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This publication is made with the support of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). The information contained in this report does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.
Reconciling work and private life is an area where the European Union can and must make more progress.

This is not only about women, but it is mainly women who need to share their time between paid work, taking care of children, and also taking care of elderly family members.

In recent years, solutions have been explored and many initiatives have been taken. Reconciliation requires more flexibility in terms of what kind of jobs are offered, but also the availability of a much wider network of childcare facilities. And there is a need for measures that ensure that care responsibilities are more fairly shared between men and women.

However, the protracted economic crisis of the recent years has just increased the burden on many working parents. The period of high unemployment, abrupt economic adjustment and increased labour mobility can only bring new challenges to families. More working people and more children are at risk of poverty today than five years ago.

There is no real answer to these problems without more solidarity within and between EU member states. This also means strengthening our capacity for social investment at all levels.

Europe is diverse, including in terms of demographic trends and national welfare systems. However, the EU can play a significant role in helping families and communities cope with the current economic hardships and invest in a more productive future.

Our success depends on the cooperation between national governments, social partners, EU institutions, and in particular civil society organisations, like COFACE. This volume is an important contribution that shows the way forward.

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There is a need for measures that ensure that care responsibilities are more fairly shared between men and women.

László Andor
EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2010-2014)
Dear Reader,

You are holding in your hand a copy of our European Reconciliation Package, or ERP as it became affectionately known to us. This document is an important milestone in a journey that started a couple of years ago, when COFACE launched its campaign to have 2014 designated as the European Year of Reconciling Work and Family Life. With every step of this campaign we enriched our knowledge, opened doors and created new partnerships.

Too Many Families in Europe Struggle for Finding a Good Work-Life Balance

Over the past couple of years we observed an increased preoccupation of European families with the challenges of balancing their family life and work, whereas the world of work hasn’t been successful in adjusting to the changing needs of families, in particular to the growing number of dual-earner families with dual care-needs, both for little children, and for ageing parents.

Too many families in Europe struggle for finding a good work-life balance. Work life balance is common sense and society must address the needs of families by developing integrated policy responses dealing with the family life cycle, which considers the different needs and resources of women, men and children at different stages of their lives.

The final policy package you are about to read couldn’t have happened without the coming together and great investment of time and energy of a wide range of experts from civil society, policy, research and employers to develop a much deeper understanding for the challenges in reconciling work and family life and to showcase different practices, which we used as inspiration for drawing up our concrete policy recommendations. They were either members of our network, members of the 2014 Alliance, speakers and participants at our 3 conferences, and many other events and interaction we coordinated during 2014. We are truly grateful for their contributions.

Mobilise

We are very ambitious in our plans for putting the ERP to best use. It will form the basis of our on-going awareness raising campaign on the issue, and we will be reaching into its best practices, case studies and recommendations to fulfil the commitment COFACE made at the beginning of the campaign: to make a real difference in the lives of families.

We will continue the advocacy work with the ERP in hand to give men and women the opportunity to be carers and earners in equal measure, as well as equally active members in their communities and to help families alleviate the tension between their professional and family lives. We are sure it will help stimulate the design and implementation of effective reconciliation policies (and legal framework) and the development of measures that are needed by all workers, regardless of their age, gender or family status.

Realise

We will encourage our members, family organisations representing citizens and families and our broader stakeholder circle across the EU to help us turn the ERP into reality by adopting the inspiring practices and convincing their national governments to adopt some of the policies we recommend. For its success, we count on the further support and active involvement of the European Commission, the European Parliament, the national and local authorities, the Social partners to recognise the importance of these issues and act. We also hope, that it will help open the much-needed discussion at the workplace between employers and employees to enable a much more family-friendly working environment.

Only through working together can we address the needs of families and make effective policies and programmes that will bring about change.

Annemie Drieskens
President
COFACE
In the last few years, there has been a growing demand for policies that support the achievement of the targets on gender equality, closing the gender and pension pay gap, women’s participation in decision making, the Barcelona targets for early childhood education and care, and a better reconciliation between work and family life. In the context of the EU 2020 Strategy, whilst not framed as a headline target, reconciliation measures have nevertheless been recognised at EU level as important means of achieving major policy objectives.

Europe is the continent with the highest number of older citizens, with women who have a longer life expectancy than men, and an ageing process that will continue for the remainder of this century. However, despite these well-known trends, about 80% of care for people with a disability or for older persons is still provided by informal carers: family, friends, or neighbours, with a great difference from one Member State to the other and with significant differences between women and men. Age groups are also affected differently and, despite a growing number of young carers, the highest share of care is provided by women age 50 or older.

The lack of services and support to those with family needs, long waiting lists for childcare and care for older and disabled persons, including services promoting independent living, coupled with difficulties in reconciling work and care responsibilities has had a strong impact on employment, especially for women. This has, for many women, often resulted in having no other choice than reducing working hours or dropping out completely from paid employment. During the last century, labour market strategies as well as employment policies have been designed based on the traditional family and societal structure of the male breadwinner model. Over time this dynamic has evolved. However, these changes in society and diversity of family forms have not been followed by revisions of the labour market legislation. Reconciliation policies and practices are essential to implement this change and promote the employment of women, which, in the EU in 2013, stands at 62.5% (against 74.2% for men). The gender pay gap remains at 16% and the pension gap has reached 39%.

Women’s employment is tightly linked to the distribution of work and family responsibilities between women and men. The unequal share of unpaid work in the family has a direct impact on gender segregation, because women still adjust their working arrangements considering their caring responsibilities especially when they have children or when they need to care for an elderly or disabled relative. Subsequently, women are more likely to take leaves, work part time or withdraw from the labour market. Indeed, because of insufficient or a total lack of childcare facilities and policies, across Europe, 23% of women whose youngest child is under three and 18% of women whose youngest child is between 3 and mandatory school age work part-time or do not work at all.

Leaves are still often ground for discrimination and despite existing legislation on the protection of pregnant workers, women continue to be discriminated on the grounds of childbirth. Furthermore, it is very difficult for women to reintegrate the labour market after a long care period.

To counterbalance this trend, it is important to put in place measures supporting women to access and stay in employment, it is equally important to encourage men in taking a higher share of the family and care responsibilities.
However, reconciliation policies must not be seen and identified as measures to support young parents only, or benefit only employees in large corporations or in the public sector where employers can put in place special arrangements for their employees with certain types of jobs, mainly managerial and white collar. On the contrary, reconciliation policies are to be considered as a review and improvement of the working environment in order to improve the working conditions and well-being of all employees and workers, as well as a contribution to the productivity and success of the company.

They are not a “one-solution-fits-all” type of policies and tailored instruments must be elaborated and used to fulfil the specific needs of the workers and of the company, according to its size and sector, or developed to favour specifically the self-employed and entrepreneurs. They should provide a coherent framework, aiming to reform the labour market but also to create a “Reconciliation economy” on the model of the “green economy”, developing and promoting a social impact indicator, rewarding those companies with low social impact, for the benefit of the entire community.
INTRODUCTION
The European Union is meant to be more and more equal and inclusive. Its citizens and residents are to enjoy their freedoms and have guaranteed equal opportunities, regardless of their gender, age, race, religion nationality, sexual orientation or disability. The Treaty of Rome, in 1957, included initiatives on equal pay for women and men as one of the main commitments to social policy and equal opportunities. Later on, initiatives favouring reconciliation of work and family life have gained importance across Europe within employment policies, as an explicit way to respond to the pressing challenges of an ageing population, to boost competitiveness and reach the renewed Lisbon targets for increasing women’s participation in the labour market.

