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REPORT

on regulating domestic help in the informal sector
(2000/2021(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

Rapporteur: Miet Smet

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

At the sitting of 2 February 2000 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report, pursuant to Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on regulating domestic help in the informal sector and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs had been asked for its opinion.

The Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had appointed Miet Smet rapporteur at its meeting of 26 January 2000.

It considered the draft report at its meetings of 14 September 2000 and 10 October 2000.

At the latter meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously with 2 abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Theorin, chairperson; Eriksson, vice-chairperson; Van Lancker, vice-chairperson; Evans, vice-chairperson; Smet, rapporteur; Aviles Perea, Bordes, Fraisse, Ghilardotti, Gorostiaga Atxalandabaso, Gröner, Klass, Prets, Sartori, Valenciano Martínez-Orozco and Zissener.

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs decided on 15 February 2000 not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 17 October 2000.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

Resolution of the European Parliament on regulating domestic help in the informal sector (2000/2021(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the fifth indent of Article 137(1) of the Treaty establishing the European Community,
 - having regard to ILO Convention C177 on Home Work,
 - having regard to the International Labour Office's International Standard Classification of Occupations, ISCO-88,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 November 1999¹ on the Commission's draft Joint Employment Report 1999 (SEC(1999) 1386 - C5-0215/1999),
 - having regard to its resolution of 21 September 2000² on the Commission Communication on undeclared work (COM(1998) 219 - C5-0566/1998),
 - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (A5-0301/2000),
- A. whereas 'domestic help' is a concept that has not been defined,
- B. whereas the proportion of women in paid employment is constantly increasing,
- C. whereas it is very difficult to ascertain the extent of the black economy and of undeclared domestic work,
- D. whereas undeclared work has important repercussions on national budgets and residents' incomes,
- E. whereas domestic work, by its very nature, is more likely to involve working flexible or split timetables for a number of different employers while earning minimal salary, which is generally undeclared,
- F. having regard to the number of families in which both parents work full time,
- G. having regard to the increasing number of single-parent families,
- H. whereas there has been a considerable increase in demand for domestic help as a result of changes in family circumstances, work circumstances, the way time is spent and the interests of both men and women,

¹ OJ C 158, 7.6.2000, p. 43.

² See minutes of the sitting, Part II, Item 13.

- I. whereas the demand for such help continues to increase, as does the extent of undeclared working,
- J. whereas there has been an increase in the number of elderly people living alone and needing domestic help,
- K. having regard to the difference in, or indeed lack of, provisions to regulate domestic work in some Member States,
- L. whereas, even in diplomatic missions, employers regularly abuse their status vis-à-vis their employees,
- M. whereas there is a need to establish a special legal framework which affords all domestic employees the protection of labour legislation and the subjective rights deriving therefrom,
- N. having regard to the commendable efforts made by certain Member States to set up local or regional organisations to regulate the supply and demand of domestic help,
- O. whereas combating undeclared domestic work is tantamount to combating unemployment for a large number of women,
- P. having regard to the results of the introduction of service employment cheques in France and Belgium,
- Q. having regard to the large number of female migrant workers,
- R. whereas the majority of female migrant workers are employed as domestic workers,
 - 1. Calls for a European definition of domestic work to be drawn up;
 - 2. Calls on the Member States to draw up and regularly update statistics on undeclared domestic work with a view to obtaining a more accurate picture of the scale of the problem;
 - 3. Calls on the Member States to conduct a more detailed study of undeclared domestic work and of its costs to and repercussions on national budgets, the employment market and private individuals;
 - 4. Calls for work of this kind to be recognised as an occupation in its own right;
 - 5. Takes the view that the domestic work sector in principle falls within the scope of existing directives on employment and occupations and should also be covered by future guidelines - to be included in the guidelines on employment - with a view to eventually establishing European rules on the social rights of workers, the adjustment of supply and demand in the sector, access to training and co-funding of contributions by the public authorities;
 - 6. Calls for due account to be taken, when drawing up directives and other legislation, of the specific work situations and employment relationships of domestic workers, including their isolation and their atypical relationship with their employer(s);
 - 7. Calls on the Member States to involve the social partners closely in the implementation of

the guidelines for the domestic work sector;

