheques by the end of October 2008.

I should now like to outline various experiments carried out in Italy, starting with the employment and lifestyle and home care services project. This seeks to improve the capacities of such services to facilitate bringing their provision in line with demand in the areas of household help and services for the elderly. Special counters have been set up. Following needs analysis, a contract is signed and the worker is given advice, with specific measures taken to improve his or her skills in order to ensure quality service. Language courses are provided for immigrants, for example, who are also given help in obtaining their residence permits. Results have been positive, with 8,000 work contracts signed, 20,000 workers accessing the system, and 10,000 families assisted. Another experiment has been tried out in Sicily.

Carmelo Incardona

This meeting shows how important lifestyle and home care services are. The sector is in the process of organising itself, and we must look into all the employment possibilities it has to offer. Experts and political representatives responsible for its future development must be brought in. Work contracts on offer in this expanding sector must be analysed. We also need to improve the quality of Europe's services. Rich societies need lifestyle and home care services, and we need to exchange ideas on best practices.

I would like to tell you something about the Alpha project, which provides solutions for a number of the problems that have been brought up. The project puts forward measures that attempt to reconcile professional life with family life. Under its terms, workers obtain service cheques to facilitate childminding or elderly assistance. Such State action is necessary to reconcile professional and family life. The service is taken in hand by a public or private service provider, which must figure on a list of accredited providers. Competition has also come into play among the latter. The measure has been of particular help to women seeking employment. Because of the part played by the State, the system is transparent and altogether legal. I would very much hope to see the scheme applied in other parts of Italy. It is also possible to widen the scope of services, extend the list of accredited service providers, and to reconcile professional with private life. In this context, it is essential that all sector players participate, along with those responsible for developing the job market.

Emmanuel Kessler

What budget does the system have in your region?

Carmelo Incardona

For the time being, it's still an experiment. 12,000 cheques have been issued in just a few months, for a total cost of 6 million euros. We've been testing the scheme for six months, but we hope to extend it and subject it to restrictive conditions with a view to encouraging lower income brackets to make use of it. Finally, quality of work has to be improved.

Emmanuel Kessler

It's possible, then, to differentiate between types of assistance, which is not the case in France. That would be an interesting subject for discussion.

IV. Sweden and Denmark

Ellinor Platzer

Up until the 1970s, a large number of households made use of domestic services. This is no longer the case, due to high taxation in the sector, which has also had to cope with understaffing. The early 1990s were a period of economic and social change, seeing increases in unemployment and immigration, along with higher percentages of undeclared work, particularly in the craft and services sectors. The sector needed qualified personnel, and increasing numbers of women were working, which made reconciliation of professional and private life a necessity. As a result, demand for lifestyle and home care services increased, as did provision of such services. Tax advantages have been granted in Sweden and Denmark since 1994, with a view to lowering unemployment and discouraging undeclared work.

Due to ignorance of the system, it was not until 2004 that childminders and home helps began to receive subsidies. The programme only accounted for 12% of Danish households. In 2004, the government put an end to the programme, which only concerned pensioners, who received a 50% tax reduction. In Sweden, the issue is subject to much ideological discussion. The government did not set up the present system until 2007. It is now possible to purchase lifestyle and home care services, at a cost of 1000 euros per year per adult.

The project has not been particularly successful, with only a small percentage of households making use of the system. We believe, however, that the sector will grow. In Denmark and Sweden alike, one has to go through a third party, but households will soon have direct recourse to lifestyle and home care services. The authorities are doing everything they can to reinforce the system in order to reduce unemployment and undeclared work.

Emmanuel Kessler

The examples cited show that ways of supporting lifestyle and home care services vary from one country to the next. I now suggest we let the floor have its say before winding up this morning's session.

V. Exchanges with the floor

From the floor

Public policies must be assessed in order to determine what lifestyle and home care services can achieve, especially with regard to integrating undeclared workers into the official circuit. Consideration must also be given to a Community policy bearing on such services.

From the floor

People should be the central concern here. The authorities often only give support to lifestyle and home care services because they want to create more jobs. Europe must make an effort to structure employees' contracts more appropriately. Employees in the sector often have more than one employer, which raises the question of transport costs. Besides which, the State is involved in

financing, and quality of service is therefore a major issue, hence the importance of workers in this sector possessing the necessary skills and qualifications.