In the last few years, there has been a growing demand for policies that will support the achievement of the targets on gender equality, closing the gender pay and pension gap, women’s participation in decision making, the Barcelona targets for early childhood education and care, and the need for a better reconciliation between work and family life. This movement has urged the three main EU institutions to issue specific policy documents and declare political commitment. Among others, we recall the Council Resolution 2000/C 218/02, the European Parliament resolutions 2003/2129 and 2006/2276, the Council Conclusions of December 2008, and finally, the Commission “Reconciliation Pack” which includes the Communication COM (2008)635 “A better work-life balance: stronger support for reconciling professional, private and family life”. More recently, the European Employment Strategy as well as the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 also played a very important role in paving the way to effectively implement reconciliation policies.

In the context of the EU 2020 Strategy, whilst not framed as a headline target, reconciliation measures have nevertheless been recognised at EU level as important means of achieving major policy objectives, notably higher rates of employment, inclusive growth, inclusion of vulnerable groups and on equality between women and men. The commitment of the EU Heads of States and Governments and the European Commission to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion is not achievable without narrowing the gender gap and increasing the participation of women, people with disability and young people in the labour market; while also enabling men to take more family responsibilities, redefining gender expectations and roles.
DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

The overall population size of a given nation is driven by life expectancy, fertility and migration. As the financial uncertainties and insecurity continue to dominate daily news headlines, the demographic shifts start to become another stress factor for Europe. The population is becoming older and more diverse, so the question awaiting an urgent response is: Europe's population structure will definitely shift within the next decades – but how is it possible to maintain sustainable social (and economic) structures, social welfare systems, pensions and healthcare funding? There is no doubt that these are critical factors which determine Europe's global competitiveness and resilience, the stability of its civil society and finally the wealth and wellbeing of its citizens.

The old age dependency ratio – the ratio between the total number of elderly persons (aged 65 and over) and the number of persons of working age (from 15 to 64) - is increasing - from currently 28% in the EU, up to a projected 39% in 2030 (EuroStat). This means that by 2030, there will be approximately 2.5 people of working age for one person aged 65+. Such an unprecedented shift, from currently 4 persons of working age for one senior, down to 2.5 within two decades highlights the severity of the demographic challenge in the coming two decades. For this reason important reforms are being introduced to adapt our social welfare and benefit systems in order to ensure their long-term sustainability, but not enough is done to guarantee adequate living standards for the most disadvantaged of all age groups.

The other dimension of demographic change is the steady population decline from the mid-1960s. However, in recent years the total fertility rate in the EU-28 has shown a slight tendency of rising again. This slight increase in the total fertility rate observed in recent years may, in part, be attributed to a catching-up process: when women give birth later in life, the total fertility rate tends to decrease at first, before a subsequent recovery. The recent financial and economic crisis has played a role in this decrease and, especially, in the decision of (future) parents to start a family or have another child. More generally, the mean age of women at childbirth continued to rise between 2002 and 2012, from 29.1 to 30.1 years.

LABOUR MARKET

Understanding and appreciating the situation and acting accordingly and in a sustainable way is the pivotal challenge for the EU leadership in these years. Labour market and employment policies have historically been designed to respond to the needs of the time and now need to be adapted to reflect today’s society. Families and society have been, and still are, changing and evolving into more complex and diversified structures. These changes in society and in family forms, however, have not been transposed into the labour market which is still mainly based on the single earner, male breadwinner model. For these reasons, among others, there is a structural difficulty for women to fulfil their potential and to enjoy equal opportunities in employment. Lack of child and elderly care services, flexible working arrangements and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes continue to hamper women’s participation in the labour market and to create perverse effects such as the segregation of women in lower paid sectors or in lower positions within companies (horizontal and vertical segregation).
Reconciliation policies tend to be seen as specific measures for women, or even more narrowly for young working mothers. This is, however, a misinterpretation of workers’ needs and a bad implementation of measures that are needed by all workers, regardless of their gender or family status. It is important that reconciliation policies, may it be flexible working arrangements or tailored service provision, are available to all workers, regardless of their parental status or the age of their children since families’ needs for flexibility do not end with the enrolment of children in school. Parents of older children and teenagers have to respond to a different but equally important demand for parental presence that requires a certain flexibility. Furthermore, reconciliation must not be seen as a parents-only policy: those who care for an older or disabled relative also experience specific situations that have to be taken into consideration.

Finally, these needs may be temporary and last for short or longer periods, may occur abruptly or may be linked with the worker’s well-being. Therefore, linking them to a specific family situation (e.g. being a parent, carer...) can be limiting and create disparities among employees, which can have a negative impact on the working environment. Designing and implementing reconciliation measures is not, and must not be considered as a gesture for women or employees with family responsibilities only but a profound change in the way of organizing work and society.

Gender equality is not only a women’s issue, but an issue for the entire society. Men should be considered recipients of reconciliation measures as much as women. The perceived and real barriers associated to men’s participation in care responsibilities have to disappear by active and outreaching campaigns, targeting women, men and companies. Policies have to help create an enabling environment for men’s active participation in child or elderly care and care for dependents as beneficiaries of appropriate leave schemes. This would entail the reduction of differences for “out-of-work” periods of women and men, lowering the gender discrimination in the recruitment process, where women are still perceived as the potential main carer.

Most of the attention for reconciliation policies seems to be on young parents, and the provision of services for early childhood. However, older children, teenagers also need to spend sufficient time with their parents as they transition from being a teenager to being a young adult, for their wellbeing, their future choice of education, skill development opportunities and to prevent early school leaving. The organisation of care for ageing parents can also be a challenging time for any family, especially if the care demand is not gradual, but due to an accident or illness where older parents lose the capacity to live independently and need round-the-clock care.

It is also important to highlight the freedom of choice for families to organise their lives in the way they wish. To enable them to make the appropriate choices, accessible and affordable services as well as appropriate and suitable time arrangements need to be in place. These require social investments that will later pay out in the form of more people, and especially women, working in paid employment because they know their dependent family members are in good hands.

Through the general trend towards longer lives and rising life expectancy, it can be imagined that also the traditional life course and career path(s) could be reviewed. The customary working life no longer applies as most young people spend a longer time studying or upskilling, and thus their entry into the labour market is now postponed. Longer and healthier life spans result in people working until an older age. This stretched and shifted working life could benefit from more flexibility with a long-term vision.
instead of the crammed “rush-hour” period of intense work and career coupled with having children that we have today.

WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN, INCLUSIVE WELL-BEING

Reconciliation measures and policies are essential for the well-being of all citizens in Europe. Notably, well-being of children and their social and cognitive development are strongly affected by the capacity of parents to spend time with their children. A balance between working and time for parenting is necessary. Children have the right to quality education, quality care, participation and family life and these rights cannot be foregone by the interests of the economy. The well-being of the elderly, frail, ill or disabled family members and their carers must not be left aside but fully integrated in policy making.