8. To improve the image and the status of the occupation of domestic work, recommends that the Member States introduce the following measures:
 - a definition of the tasks performed, and clear provisions laying down the maximum number of hours to be worked and the limits thereon,
 - specific and comprehensive social security cover for persons pursuing this occupation, which should take account of the wide range and potential hazards of the tasks involved and entitle the worker to social insurance cover and other rights, including a decent pension on retirement,
 - the creation of conditions for ensuring quality jobs by organising professional training courses,
 - the setting up of reception facilities to encourage the integration of such workers into society,
 - awareness raising and information campaigns for employers and employees concerning their rights and duties;
9. Recommends, as a way of structuring the organisation of the market for paid domestic work, that the Member States introduce a framework by means of, for example, businesses providing domestic services, NGOs and local employment agencies;
10. To combat the increasing amount of undeclared work in this sector, calls for the introduction of the following measures at national level:
 - adjustment of prices and costs to take account of individuals' financial resources,
 - simplification of administrative formalities with regard to the requirement for private employers to declare their employees,
 - making domestic services tax-deductible to reduce the difference in cost between employing undeclared and declared workers;
11. Stresses the importance of introducing in all the Member States the principle of declaring all employment relationships;
12. Stresses the importance of making both employees and employers aware of their rights and obligations under their employment relationship;
13. Stresses the importance of developing the social dialogue at sectoral level, as this is the negotiating forum that is closest to the problem and thus most likely to generate proposals to combat undeclared work and create new long-term employment; stresses also the need to bring domestic work within the scope of the general framework of labour legislation and associated collective agreements;

14. Recommends that specialised reception centres be set up for female migrant workers to provide the psychological and psychiatric help required by migrant women who have suffered mental or physical or sexual abuse and any assistance needed to draw up applications to regularise their situation if they have temporary residence permits, as well as help with legal action against persons who have exposed such women to sexual and psychological oppression;
15. Also calls for such reception centres to distribute information leaflets to provide them with all the information and addresses they require in relation to their residence in the Member State;
16. Considers that, in the context of recognising domestic work as an occupation, female migrant workers should be eligible for regular work permits;
17. Recommends that Member States' relevant national bodies consider in detail the specific situation of migrants as domestic employees;
18. Calls on Member States to link the issue of visas for domestic employees working for diplomats to a guaranteed minimum level of working conditions;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the social partners and the International Labour Organisation.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Introduction

The aim of this report is to examine the EU's legislative framework in relation to domestic workers who are paid but not declared, and therefore have a considerable impact on the black economy. This form of work, which is hidden and not easily quantifiable, provides a significant proportion of women with a source of income which is not subject to any form of state control.

This does not purport to be a study of undeclared work in general, which would cover a large number of occupations and raise different problems, but rather to focus on female domestic workers alone. Obviously, this study is not concerned with housewives who have chosen to look after their own households, as they are not paid and not employees.

The purpose of this study is to put forward various proposals based on the positive experience gained in some Member States, to ensure that the sector is regulated by uniform rules at European level and, more importantly, can be fully exploited by the Member States as an important source of new jobs. On Tuesday, 19 September 2000, a Public Hearing was organised to examine certain of these proposals. At this hearing various national experts were invited to elaborate upon different systems or aspects of the sector of domestic labour such as Bridget Anderson, Research Fellow for the University of Warwick and representative of Kalayaan, Mrs Marinella Meschieri, national representative for the sector of domestic employees FILCAMS-CGIL in Italy, Mr Georges Carlens, Director General of the Office National de l'Emploi in Belgium and Mr Walter Actis Mazzola, sociologist and investigator at Colectivo Ioé in Spain.

Finally, we cannot ignore the situation of the very large proportion of female migrant workers employed as domestic help. The last part of this report will also cover their status as paid but undeclared domestic help.

1. Brief outline of the situation of female domestic workers

Domestic work is the occupation which lends itself most easily to irregular hours and working for different employers for a few hours each week. Also, as it is the most easily concealed form of work, it is the most unprotected. The lack of figures, statistics and quantification is not insignificant, employment in this sector is a last recourse, and often performed by a workforce who have no idea of their rights. The workers involved are isolated and have no possibility of establishing social contacts with the world of work and enjoying the support such contact can provide.

