Reconciling Work and Family Life as a strategic tool to achieve gender equality and the SDGs

20 April 2016
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COFACE

• The European network of family organisations representing the interest of all families
• Founded in 1958
• 59 organisations in 23 EU Member States
• 100 million citizens
• Funded by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)
2014 Year of Reconciling Work and Family Life in Europe
**European Reconciliation Package**

**Reconciling for Carers**

- 13% of Europeans aged 50-64 care for a disabled or elderly family member every day or several times a week.

**Recommendation**

The European Commission should initiate a Recommendation on the recognition of family and informal carers and for the adoption of provisions recognizing their legal status in Member States.

**Women at Work**

- Average gender pay gap in the EU: 16%
- Average gender pension gap in the EU: 39%

Nearly 60% of EU university graduates are women, but they account for less than 33% of scientists and engineers across Europe, yet represent nearly 40% of the total workforce in the health, education and welfare sectors.

**Recommendation**

The EU should adopt a coherent legislative package including maternity, paternity, parental and carers' leaves, to promote a more equal share of care responsibilities between women and men.

**Childcare, Education and Parenting**

- Almost 60% of parents identify availability (waiting lists, lack of services) as a difficulty concerning the usage of childcare in the EU27.

Across the EU, women reported that they do not work or work part-time because...

**Recommendation**

In addition to guaranteeing a legal right to a childcare place for all children after the end of the daycare period, there is the need for a childcare policy that supports the diversity of types of provision and is flexible enough to be able to reflect the real lives of the families who rely on these services locally.

**Reconciling at the Workplace**

- Less than half of the European workforce has flexibility in working hours (Eurofound ECLS 2012)

In order to create a reconciliation friendly environment, all stakeholders must be involved in shaping legislative and practical initiatives.

**Recommendation**

Reconciliation policies are not a "one-size-fits-all" type of policies and companies should elaborate and introduce adapted instruments to fulfil the specific needs of the workers and of the company, according to its size and sector.
EU: Where are we?

- Debate on how to merge SDGs into Agenda 2030 (SDG 5.4) – where can the EU lead the way?

- EC Strategic engagement (not a strategy) for Gender Equality (women employment and work-life balance is first of its 5 areas of work) – pivotal for economic independence and gender equality
2015: A “New Start” proposed

European Commission launched the Roadmap for a package to support families reconcile their work and family&care responsibilities

COFACE welcomes the comprehensive approach, understanding that reconciling is a multi-faceted and complex topic
But let’s not forget, to be efficient and promote real equality:

1. Reconciliation should be **for all** and not a benefit for young mothers, fathers or for cares only – change in work culture

2. Impact of **technologies**: more flexibility and smart working (positive), shift from culture of presence at the workplace to culture of availability 24/7 (negative)
3. **Mobility and migration**: need to include reconciliation needs of migrant and mobile workers (and their families) when designing legislation and policy – Transnational families, migrant care workers.
2016: Time to act

EC Reconciliation Package proposal:
- Ambition
- Comprehensive
- Life-cycle approach (= reconciliation measures as safety nets, preventing situations of vulnerability and poverty)
- Mix of legal and non-legal instruments
What we call for:

- Comprehensive set of legislative measures for leave policies

- A monitoring and benchmarking system for care services provision within the EU semester (beyond childcare)

- Policy guidance, awareness raising and share of practices for implementing better flexible working arrangements at Member States and company levels
Thank you for your attention!

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