A balanced work and family time reconciliation is necessary to enable citizens to spend time on other activities, such as voluntary activities and general participation in local communities and building social capital.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

There is a clear and direct link between difficulties in combining work and family life and the risk of poverty, hence reconciliation measures are key to any wider policy that seeks to tackle and prevent poverty, social and economic exclusion.

Policies, instruments and measures that aim to reconcile work and family life should underpin Europe’s recovery from the crisis. One in every five children in the EU is at risk of poverty and exclusion. The lack of available flexible and quality part-time jobs, long commute hours, unavailable, low quality or unaffordable childcare, personal assistance and care services mean that women (in fewer cases, men) are forced to drop out of the labour market. The recent European Parliament report on the impact of the economic crisis on gender equality and women’s rights (2012/2301(INI)) showed, that after the birth of every child, mothers work 12% less. This has serious implications for the overall family income and women’s economic independence later in their lives.

Especially in the most vulnerable families, such as migrant families, lone parent or large families, families with heavy care responsibilities for an older or a disabled family member, the risk of poverty and exclusion (social and economic) are very high if one or both of the parents are excluded and/or distant from the labour market.

PLURALISM AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Reconciling work and family life is fundamental to all families in recognition of their diversity, regardless of the ethnicity, migrant background, disability or socio-economic status of its members.

Furthermore, there is a great cultural and historical difference between countries in Europe in how families organise their lives, and how legislation, social service provision and labour law approach the issue of reconciliation of work, family and private life. It is important to monitor, evaluate and communicate on the related issues all the while keeping in mind, and respecting diversity.
A. AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES

Successful reconciliation of work and family responsibilities is one of the foundations of decent work for women and men of any age, with and without disability. As already stated, reconciliation measures can support women’s access to the labour market and prevent them from dropping out of employment but it must also address equity, so that men and women can be equal earners and equal carers throughout their lives. Gender stereotypes and labour market segregation (horizontal and vertical) are a pervasive challenge for the European Union. The “male-breadwinner” model and the typical linear careers are no more the main economic model chosen by [or given to] families. Dual-earner and second earner models continue to be gender biased and normative. Despite cultural differences, especially in Southern EU countries, legislation and policies need to be adapted to the current authenticity of family diversity, needs and realities. There isn’t a one-solution-fits-all, solutions must be tailored; private and public bodies must find the most appropriate one which responds to the specific needs of their employees and employers. Having a family friendly working environment must not be seen as a “concession” to employees but rather as a natural and productive win-win prospect, where businesses can also find benefit. Hence, it is a new way of doing good business, more responsible, more sustainable, where the family-friendly policies become an integral part of the core business, and not just tokenistic gestures to promote corporate social responsibility. Such workplace measures can have a positive impact, among which are reduced absenteeism and turnover, more motivated and engaged employees, enhanced productivity, improved attraction and retention of qualified workforce, swifter return from leaves, and an overall improvement of the wellbeing of staff, all of which will be positively reflected on the bottom line.

According to the company’s or public body’s structure and size, several different initiatives can be taken, starting with flexible working arrangements for both women and men with and without disability (working hours, tele-work, and flexibility over specific periods of the month, of the year…) which can suit both employees and employers. Other options could be the provision of services to employees such as in-house child care facilities, which can be arranged through a “consortium”, for example, for SMEs or the provision of benefits facilitating access to such services (see chapter 2 - Women at work and chapter 3 - Reconciliation in companies).

Moreover, in the EU28 there is a growing recognition that the labour market is evolving due to rapidly changing technologies along with economic and social factors. However, legislation and policies are not always in place to facilitate these changes. Therefore, Europe does need a fundamental shift in the labour market, which is responsive to family needs; with innovative proposals and flexible arrangements that could accommodate women and men’s requirements without jeopardising their rights and responsibilities. The reorganisation of working time arrangements must go hand in hand with the development of services for families.

In addition, allowances and cash benefits to support children and families, de-taxation of some products or services are instruments that are used very differently in the EU Member States.
B. SERVICES

The prospect of reconciling work and family life very much depends on the availability of accessible and affordable quality services as it has been recognised by the European Commission’s Employment Package. Lately, for example, the European Commission’s Child Poverty Recommendation includes provisions to improve the availability of these services particularly in relation to child care and care for other dependent persons. The lack of available and affordable care solutions for children, elderly, or persons with disabilities, chronic illness or special needs is an important prohibitive factor in labour market inclusion.

The demographic trend is putting great pressure on families and thus a new demand for services and solutions has emerged. Therefore, the development of those services must be strengthened and tailored in accordance with families’ needs and expectations. For instance, access to personal and household services are one solution among others to better reconcile work and family life, especially for family carers.

C. TIME USE

A good work life balance is too often evaluated on a daily basis, instead of in the longer-term perspective. Finding the right balance requires more flexibility, for instance the alternation between intensive working periods and family time, or time spent on voluntary activities, learning, traveling or caring. The time-use of a working parent or carer is very much structured by the external environment: for example by the opening hours of the care facilities or the schools, by school holidays or the opening hours of shops and public administration. These external, set times often do not take into account individual needs or productivity. The culture of the organisation has also a strong influence on what time employees leave the workplace. The concrete organisation of a given day, week or month depends in fact on the availability of time arrangements at work, for example whether it is possible to work from home, to work flexible hours... Management is often based on time, instead of outcomes.

A recent survey carried out by the local Government of Thuringia, in Germany, shows that the majority of 25-35 year olds give more importance to the family-friendliness of their job than to the proposed salary package when seeking employment. With the shrinking working age population, the attraction and retention of skilled and qualified workers will have to take into account the periods of their lives when they are founding a family or look after a dependent relative, and the implications of their care responsibilities.

Periods of leave are key to combining work and family life in the mid-term perspective. Changing family structures and situations along the life course - motherhood, fatherhood, looking after a small child or adolescent, caring for an ill or disabled child or adult or caring for an elderly relative - could lead to having to dedicate more time to family responsibilities, and reducing or interrupting work, stopping paid employment for some time, partly or altogether. This situation could escalate as every EU Member State is faced with the prospect of a population that is getting progressively older.

The European Union has its own parental leave policy and legal framework, though it only represents a minimum standard, which is exceeded by many Member States. Since each member state of the EU can individually decide on providing care leave payments, there is a wide variety of leave provisions across Member States.

An inclusive and tolerant workplace motivates employees to perform to the best of their ability. It also promotes understanding between people and effective employee engagement. This in turn creates a stronger and more focused service and good teamwork.
European Reconciliation Package

Accessible, quality and affordable care services

Adequate resources

Working time arrangements
1. CARERS
Europe is the continent with the highest number of older citizens, with women who have a longer life expectancy than men, and an ageing process that will continue for the remainder of this century. According to international studies, nearly 20% of the European population is 65 years old or older. It is estimated that this rate will be 25% by 2050.

In addition, people with disabilities represent around one-sixth of the EU’s overall working-age population. The ageing process produces significant effects on society, such as the modification of population age structure, the number of generations, without mentioning the fact that there are increasingly older people needing care and less people of all ages able to provide it.