Moreover, wage bargaining takes place on an unofficial basis, in accordance with local supply and demand, while the flexibility required and lack of a precise definition of what constitutes domestic work can result in employers making excessive demands. It should be noted that national employment inspectorates are powerless to intervene, as this would constitute an invasion of the privacy of the home. The employee is therefore at the mercy of the employer's demands, often has no social security cover, and is liable to be dismissed at any time.

There is a growing demand for domestic help as a result of changes in economic and social conditions such as the increasing number of families in which both parents work full time, the tendency for extended families to be geographically separated and the requirements for constant care that arise from an ageing population.

This form of work requires a legal framework to enable it to be recognised as a separate occupation and to ensure that the women working in this sector are protected by legislation against discrimination in employment, are covered by health and safety at work legislation, are fairly paid and are covered by the statutory social security system.

2. Undeclared domestic work

It is difficult to investigate undeclared work by its very nature. There is no exhaustive definition at European level which takes into account the various characteristics of such work in each Member State. Nor is there any definition which exactly corresponds to the subject of this study.

In its communication COM 219 fin (1998), the Commission defined undeclared work as 'any paid activities that are lawful as regards their nature but not declared to the public authorities, bearing in mind that differences in the regulatory system of Member States must be taken into account'. But that is not the area which we intend to study.

On the basis of this European *acquis* we shall attempt to confine this report to undeclared work by women employed to perform household tasks. The many expressions in current use include 'housework', 'domestic work', 'domestic help', and 'cleaning lady'; do they all relate to the same job? And what tasks, exactly, does this job comprise? Where should we draw the line? Can we refer to an occupation at all, or should we refer to it in terms of the tasks involved?

The ILO, in its Convention No C 177 on Home Work, defines the latter as follows in Article 1:

'a) the term *home work* means work carried out by a person, to be referred to as a homemaker,
i) in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer;
ii) for remuneration;
iii) which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used'.

The definition of 'domestic and cleaners'¹, which is also provided by the ILO, seems closer to the occupation which we are trying to define.

'Domestic helpers and cleaners sweep, vacuum clean, wash and polish, take care of household linen, purchase household supplies, prepare food, serve meals and perform various other domestic duties.

Tasks include:

¹ Sub-group 9131, Internal Standard Classification of Occupations, ISCO-88, ILO, Geneva.

- (a) sweeping, vacuum cleaning, polishing and washing floors and furniture or washing windows and other fixtures,
- (b) washing, ironing and mending linen and other textiles,
- (c) washing dishes,
- (d) preparing, cooking and serving meals and refreshments,
- (e) purchasing food and various other household supplies,
- (f) performing related tasks,
- (g) supervising other workers.'

This report will not focus on the domestic work carried out by industrial cleaning firms which provide a service for public and private organisations or undertakings. That category of employees is obviously declared, has various social rights and is covered by national employment law.

We shall concentrate, therefore, on the second category, comprising undeclared workers without social security cover or an employment contract, who provide services for a number of different private households in which they work for a few hours per week.

Finally, the third category comprises declared domestic workers who have an employment contract and work for private individuals; their situation will be referred to, if relevant, when considering workers in the second category.

3. Analysis of the situation in some countries

We have limited our study to the following countries: France, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Portugal. This is not an exhaustive study, as we have decided to draw attention only to the most unusual situations and the most innovative solutions adopted in some countries.

France

According to the IRCHEM, the Institute for domestic workers' pensions, the number of persons employed in the sector increased from 467,000 in 1991 to 837,000 in 1997, 90% of whom are employed as cleaning women. They are often badly paid, have part-time contracts and are employed on a casual basis.

The innovative approach adopted to regularise the employment situation of workers in this category and to cut the red tape involved in the obligatory declaration of employees is called the 'service employment cheque'. These cheques, which were introduced under Article 5 of the quinquennial law of 20 December 1993 on employment, were introduced for a trial period from 1 December 1994 to 31 March 1996.

This was subsequently repealed by Article L.129-2 of the Labour Code, and inserted in the law of 29 January 1996 to encourage employment in the provision of services to individuals.

