

Bogus Chair Renting – A Threat to the Future of the Hairdressing Industry

A joint statement of Coiffure EU and UNI Europa, European Social Partners in Personal Services

The European social partners in Personal Services express their deep concern over the rapid spread of bogus chair renting as a business model in the hairdressing industry. Although self-employment has a legitimate place in our sector, the growing use of bogus chair renting arrangements poses a serious threat to sustainability, professionalism, and fair working conditions in the sector.

The hairdressing industry predominantly, made up of micro and small enterprises, plays a foundational role in creating quality employment. However, this model is increasingly undermined as bogus chair renting arrangements distort fair competition within the sector. In principle, chair renting allows an independent professional to operate their own business from within another salon. Yet, bogus chair renting can enable the salon owner to control key aspects of work, such as pricing, schedules, or products. This kind of chair-renting not only distorts competition and erodes social protection for workers but also deprives public finances of essential tax and social security contributions. In a labour-intensive sector where wages account for more than half of total business costs, bogus chair renting practices create unfair competition, endanger compliant employers, and destabilise the entire ecosystem.

Moreover, if bogus chair renting becomes more prevalent, the industry risks losing much of what defines its professional character and crafts identity. The salon environment, with its shared standards, and structured training, is the cornerstone of quality and skills development. Self-employed Hairdressers often possess the required qualifications. However, employment-based salons can provide additional opportunities for continuous training, mentorship, and knowledge exchange that sustain professional standards and innovation. Without them, newly qualified hairdressers lose vital guidance and career development prospects. This leads to declining quality, weakened recruitment, and reduced attractiveness of the profession for young people entering vocational education. Bogus Chair renting can also lead to inconsistent health and safety standards and increased risks in the workplace, thus undermining the decade-long efforts of EU social partners to improve OHS provisions.

The European Social Partners, Coiffure EU and UNI Europa, firmly believe that the future of the hairdressing industry depends on preserving employment-based salons as the dominant business model. This structure is more conducive to quality jobs, fair competition, and a foundation for long-term investment in skills, fair work, innovation, and sustainable business practices.

We call on the European Commission to recognise this shared European priority, which is aligned with its current commitment to support both quality jobs and thriving SMEs, and to work with us and educational institutions across Europe to curb the expansion of bogus chair renting and secure a strong, professional, and future-oriented hairdressing sector.

We call on the European Commission and Member States to:

1. Curb the spread of bogus chair renting practices that disguise employment relationships, distort fair competition, collective bargaining, and undermine social protection.
2. Strengthen the enforcement of existing labour, tax, and social security laws to ensure that both workers and employers are treated fairly promoting fair competition across the sector.
3. Promote apprenticeships and skills development within salon environments. Validation of competences and certification of qualifications to ensure professionalism in the sector and enable intra EU-mobility.
4. Strengthen EU sectoral social dialogue, ensuring that both employers and workers have the capacity to create fair working conditions and fair competition.

The Social Partners commit to:

1. Cooperate with national authorities, labour inspectorates, and social security institutions to strengthen compliance with labour law, tax, and social protection regulations. Strengthen our cooperation with the European Labour Authority's Undeclared Work Platform.
2. Continue the autonomous implementation of the EU Sectoral Social Partner agreement on occupational health and safety in the hairdressing sector.
3. Strengthen social dialogue and collective bargaining cooperation between national member organisations; engage in joint capacity-building projects that create a sustainable and equitable hairdressing sector through sectoral observatories.
4. Write a joint letter to the European Commission, European Parliament, and Member States on policies that safeguard fair competition, promote decent work, strengthen entrepreneurship, vibrant highstreets and sustain small enterprises in personal services.

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