However, despite these well-known trends, about 80% of the time spent caring for people with a disability or for older persons in need of care is still provided by informal carers: family, friends or neighbours. According to the last Quality of Life Survey (2012) by Eurofound, 10 Europeans out of 100 take care of an older or disabled family member several days a week or every day, with a great difference from one Member State to the other and with significant difference between women and men.

Gender differences are more visible in countries where families have to bear most of the care responsibilities: the more care responsibilities are left on families, the higher the gap of the repartition of care responsibilities between men and women. Age groups are also affected differently and, despite a growing number of young carers, the highest share of care is provided by women aged 50 or older.

Lack of services and support to those with family needs, long waiting lists for childcare and care for older and disabled persons, including services promoting independent living, coupled with difficulties in reconciling work and care responsibilities has had a strong impact on employment, especially for women. This has often resulted in having no other choice than reducing working hours or dropping out completely from the labour market. There are also long term effects, since after a longer care period it is very difficult for women to reinteigrate the labour market and to obtain the recognition of those skills gained through informal family work.

Care is a very transversal topic and covers many aspects of family life: from the care for young children to the older family member, including care for persons with
disabilities, young and adult. In this chapter we will present the main challenges, suggest recommendations and showcase examples of practices relating to reconciling work and care responsibilities, focusing on care for family members with disabilities or older persons.

Recommendations and practices for working carers will be outlined in chapter 3 – Reconciling at the workplace, not a matter of size or sector. Child care and support for early age will be detailed in chapters 2 – Women at Work, and 4 – Childcare, Education and Parenting.
UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which the EU is a signatory and has to present an official implementation report to the UN Committee. Because of the EU / Member States’ competence in this matter, it can be useful to consult the Online Tool that provides an overview of the key instruments needed for the implementation of the UNCRPD and the state of the art in the Member States and the EU. This tool is managed by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED), which also provides the European Commission with analysis of national situations, policies and data.


Communication 2008/0420 final: A renewed commitment. It establishes a framework for the Commission to carry out different activities aiming to fight against discrimination on different grounds, including age.


2012 - European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.


WHO IS A FAMILY / INFORMAL CARER? THE EU CHARTER

The family/informal carer is "a non-professional person who provides primary assistance with activities in daily life, either in part or in whole, towards a dependent person in his/her immediate circle. This regular care may be provided on a permanent or non-permanent basis and may assume various forms, in particular: nursing, care, assistance in education and social life, administrative formalities, co-ordination, permanent vigilance, psychological support, communication, domestic activities, etc.". This type of care, provided by family and friends still represents about 80% of care activities in Europe, with serious consequences for carers and their families. COFACE has, in 2007, developed a European Charter for Family Carers where it states the rights and recognition that every single family or informal carer should have, including the recognition of his/her work, the right to respite care and the right to choose whether and in which form to become a carer.

CARE AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

Children and adults with disability are to be supported in a way so that they can live lives based on their human rights and Independent Living according to the UN CRPD and TFEU. They are to be able to choose where they want to live, with whom and which support services they need. Nowadays, care is dependent on the families and Independent Living is not a reality for many disabled people and their families. Legislation for respite care, child care allowances, personal assistance and other legislation promoting Independent Living need to be adopted to allow families and people with disability to access services allowing for Independent Living and independent families with a choice to work.

EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR FAMILY CARERS

The Charter deals with all aspects pertaining to the life of persons with disabilities and their families. Meeting the needs of family carers, irrespective of the cause of the dependency of the person that is being cared for (age, illness, accident, etc.) through targeted measures, contributes to the quality of care and helps preserve a qualitative family life.

Article 1: Definition of a family carer
Article 2: Choice of family carer
Article 3: Public solidarity
Article 4: Family solidarity
Article 5: The place of the family carer within the health system
Article 6: Official status of the family carer
Article 7: Quality of life
Article 8: Right to respite
Article 9: Information/training
Article 10: Assessment
THE GENDER AND AGE DIMENSIONS OF CARE

The gender distribution of care within the family is still unequal and women represent the majority of carers, with great impact on their paid employment. Too often, care duties force women to reduce working hours, terminate work contracts in their early career, take up part-time or low-qualified employment. An alarming phenomenon that cannot be neglected is the one of the so-called “sandwich generation” women, aged 50+ who find themselves in between the need for caring for an elderly person (often parent or parent-in-law) and their grandchildren or their adult children with disabilities. Demographic change means not only an increasing number of dependent older people in our societies, but that today’s parents who are often older than 35 will need care when their children are at a mid-career stage rather than at the end of their career. They will be even less able to count on informal care by their younger family members than today’s dependant older people. Reconciling work and family life at this stage will therefore become even more difficult. This will become even more relevant in the context of a mobile Europe, where workers will increase their mobility throughout the EU and in their own country during their careers, increasing the possibility of geographical distance between the person in need of care and his/her family and friends.

RECOGNITION OF CARE WORK

Care provided by family members or informal carers is often considered as a natural duty and not recognized as work even if, as noted above, this can have a huge impact on carers’ possibilities to work in formal employment and pursue their careers. For those who have stopped working to be a carer during a long period, re-access to the labour market is extremely complicated. Therefore, recognition of this work should mean also recognition of skills and possibility of training for future employment and not only legal recognition of social rights. At present, without recognition, family and informal carers are exposed to a higher risk of poverty (having to reduce or drop out of labour market with direct consequences on their income) and an even higher risk of poverty in older age, since with their unrecognised work, they would not have set aside social contributions for pension. In addition, the ongoing shift from state-regulated pensions to privately funded schemes reinforces the inequality between informal carers (i.e. mainly women) and non-carers. Income inequality at an older age is often due to unequal amounts of pension income received through private pension schemes, i.e. as consequence of restricted access to good quality and full-time employment.

This is especially problematic for those carers who have to drop out from the labour market a few years before retirement (50+) or those who stay out of employment for longer periods and could only enter paid work in an advanced age (45-50+) because the person they have cared for has passed away. Finding quality employment for those former carers is almost impossible because of their age and their long absence from the labour market. Furthermore, the skills they acquired during their care activities are not certified and they are not able to enter the formal care sector, if they wish so, even if they have worked in care for the previous years. Moreover, being a carer can impact physical and mental health (e.g. back problems due to continuous and repeated lifting of the person cared for, high levels of stress for long periods and risk of depression...) that will not be monitored by preventive and labour medicine centres, since they are not considered to be working.
ACCESSIBLE AND AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS TO REDUCE THE NEED OF CARE

The need for care of older persons is often not only conditioned by their health status, but also by the lack of adaptation of their environment to their needs. The lack of accessible housing and environments also influences the possibilities for independent living of people with a disability. Creating accessible and age-friendly environments is the key to mitigate the rising need for long-term care, therefore helping informal carers not to lose track of their careers. The World Health Organisation has already developed standards on what ‘age-friendly environments’ mean.¹ The EU can significantly contribute to the development of age-friendly environments through regional funds. AGE Platform Europe is currently building an innovation network on age-friendly environments featuring especially local governments and municipalities. Drawing from the experiences of the network, a European Covenant on Demographic Change can provide answers and give an incentive to the mainstreaming of age-friendly environments into policy work.²

FLEXIBILITY AND TIME-OFF WORK TO CARE

Labour markets policies and companies’ practices often do not reflect the needs of an ageing and inclusive society. More and more workers are forced out of the labour market because of their difficulties, not to say impossibility, of reconciling their work and care responsibilities, may they be for a caring parent, for a family member with disabilities or, as it happens more and more often, for both. With disabled people themselves not being able to access employment, the care remains a life-long responsibility. Two main instruments can be used, for example, to support carers to stay in formal employment: flexible working arrangements and the possibility to take days/hours off work for care. Both instruments can take different forms, including specific leaves or job sharing, telework, flexy-time allowing employees to vary their working hours within specific limits (core hours) from day to day, shift swapping among employees, compressed working week......