The service employment cheque is a form of payment intended to pay for services performed in individuals homes while reducing the red tape involved in employing workers. It is non-specific.

It covers all services of a domestic or family nature, for whatever length of time, provided that they are carried out at the home of the person paying by means of the cheque. This includes the care of invalids or children, coaching for school children, odd gardening jobs and activities covered by the national collective agreement (September 1998) on domestic work.

The employees concerned are therefore paid workers, the amount they are paid per hour cannot be below the minimum legal wage, they are covered by the provisions of the employment code and they enjoy all social rights. Employers have to fulfil less administrative formalities as there is no employment contract (for employees working less than eight hours and less than four consecutive weeks in the year), and the employer no longer has to submit a declaration within a week, provide monthly payslips and calculate the contributions and deductions to be made. The worker's net salary is paid by cheque, the CNTCES (national centre for processing service employment cheques) calculates the contributions due and monthly deductions are made automatically by the payment office that normally handles the employers accounts. The employer is entitled to a tax rebate amounting to 50% of the total salary and social security contributions paid per year up to a limit of FF 45 000.

In 1996, 50 328 422 hours were paid for under this system, which applied to 220 000 employers in December 1996. In 1997, the number of employees was established at 254 695 in May, a figure which increased at a regular rate of some 25 000 per month¹. Households are eligible to the same tax benefits if they use workers provided by recognised providers of services to individuals. This recognition, which was first extended to non-profit-making organisations in 1992, was extended to private firms in 1996.

Belgium

As far back as 1987 Belgium tried, by setting up Local Employment Agencies, to regularise jobs in the community services sector in order to enable unemployed people to take up such work without forfeiting their unemployment benefits. The Local Employment Agencies help unemployed people to remain in contact with the world of work by directing them towards the kind of community service work previously carried out 'on the black' by unemployed persons. Unemployed people who register voluntarily with the agencies are helped to find regular employment.

This system enjoyed some, albeit limited, success and, after radical revision, was extended to all communes in 1994 (law of 30 march 1994). All long-term unemployed people are automatically registered with the Local Employment Agencies. Since 1 January 2000 (law of 7 April 1999) unemployed people working in this sector are provided with a specific employment contract by the Local Employment Agency.

Such workers receive FB 150 net per hour worked in addition to their employment benefit, and are permitted to work up to a maximum of 45 hours a month for private individuals, associations or local authorities, or to carry out seasonable work for farmers and horticulturists. The tasks performed for private individuals include housework, childcare, care of invalids, assistance in carrying out administrative formalities and odd gardening jobs. Workers are fully covered under the social security system and by all the relevant employment legislation. The employer pays the

¹ Replies given in the Senate by the Minister for Employment and Solidarity on 24 July 1997, No 1628, p.2469.

worker by means of Local Employment Agency cheques which cost him between FB 200 and 300 an hour. Employers, in turn, are entitled to an income tax rebate of up to 30 to 40% of the value of the cheques up to a maximum of FB 80 000. In other words, it is cheaper to pay local employment cheques than to employ an undeclared worker. The Local Employment Agencies are also obliged to devote some of their budget to training workers.

In June 2000, 128 613 users were registered with the Local Employment Agencies and 47 883 workers had been employed. In 1999 the average number of hours worked by each such worker was 29 hours per month. 75% of hours worked for the Local Employment Agencies concerned domestic work in the broad sense.

A pilot project was carried out in Charleroi and Liege to extend the use of employment cheques to domestic cleaning firms. The project was set up by Sens, a non-profit-making association ('Solidarity, Employment and Innovatory Services) which was supported by the John Cockerill fund and the European Social Fund. The Sens project was selected in November 1998 following the issuing of a call for proposals by the ESF; it received funds of FB 15m and was launched on 28 January 2000. This system, too, required individuals to obtain a book of cheques for FB 250 to be exchanged for one hour's work. As the hourly cost was FB 900, the other FB 650 were covered by Sens. The workers also received a week's training.

This second project involving service employment cheques in Belgium was aimed at genuinely creating jobs by obliging the cleaning firms selected for the project to take on workers. Once a worker had worked for 19 hours per week for three consecutive weeks, the firm was obliged to employ the worker on a part-time basis.

