

Tailored guidelines summary: **SOCIAL VOUCHER PROGRAMMES**

Social vouchers are policy tools used by states or public authorities to support their initiatives for social change and to meet specific political objectives such as stimulating the local economy and tackling undeclared work. Social vouchers, whether paper or digital, are social benefits issued collectively to workers by their employers, both public and private, carrying rights to access specific goods or services that improve their beneficiaries' working conditions and facilitate their work-life balance (such as access to food, culture, transport, childcare or holidays). Public authorities can also adapt social vouchers to distribute benefits and well-being to their citizens as an alternative to allowances in cash or kind.

How are they used in PHS?

It is well documented that across Europe we are seeing an aging population and in some countries higher participation of two-parent households in work outside the home. Social vouchers have been one approach to support access to and formalisation of PHS.

Features of social vouchers

- 1. Limited geographical scope:** valid only in a limited territory (state, region, sub-regional district or municipality);
- 2. Regulated framework:** regulated by a specific social or tax framework intended to implement a social and/or employment policy;
- 3. For legal entities:** provided upon request of an enterprise or a public entity;
- 4. Access to services/goods:** entitling an individual to obtain goods or services;
- 5. Dedicated network:** give access to service providers which have a commercial agreement with the issuer;
- 6. No cash equivalent:** cannot be exchanged for money;
- 7. Easy to use:** administrative formalities are simplified for beneficiaries, who are enabled to identify clearly what services they are entitled to, how to access these services and how much they will cost.

Important note

Social vouchers are seen mostly as positive as regards job creation, formalising undeclared work, restoring work-life balance for some households, local development, and positive financial outcomes. However we must be cautious when designing social voucher programmes so as to ensure that while they may become the primary motivator to promote PHS work, they should not entail a heavy dependence by stakeholders on the system as regards setting wages and working conditions. The industry should remain able to provide services alongside social voucher programmes. Vouchers are not exclusive tools to support PHS, and in fact a combination of social voucher programmes with other government incentives would better ensure sustainable support to PHS over the long-term.

Partners



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