From the floor

Multiple employers are certainly a typical feature of the sector, and the need for frequent travel should be taken into account. This particular job sector is still too fragmented, and is in need of better structuring.

Denis Stokkink

In Belgium, the different regions are responsible for providing help for people in difficulty, in particular those in low income brackets. We must remember that it was Europe that initiated these lifestyle and home care services policies.

Oliver Mills

With regard to how effective our policies are, we must decide what it is we expect of public services. In the United Kingdom we no longer gather statistics, but focus on qualitative data. It is also imperative to implement personalised action. Whatever measures we take will have little effect without cooperation, however; everyone must work towards the same ends.

French public policy for development of lifestyle and home care services

Thomas Fatome

Director of the Office of the Secretary of State for Employment

Good morning everyone. Please excuse the absence of Laurent Wauquiez, who has asked me to transmit his message to you all. We should first of all like to thank the ANSP for having organised the first European Convention. The French Presidency of the European Union has given the Agency an opportunity to promote and increase awareness of the actions undertaken throughout Europe, with a view to improving the quality of its nationals' everyday lives through development of lifestyle and home care services. The many representatives here today testify to the vitality of the various players in the sector in Europe. A number of the presentations we have heard show where points of view differ and where they are shared. Laurent Wauquiez would also like to thank the European Commission for its action.

The three workshops organised this afternoon clearly illustrate the issues that European countries must tackle – an ageing population, increasing numbers of people living alone, and urban and job-related stress. It is therefore well worth pooling experience and giving thought to the various ways in which different countries are approaching these issues.

The Minister wanted us to take a closer look at the French approach, in play since 2005, bearing in mind the four models for development of such services:

- the Scandinavian model, where the Welfare State plays a major role;
- the Anglo-Saxon model, which looks to the private sector;
- the Mediterranean model, which is based on family solidarity;
- the continental model, where the State seeks to improve solvency of demand.

France has adopted this last model. Public policies implemented over the last fifteen years, with tax reductions and aids to childminding services, gained fresh momentum with the 2005 law, which aimed to remove three obstacles to development. Measures drawn up sought first of all to reduce the cost of services, improve their accessibility, and make employment in the sector a more attractive prospect. They also aimed to reduce numbers of undeclared workers.

Introduction of tax credit enabled non-taxable households to make use of lifestyle and home care services under the same conditions as taxable households. Finally, creation of the CESU prepaid voucher was a true innovation in the field. 650,000 employees currently make use of the system. The plan also provided for professionalisation of sector employees, with a view to improving the quality services on offer. Professionalism is a key factor in sector development, for trust plays a major part in deciding to make use of the services it provides. The system has led to creation of recognised national mediators, and an awareness-raising and communication campaign has been carried out.

The French example, then, is a positive one, with over 230,000 jobs created in 2007, and economic sector added value rising by 14% between 2006 and 2007. Six authorised issuers have issued over

12 million vouchers for a total of 170 million euros, with an increase of over 100% forecast for 2008. A score of mediators are currently in operation.

The progress made in France with regard to working conditions should also be highlighted. The European Federation of Services to Individuals, along with a number of union organisations, have signed an agreement protocol on definition of the field of the collective agreement. Negotiations are underway and should be concluded by mid 2009. The home-help branch has started work on a new collective agreement. And finally, the employees', home employers' and childminders' branches have signed agreements on professional training. This recent involvement of OCPAs is evidence of increasing awareness of the importance of training for the sector.

As a result, the sector is organising itself, and the landscape has changed considerably over the last three years. Development must continue, which is why Christine Lagarde and Laurent Wauquiez are working on a second stage of the support plan, designed to remove remaining obstacles and give further impetus to efforts made with regard to professionalisation and training. Liquidity constraints, for example, are still the main obstacle to recourse to the sector. The government is working out a cash advance mechanism to alleviate the problem, and hopes to develop the prepaid voucher system in companies. Stakeholders have taken innovative action with regard to training, with a view to improving service quality.

The sector is not yet structured at European level, with national models still varying considerably from country to country. The major aim of this convention is therefore to highlight points of convergence and lay the foundations of a real European lifestyle and home care services network, in which France will play a resolute part, well aware of how important the sector is in providing new jobs.

Thank you for listening.

Emmanuel Kessler

I would like to thank all our speakers. Summaries of this convention will be online early next week on the ANSP website, along with Nicolas Bouzou's and Patrick Haddad's macroeconomic presentations.