After three months' operation in the Liege and Charleroi region alone, 410 cheques were issued, 28 clients used the system, eight people were trained and three jobs were created.

Germany

According to estimates made in 1994, 2.8 m households regularly employed domestic help, and a further 1.4m households employed domestic workers on an irregular basis.

Service cheques were introduced in Germany in 1997, and offered fiscal incentives to people employing domestic workers who were declared and properly paid. To use the service cheques, private employers have to pay all the relevant social charges. They are then eligible for rebates provided that the wages paid are above a certain threshold and relate to more than ten hours work a week.

The tax rebate is proportional to income, thus favouring higher-income households which have greater demand for domestic help.

Only a few hundred people have taken advantage of this system so far.

Another, more successful experiment involves 'intermediary offices' which offer advantages to both sides.

Persons wishing to use this service contact the intermediary offices, which are responsible for recruiting workers, paying the relevant social insurance contributions and providing replacement staff if necessary. The worker concerned is employed on the same financial basis as a salaried employee and has a regular status. It should be noted that, through the intermediary office, workers also have the opportunity to establish contacts with fellow-workers and avoid social isolation. In 1997,¹ 15 intermediary offices were operating in Germany, cofinanced by the public authorities.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has a different approach to the problem compared to other European countries. There is no minimum wage, but there is a system of universal social protection. Action to combat undeclared work focuses on the workers rather than the employers. The drive against working 'on the black' is mainly concerned with preventing people who are not entitled to them from claiming social security benefits such as unemployment benefit and income support. The measures introduced by the government reflect this different emphasis.

The Working Family Tax Credit introduced in October 1999 is an attempt to combat poverty by providing compensatory support for families (one or two parents with children) on low incomes (£3.60 per hour). The WFTC contributes half of the minimum wage earned by a domestic worker with a dependent family. So the employer continues to pay the usual amount, and the State tops it up.

Italy

The status of domestic workers in Italy is governed by Law No 339 of 2 April 1958. This lays down detailed provisions concerning the drawing up of employment contracts. The national collective agreement also regulates a number of rights, for instance concerning holidays, a thirteenth month's pay, sickness (for which reduced cover is provided, at the family's expense), etc. The contribution system is not calculated on the basis of the actual salary but a notional salary, which means for example that workers receive a pension not much above the minimum and the maternity allowance, which is paid for five months, is less than the actual salary received.

To address this problem, employers' contributions should be tax-deductible. Draft Law No 4233 in the Chamber of Deputies and No 2966 in the Senate, on income tax, would bring domestic workers into line with other categories of workers. It would extend tax rebates in respect of individuals' expenses to the cost of employing domestic help. Domestic workers would also obtain entitlement to sickness leave, and their pensions would be calculated on the basis of the salary actually received.

Both private employed domestic workers and industrial cleaning firms are covered by a national collective agreement signed in July 1996. The agreement establishes three categories of workers

¹ European Colloquium on new sources of employment, organised by FENI, EURO-FIET and DG V in Oct 9 and 10, 1997, p. 28.

depending on the skills required; the first category comprises workers who have autonomy and high levels of responsibility requiring advanced professional skills, such as governesses, nurses and school cooks; the second category comprises family-oriented jobs requiring specific professional skills such as babysitting, waiting at table or caretaking; finally, the third category comprises workers engaged in manual or physical work such as cleaning or kitchen help.

Portugal

The law of 24 October 1992 established a separate legal status for domestic workers for the first time in Portugal. It was the first attempt to regulate an occupation which had not evolved despite all the radical changes which have transformed most employment contracts. It was therefore necessary to regulate the sector in view of rising living standards and changing employment relations, particularly in view of the fact that this kind of employment contract was still governed by the provisions of the former Civil Code, and dated back to 1867.

The new law of 1992 recognises the special nature of this kind of work, which requires a particularly strong relationship of trust, and subjects it to different rules from those governing other employment contracts. Article 2 of the law defines domestic work by drawing up a long list of the various tasks which workers might be called on to perform under their contract. The law then lays down detailed provisions to cover every eventuality, for example the ending of the contract, sickness leave, maternity leave, paid holidays, accidents and probationary periods, to ensure that neither side is placed at a disadvantage.