In order to maximize cover for all workers these measures should be regulated by law. However, lack of regulation in some countries should not prevent companies in establishing specific measures, according to their core business and their employees’ needs. These measures have proven to produce beneficial effects not only for employees but also for companies, as the employees’ loyalty increases significantly. While these measures may seem to be possible only by bigger companies or operating in an “office-setting”, SMEs and companies operating in other sectors can also find their own measures to meet the company and the employees’ needs. These measures will be discussed in chapter 3.
SERVICE PROVISION: ADEQUATE, ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY SERVICES

Taking time off for caring duties must be a voluntary act, not one that is unavoidable due to the lack of adequate care facilities and services persons with support need, and for independent living services for the disabled persons and the elderly. Investment in care facilities and support systems is a major driving force to ease the burden of informal carers. Care facilities can be day-care or residential but should be based on Independent living with choice, control and self-determination of the person to use the service. Services need to be accessible and affordable for all users and their families. Quality of care is one of the key aspects that have to be at the heart of the service provision. The Social Protection Committee released in 2010 a Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services, including key quality principles for social services in Europe.

It has been estimated that almost 20 million older people had experienced some form of psychological abuse, nearly 6 million experienced economic or financial abuse, 4 million physical abuse, and one million sexual abuse in Europe. The risk of being the target of mistreatment is very high among older people, especially older women. Violence is also high regarding disabled people. This risk is the result of a complex combination of individual, interactional, social, cultural and environmental aspects. However, the exact extent of the phenomenon is still largely unknown and hardly addressed during debates. However, it has to be recalled that neither elderly abuse nor abuse of disabled happen solely in residential care settings – actually, most cases of elder abuse happen behind closed doors. This is why it is of primary importance that formal caregivers, informal carers and families are accompanied in accessing services, included respite care, and offered peer and psychosocial support to help carers self-assess their situation. Indeed, such measures would help preventing situations of discomfort, depression or burn out.

INVolVEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL AND MIGRANT CAREGIVERS

Care (personal and health services) can also be provided by professionals within the home setting. These allow elderly and disabled individuals to maintain their autonomy and stay in the comfort of their own home while postponing or avoiding the onset of dependency.

Professional care within the home setting asks for a very good coordination between an older or disabled person, the professional carer and the family in order to avoid a de-personalisation of services and care. Overall it opens a perspective to respond better to the specific needs of the person in need of support and his/her family.

In more and more European countries it is possible to recognize a trend of hiring migrant carers, mainly women, to care for older and disabled persons in a form of residential care within the home of the person cared for. While this allows the family carer to better reconcile his/her work and care responsibilities, it is important to develop a legislative framework for their employment and skills acquisition/validation to make the system sustainable and to support the quality of care and the quality of life of both the carer and the person cared for. This also avoids that this solution becomes a simple shift of care responsibilities from a person (often women) within the family to another one outside the family, with a consequent shift of difficulties in reconciling work and family responsibilities onto the migrant (see also COFACE Report on Transnational Families – 2012).
RECOMMENDATIONS

EU level

• **EU strategy carers**
The European Commission should, following the European Parliament Interest Group (2014) demand, develop a comprehensive strategy on Family and Informal Carers at EU level that will mainstream recognition and support for carers throughout the European Policies and legislation.

• **EC Recommendation on family and informal carers**
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. This should be based on the EU Charter for Family Carers (COFACE, 2007) and would be the natural continuation of the existing EU policy documents, including the Social Investment Package and its Staff Working Document on Long Term Care.

• **Carers’ leave directive**
The Commission should inform about the outcomes of the consultation launched in 2011 on carer’s leave and prepare a directive on this issue, giving an adequate amount of leave to workers who are faced with care duties for their family members with disabilities or elderly dependents. This directive should contain recommendations for financial compensation during carer’s leave as well as the possibility for family and informal carer’s to switch from full time to part-time and vice versa. Special attention should be devoted to making it possible for male workers to take up their share of carer’s leave as well.

• **Migrant care workers**
to develop a legislative framework for their employment and skills acquisition/validation that also recognizes the psycho-social and reconciliation needs of the carer

National and local level

• **Legal recognition of status of family/informal carer:**
Member States should introduce legal instruments to recognize the status of family and informal carers, including provisions for their social rights and assimilating periods spent caring to employment, especially in the calculation of their pension and for their access to specific medical and social support; their eligibility for training and skills validation.

• **Support and services for carers**
Respite care services should be provided to all carers. In particular, carers should be enabled and offered opportunities to (self-)assess their needs and physical and mental well-being. Campaigns and information sessions and materials should be made available to the wider public to raise awareness about the existence and the role of family carers.

• **Education and training of professionals and staff in the detection of abuse or violence** is essential to guarantee good treatment to elderly and persons with disabilities. This could be achieved by incorporating the prevention of abuse in the curriculum of professionals in the fields of health, justice, education and social services and by enforcing an EU framework of quality standards in care provision for the prevention, detection and protection from neglect and abuse in home and residential care settings.
BELGIUM
CARERS’ LEAVE AND TIME CREDIT SYSTEMS

Each employee having worked at least 12 months for the same employer, has a right to take carers’ leave for a period of 12 months (24 months for single parents to take care for a child up to 16 years old), on the condition of a medical certificate stating that the assistance of the worker is needed for the person that needs care. This leave is remunerated by the government as a lump-sum. There is an additional carers’ leave (called “motivated time credit”) that can be used for the same purposes, for a maximum period of 24 months, but the conditions are stricter and the remuneration lower. “Motivated time credit” can also be granted to care for children up to 8 years old (additional to parental leave), with an extension, in case of children with disabilities, to 21 years old. Workers in time credit or carers’ leave hold their pension rights and the possibility to get back to their jobs. In addition, time-credit can be used not only as a full-time block of leave, but can be spread over years by switching to part-time, for example working at 80%.

BELGIUM
BELGIAN LAW FOR THE RECOGNITION OF FAMILY AND INFORMAL CARERS

Belgium adopted in 2014, a law (2014/203605) recognising the legal status of family and informal carers, caring for a person with high dependency needs. The law defines a legal status for carers, allowing them to be legally recognized. This status will be granted annually, after a specific application to the social security that will need to be renewed each year. This law is the first step of a longer process as it does not provide carers with specific social rights or financial compensations.

SPAIN
LEY DE DEPENDENCIA

The law on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care (BOE-A-2006-21990) has been adopted in December 2006. In its framework, dependent people can receive a grant to support family carers. Its amount varies between €330 and €414 per month, depending on the level of dependency of the elderly. Carers must be registered in the social security system and must pay a full rate of social contributions. They benefit from a compulsory rest period and training.

