Regulating domestic help in the informal sector

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The committee adopted the report by Miet SMET (EPP-ED, B) which looked at the legislation governing this sector in a number of Member States (France, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Portugal) and called for a European definition of domestic work to be drawn up. It called for work of this kind to be recognised as an occupation in its own right and to be included in the guidelines on employment. It also wanted 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. The Member States should take account of the principle of declaring all employment relationships, and it was important that both employees and employers were made aware of their rights and obligations under their employment relationship. The committee proposed various measures for combating the increasing amount of undeclared work in this sector, such as simplifying administrative formalities in connection with the requirement for private employers to declare their employees and making domestic services tax-deductible to reduce the difference in cost between employing undeclared and declared workers. To improve the image and the status of the occupation of domestic work, it also recommended specific and comprehensive social security cover for persons pursuing this occupation, which would entitle the worker to social insurance cover and a decent pension on retirement. Given that many migrant women were employed as domestic workers, the committee advocated setting up specialised reception centres to provide female migrant workers with assistance, for example, in drawing up applications to regularise their situation if they have temporary residence permits. In the context of recognising domestic work as an occupation, it felt that female migrant workers should be eligible for regular work permits. Lastly, it called on the Member States to link the issue of visas for domestic employees working for diplomats to a guaranteed minimum level of working conditions.