4. Concrete proposals

Three main points emerge from the foregoing survey. Firstly, the scale of demand for domestic help whether it is provided by Community or non-Community citizens. The wide range of situations in which such work is performed shows the need to regulate the market and the working conditions of those involved. To achieve that, the first prerequisite is to obtain, at Community level, recognition of this category of work as an occupation.

The second point that emerges is the lack of regulation in this sector. No other occupation is so vulnerable in this respect. The various approaches being tried out in the Member States show that awareness of the problem is increasing. But this is only a start, particularly in view of the rise in immigration into Europe and the increasing supply of 'black' labour with which we will be confronted.

Finally, the demand for such labour on the part of households is growing and will continue to grow. However, this demand cannot be resolved in so far as nobody is prepared to meet the real cost of the work performed or, in other words, to pay the workers concerned on a regulated basis.

To sum up, in view of the money being lost to national exchequers, the extremely high percentage of domestic workers who are 'on the black', this is a sector which deserves to receive serious attention.

In essence, the two sets of measures proposed are intended to reduce the attraction of the black market on the one hand and to increase the different effect of penalties on the other. So while

some States have opted to finance social security or fiscal contributions by means of service employment cheques, others have tightened up controls and introduced more severe penalties.

5. *Migrant domestic workers*

This report would be incomplete if it did not refer to the large number of female migrant workers employed in this sector on an undeclared basis, many of whom endure very hard and unfair conditions of employment. Given the ever-increasing size of this new and even cheaper supply of labour, there is no doubt that any attempt to regulate this sector at European level must take into account these new developments also.

Obviously, the fact that such work is undeclared makes it very difficult to ascertain its extent. However, there is no doubt that carrying out domestic work for private individuals is one of the main activities of migrant women who have settled or recently arrived in Europe.

In Italy, where the sector is covered by a collective agreement, the information provided by the Filcams-CGIL trade union indicates that, of the one million people engaged in domestic work, 480 000 are migrant workers. In 1995, female domestic workers accounted for almost a third of all work permits issued.

Another study carried out in Barcelona in 1997¹ estimated that there were 15 000 Filipino nationals, almost all of whom were employed in domestic work. Of the 7 000 Dominican Republic nationals who had emigrated to Spain, 85% were women, most of whom were employed in domestic work.

In France, domestic work is an important source of employment for women: a study shows that, as far back as 1984, almost 53.8% of illegal immigrants were employed as domestic workers².

However, despite the scale of the problem, it is often unseen and overlooked. In 1997, a study commissioned by the European Commission and carried out in various European towns revealed the scale of abuse to which female migrant workers employed in domestic service were exposed. In addition to the fact that domestic work is often undervalued and not regarded as real work, such women have to face racism and the dependency arising from their illegal status. Employers are often in a position of strength and openly exploit their employees. The living and working conditions of such workers are largely determined by whether or not they are housed by their employers.

The findings made in various European towns have shown that in addition to being exploited at work (with very low pay, or even no pay at all, and long working hours), migrant women in domestic employment were often exposed to violence or sexual harassment on a daily basis³. Such women generally have no recourse against this form of abuse, as they are completely isolated and their employers are in a position of strength, given that the women are often illegal

¹ Anderson, B. and Phizacklea, A. (1997) *Migrant Domestic Workers: A European Perspective*, Report to DG V of the European Commission, p. 52-54.

² Marie, C.V. (1984) *De la clandestinité à l'insertion professionnelle régulière*, in *Travail et Emploi*, n.22, December 1984, p. 21-29.

³ 'Doing the Dirty Work? The Global Policy of Domestic Labour' B. Andersson, University of Warwick, January 2000.

immigrants. Those workers who do have work permits are legally obliged to stay with their employers, without whom their permit cannot be renewed. Leaving an abusive employer often leads to immediate deportation.

Employees' working conditions depend, therefore, on their legal status. Illegal immigrants are generally paid less and work more, as they often live in the household and are forced to continue working, without a break, until late at night. Those who do have a work permit, on the other hand, are often blackmailed by the threat that their work permit will not be renewed.