ITALY
EMILIA ROMAGNA REGIONAL LAW FOR THE RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND INFORMAL CARERS

In 2014 the region Emilia Romagna approved a regional law (LEGGE REGIONALE 28 marzo 2014, n. 2) for the recognition and support of family and informal carers. It is a regional law and has, therefore, validity only in the regional territory and for the regional competences like skills recognition and access to trainings organized by regional and local authorities, access to services like respite, support and care, which are regulated at regional level. However, it has no impact on social rights as they are regulated at national level. Despite being regional, it still has a direct impact on citizens’ life and can work as a trigger to upscale legislation at a higher level.
FRANCE
FULL PENSION FOR CARERS WHO INTERRUPTED THEIR CAREER

Those carers who had to drop out of paid employment to be a family carer for at least 30 consecutive months can enjoy full pension rights at the age of 65 and those periods will be assimilated to employment as for pension rights.

Décret n° 2011-620 du 31 mai 2011;

Informal carers, external to the family, can also benefit from this measure if they care for a person with disability receiving an allowance for supporting a carer.

Décret 2005-1588 du 19 décembre 2005:

BELGIUM
SUPPORT TO FAMILIES WITHIN THEIR HOMES

Flanders: Family care and additional home care (Gezinszorg en aanvullende thuiszorg) correspond to a service provided by a professional in the home of the person cared for. The client pays a set price per hour based on the income of the family. Family care includes personal care (washing, dressing and personal hygiene), help with cooking, laundry and ironing, psychosocial and educational support, guidance and minor cleaning of the house. Additional home care is also available per hour and although there is no set price, providers of services need to take into account the income and the family composition.

UNITED KINGDOM
CARER BREAK VOUCHERS

Since 2003, the Carer Break Voucher enables local authorities to fulfil their obligation to provide all carers with short term respite. The scheme is eligible for carers who look after adults needing substantial amounts of care or supervision, such as people with physical disabilities or sensory impairments, people with a learning disability, people experiencing mental health difficulties, people with long term illness or older people. Carer Break Vouchers are issued by the local authority after an assessment of financial and other needs. Each voucher has a money value and can be used to pay full or part-payment for a range of care services. The vouchers are accepted at hundreds of registered service providers (meeting local authorities’ requirements), including Residential or Nursing Homes, Day Centres, Homecare and voluntary organisations. It enables carers to choose to use it either in one lump sum for holiday, ad hoc days of rest or for a few hours respite. Afterwards, local authorities get to know how vouchers have been used, enabling them to ensure an efficient allocation of funds.

FRANCE
RIGHT TO RESPITE CARE

French legislation foresees a right to respite for family carers (Article L114-1-1 Créé par Loi n°2005-102 du 11 février 2005 - art. 11 JORF 12 février 2005). In addition, it is included into the national plans on Alzheimer 2008-2012 or on Autism 2013-2017. In order to respond to family carers’ needs for respite, different measures and solutions have been designed: support within the home of the person cared for, with an external person caring while the main carer takes respite, holidays for the person cared for, the carer and the rest of the family, temporary day/night or residential care in external and specialized structures for the person cared for.
SEVERAL EU COUNTRIES
SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS FOR CARERS

From 2010 to 2012 a partnership of twelve organisations in nine countries (BE, BG, CY, FR, IE, IT, LUX, SK) has been working, through a EU funded project (Long Life Learning, Grundtvig programme), to identify good practices in the field of awareness raising and training aiming at promoting awareness among carers about their needs. The consortium brought together associations with various scopes (NGOs active in the field of disability or Alzheimer disease, family carers’ organisations, and general family organisations). The consortium developed a number of tools that can be used by family carers to assess their needs and well-being in the nine countries.

EU WIDE
CHARTERS AND QUALITY FRAMEWORKS

AGE Platform Europe, together with other partners, has developed a Charter for the rights and responsibilities of older people in need of care and assistance (2010) and a European Quality Framework for Long-Term Care Services (2012) that can be used as a basis for raising awareness and developing specific tools.

GERMANY
INFORMATION CENTRES FOR SUPPORT TO CARERS OR PERSONS IN NEED OF CARE

“Pflegestützpunkte” are information centres for care and assistance to family carers or people in need of care. Initiated by the states (“Bundesländer), they have been established by the health or care insurances. The care support information centres offer: comprehensive and independent information and counselling on the selection and use of social and support services; coordination of all support services for local assistance and care including support in using these services; interlinking and modifying the social and care services. They cooperate with all institutions and services involved in prevention, rehabilitation, care and assistance. The service is for free.
2. WOMEN AT WORK
The Europe 2020 strategy sets the target of 75% of the 20-64 years olds to be employed by 2020. However, the EU overall employment rate in 2013 stood at 68.3% with a particularly low rate for women (62.5% against 74.2% for men aged 20-64 in 2013) and older workers, aged 55-64 (50.3%). Therefore, it is clear that to achieve this target, the involvement of women becomes pivotal and that a radical adjustment has to be made to the labour market, ensuring that it is accessible, able to retain and promote inclusion for women and men. Labour market strategies as well as employment policies and practices historically have been designed around the traditional family and societal structure of the male breadwinner model. Over time this dynamic has evolved, however, these changes in society and diversity of family forms have not been followed by modifications in the labour market legislation and policy. Reconciliation policies and practices are essential to implement this change and promote the employment of women and women with disability.

Women’s employment is tightly linked to the distribution of work and family responsibilities between women and men. Surveys from Eurofound reveal that for the same amount of working hours, women are more likely to report problems with work-life balance than men, as they spend almost 12 more hours per week doing unpaid work than men. The unequal share of unpaid work in the family has a direct impact on gender segregation, because women still adjust their working arrangements considering their caring responsibilities especially when they have children or when they need to care for an elderly or disabled relative. Subsequently, women are more likely to take leaves, work part time or withdraw from the labour market. Indeed, because of a lack of or an insufficient number of childcare facilities and policies, across Europe 23% of women whose youngest child is under three and 18% of women whose youngest child is between 3 and mandatory school age, work part-time or do not work. Access and availability of childcare services will be discussed in chapter 4 – Childcare, Education and Parenting.
This chapter illustrates, in clear terms, why reconciliation policies are not, and must not, be considered as benefits for women only but a deeper change into employment policies and functioning of businesses, from which all employees, regardless of their gender and family status, and employers can benefit. Designing, developing, promoting and implementing reconciliation measures is not, and must not be considered as a gesture for women or (young) working parents but a fundamental and profound change in the way we organize work, family, community and society.

Nearly 60% of EU university graduates are women, but they account for less than 33% of scientists and engineers across Europe, yet represent nearly 80% of the total workforce in the health, education and welfare sectors.
Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working condition.


Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.


Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.


Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC.


Communication 2008/635 final: A better work-life balance: stronger support for reconciling professional, private and family life.


Communication 2012/55 final: An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions.

GENDER PAY AND GENDER PENSION GAP

Women continue to be less included in the labour market in comparison to men, as they are more often in part-time employment, and the gender pay gap remains at 16% throughout Europe. This disparity discourages an equal share of household work, deepening the segmentation between a male, white-collar dominated labour market and a female labour market with a wide use of part-time, short-term and/or precarious contracts in low-paid sectors with lower salaries. Women tend to have less access to in-work training which constrains their career opportunities and locks women into low-wage sectors and lower positions in companies’ hierarchies. In the context of the recent crisis, female employment has actually even decreased in terms of the number of hours worked.

The EU Member States are tackling the economic crisis with austerity measures and drastic cuts in public spending, negatively affecting gender equality since women rely more on the public sector as employees and beneficiaries of public services. It is important to note that female employment is dependent on the average hours worked per week: in a cross-country comparison, the more work weeks are long, the less women will participate in the work force.

These disparities have an even greater effect on women’s pensions, as discrimination cumulates at the end of the life course: the gender pension gap stands at 39%, more than double the gender pay gap. Informal care (unpaid care provided by family or friends) represents 80% of total care for elderly and people with disabilities and women have a bigger share (61% on average). This work has to be recognised for its vital contribution to society in pension calculation as the need for care is increasing due to the ageing population.

Therefore, it is crucial today to recognise carer’s leave for both women and men as an activity eligible as a pension contribution period, at least at the height of the minimum contribution. Where a pension system is building more on private savings or the amount of working years, rather than statutory pension rights, an appropriate replacement should be found to cover periods of carer’s leave. Because of this, of lower salaries and career opportunities, women on average are more likely than men to be at risk of poverty. Single female pensioners, together with lone mothers, face the highest risk of poverty today. Over a quarter of women in the EU are poor (26%). 22% of older women are poor in comparison to 16% of older men and over one third of lone single parents – primarily women – are poor.

The Commission’s Expert Group on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion has pointed out that measures such as flexible retirement ages or part-time pensions can be relevant in reducing gender differences in income.

2. The European Women’s Lobby, The price of austerity - The impact on women’s rights and gender equality in Europe, 2012
4. EIGE, Gender equality index, 2013.
WORKING CONDITIONS AND WORKING TIMES

Women are more likely to reduce working hours or interrupt their careers in order to care for family members than men. This has, on one hand, roots in the stereotypical division of roles within the family but also, on the other hand, on the economic convenience of reducing/losing the lower salary within the family (woman’s) instead of the higher one (man’s). Therefore, to counter balance this trend, it is important to put in place measures supporting women to access and stay in employment but also encouraging men in taking a higher share of the family and care responsibilities.

Leaves refer to time off from work for employed parents or other relatives to stay at home and look after a new-born, a baby, an older child, or a disabled or dependant family member. The generosity of leaves (length and level of payment during the leave) varies greatly across the European Union, and this variety has its roots in the history, culture, ideology and economics of the different countries, as well as the role and place of women and men in the society.

Leaves are still often ground for discrimination and despite existing legislation on the protection of pregnant workers, women continue to be discriminated on the grounds of childbirth. The perception of women as potential pregnant workers is one of the reasons why younger women, in comparison to younger men, find it harder to enter the labour-market or find a good job.

Carers coming out of unemployment face significant challenges in finding a job in line with their qualifications, given that the labour market tends to penalise non-work periods very quickly. Unemployment agencies and life-long learning facilities have to offer these women a tailor made path to work, including the possibility to follow a training with qualifications after long carer’s leaves in order to allow women to reintegrate the labour market since in some countries, these facilities are only available for former unemployed workers, not for people reintegrating the labour market after a family break.

Leaves are still taken predominantly by women, because of economical and societal reasons. Men should be encouraged, by law, policy or practices at the workplace to take up more leaves in order to rebalance the disparity and trigger a positive change that will have a long-term impact on women’s employment and the share of family and care responsibilities within the family.

Flexible working arrangements

Establishing forms of flexible working time arrangements, may they be temporary or permanent, can be one solution to mitigate and invert the tendency of reduction of working hours or dropping out from employment for women.

Flexible working arrangement can take different forms (job sharing, tele-work, smart working, compressed working hours, possibility to swap shifts among employees...) and are proven to be beneficial for the employee and also for the company as it encourages employee loyalty, increases dedication and reduces turn-over. For example, allowing employees to take small blocks of leave over the course of the year or during school holidays, rather than prescribing that leave to be taken all at once, can be very attractive to employees without imposing onerous costs on the employer.

The involvement of employees and their representatives is crucial to design the most appropriate measures that do not transform flexibility measures into full employee availability for the company. Participation in planning of measures is also key to avoid to hit further the most vulnerable workers (those non-unionised, on short-term and precarious contracts...).

Keeping women in employment and increase flexibility for men and women can have an impact on both an increased share of household work done by men (46% of men would like to have the possibility to work shorter hours) and an increased share of women in quality jobs.

Finally, flexible working provides benefits for all: arrangements should not serve only working parents or workers with care responsibilities, but should be designed and made available to all workers, regardless of their gender or family status.

2. Eurofound, European Quality of Life Survey, 2012
Part-time work

Part-time is by far the most widespread form of non-standard work, with nearly one in five workers working part-time in the EU-27 in 2009 (Eurostat), most part-timers being women. Studies have shown evidence of a part-time wage penalty for European women. Moreover, career perspectives have also been proven to be reduced for part-time workers. However, it has to be noticed that the number of hours per week for full time employment varies among the different European countries and what can be considered part-time in one country can be full time in another one (for example: 35 hours/week is part-time in Germany and full time in France).

Availability of care and support services for children or other dependent family members has a positive and significant effect on the probability of working full-time and a negative one on the probability of working part-time. In recent years, austerity policies have been translated into cuts and reduction of services (childcare, afterschool, day care for elderly and disabled...) that were mainly supporting women in balancing their work and family life. The gender pay gap widens when women have children and when they work part-time. In 2010, the employment rate for women with dependent children was only 64.7% compared with 89.7% for men with children. Part-time is not always a choice for women: it can be the only possibility left for women who wish to stay active in the labour market and families and couples that need and want to have both members earning an income.

Moreover, Eurofound suggests that part-time jobs are on average of low quality, predominantly in traditionally female professions and do not support career progression. In particular, surveys included in the Eurofound report show that part-time workers are in general doing more basic and lower paid work than full-time workers, define themselves as working below their potential and are at a disadvantage in terms of access to training and development opportunities.

TAPPING INTO THE POTENTIAL OF OLDER WOMEN OF WORKING AGE (50 YEARS AND MORE)

Labour market strategies for women have to take into account the particular situation of women from 50 years onwards. Women in this age category have often very low opportunities to find a job which is in equation with their qualifications and experience, because their career breaks due to unpaid family work are not recognised in the labour market. In 2013, the gap between male and female employment of people aged 55-64 was of 14.2%. Instead of leaving older women longer in minimum income or unemployment schemes, there should be a real strategy for training and labour-market inclusion of older women.

In some countries, older women are not encouraged to start working after longer career breaks for family duties, because they will not have enough time to build up minimum pension rights. Women in this situation are discouraged from looking for work because their country’s pension system does not reward carer’s leave with adequate entitlements to pensions. A carer’s leave directive could introduce these pension rights for carer’s leave and have positive effects on the employment of older women.

2. Eurostat, Employment (main characteristics and rates) – annual averages, table lfsi_emp_a, 10/05/2014
Feel free to take this poster out.
RECONCILING FOR CARERS

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

80% of care work in Europe is provided by informal carers.

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.

Average Gender pay Gap in the EU: 16%

Average gender pension gap in the EU: 39%

WOMEN AT WORK

The unequal share of unpaid work in the family has a direct impact on gender segregation, because women still adjust their working arrangements considering their caring responsibilities. They are more likely to take leaves, work part-time or withdraw from the labour market.

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.

Nearly 60% of EU university graduates are women, but they account for less than 33% of scientists and engineers across Europe, yet represent nearly 80% of the total workforce in the health, education and welfare sectors.
**RECONCILING AT THE WORKPLACE**

Less than half of the European workforce has flexibility in working hours (Eurofound EQLS 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-solution-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.

**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...

- 4%: Childcare is of insufficient quality
- 25%: Lack of availability of childcare services
- 53%: Childcare is too expensive

**RECOMMENDATION**

In addition to guaranteeing a legal right to a childcare place for all children after the end of the Leave 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 for carers
Women at work
Reconciling at the workplace
Childcare, education and parenting

Informal carers in Europe provide care for a disabled or elderly family member every day or several times a week. 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.

Average Gender pay gap in the EU

The unequal share of unpaid work in the family has a direct impact on gender segregation, because women still adjust their working arrangements considering their caring responsibilities. They are more likely to take leaves, work part-time or withdraw from the labour market.

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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.

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

In order to create a reconciliation-friendly environment, all stakeholders must be involved in shaping legislative and practical initiatives. Reconciliation policies are not a "one-solution-fits-all" type of policies and companies should develop adapt instruments to fulfill the specific needs of the workers and of the company, according to its size and sector.

Almost 53% of parents identify availability (waiting lists, lack of services) as a difficulty concerning the usage of childcare in the EU27. Across the EU, women report that they do not work or work part-time because childcare is too expensive.

In addition to guaranteeing a legal right to childcare places for all children after the end of the Leave 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.

Recommendation

Recommendation

Recommendation
MAINSTREAMING INTO THE EUROPEAN POLICY MAKING

Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, and a means to achieve the goal for gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.

A strong, continued commitment to gender mainstreaming is one of the most effective means to support the promotion of women at work, equality in all activities on the ground, and to ensure that women as well as men can influence, participate in and benefit from a meaningful and fair participation on the labour market. There is a continued need, however, to complement the mainstreaming strategies with tailored interventions to promote equality and women’s empowerment, particularly where there are instances of persistent discrimination of women and inequality between women and men.

Gender equality is not specifically addressed in the five quantifiable targets of the EU 2020 Strategy, nor in any of the flagship initiatives, with the exception of the employment target - 75% for women and men. Currently women’s employment rate (63%) is far below this target and without a specific gender equality objective it will be impossible to measure, evaluate and monitor the way in which the EU 2020 Strategy and the European semester are impacting on progress to achieve gender equality in the EU. In particular, without having disaggregated data per gender, it will not be possible to evaluate progress for the employment target and fully understand the role played by employment policies, evaluate them and, where necessary, (re)design them.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Empowerment

- Reconciliation policies are essential to implementing change and promoting employment of women. More awareness raising campaigns are needed to foster an understanding of what reconciliation of work and family life means in practice (a more equal way of sharing paid work and unpaid care and household work between men and women).

Leaves

- To adopt a coherent legislative package on leaves, including maternity, paternity, parental and carers’ leaves, to promote a more equal share of care responsibilities between women and men.
- Paternity leave measures should be adopted at EU Level. Provisions can be included in a revised Maternity Leave Directive, which should be approved rapidly.
- Concerning Parental leave, we call for the leave period to be distributed in 3 blocks, one allocated specifically to the mother, another to the father (or the mother’s partner) and a third to be taken as the family choses, by any or both of the parents.
- To support fathers in taking their leave period, the principle of “take it or lose it” must be applied. Employers must inform and support fathers taking up their paternity and parental leaves.
- Carers’ Leave Directive for parents or family members (including grandparents) taking care of an ageing or disabled family member should be initiated as soon as possible. This should include measures for provision of trainings and certification for persons coming out of a longer career break because of caring for family members (see examples in chapter 1).

Employment

- The EU and Member States should support the negotiations of flexible working arrangements, to be negotiated at national or company level, with workers themselves and their representatives, local or company-based “reconciliation plans” in order to attract and retain women in the labour market.
- The EU should support legislation and policy aiming at creating a proper environment for quality part-time employment and smart working, promoting a shift from the culture of presence at work towards an objective driven one.
- Member States should fully implement the Directive 2006/54 on equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).
- The European Union and Member States should give more visibility and mainstream awareness campaigns on the gender pay gap and on the business case for diversity.
**EXAMPLES**

**MALTA**

**NISTA, SHARING WORK-LIFE RESPONSIBILITIES**

NISTA, Sharing work-life responsibilities – Initiated by the Gender Unit at the National Employment and Training Organisation, embedded in national policy on gender equality. Financed through ESF.

NISTA is an awareness-raising media campaign (2010–2012) that aimed to promote women’s participation in the labour market, which remains at a very low level in Malta. It was initiated by the Gender Unit at the National Employment and Training Organisation and was embedded in national policy on gender equality, with funding from the EU’s European Social Fund. The campaign aims to challenge traditional stereotypes, reduce the care gap and promote men’s active roles in the family, with a view to enhancing women’s employment participation. This was carried out through pre- and post-campaign research, sharing of experiences from other countries, radio and TV slots, billboard poster campaign, a 13-week TV programme and an information booklet. The project was implemented in four phases: i) awareness raising across society, ii) challenging traditional stereotypes, iii) promoting men’s roles in the family, iv) employers for work-life balance (highlighting best practice employers and benefits of reconciliation). The campaign had a noticeable impact on women’s employment participation and better awareness about childcare.

**GERMANY**

**AGENCIES FOR WOMEN AND ECONOMY**

The German Federal Land Lower Saxony currently promotes 23 so-called “Koordinierungsstellen Frau und Wirtschaft” (co-ordination agencies “women and economy”). Some of them provide extended services for women and their reintegration into the labour market after raising a family by providing information and advice. They also initiate trainings to obtain a qualification or certificate. In cooperation with local companies, the co-ordination agencies develop new ways for family-friendly working conditions in order to open up a skilled workforce and thus an important potential for innovation in the labour market. One instrument of promotion of women at the workplace are so-called “überbetriebliche Verbünde” (inter-company collaborations) of small and medium enterprises. Co-ordination agencies link the needs of women in the company with the requirements of the enterprise to the women. This makes them an important regional link between the economy, the labour market, further education institutions and women.

**DENMARK**

**“A HUG FROM DADDY”**

The company TDC, which is the largest telephone, broadband, and television company in Denmark, has since 2002 had a generous leave policy for parents – but few fathers took up the leave. The company campaign “A hug from Daddy” aimed to raise awareness amongst fathers and has led to a large increase in fathers taking leave, from 13% to almost 100% in 10 years. Fathers get up to ten weeks of paid parental leave, in addition to two weeks leave after a child is born, brought home from hospital, or adopted. One of the aims when the campaign was launched was to show that taking leave would not interrupt career progression. Information was provided on a website and leaflets, new fathers received a package containing a bib, rucksack etc. and letter with information about the parental leave policy.

**GERMANY**

**CHILD CARE PERIODS FOR PENSION**

Article 249 SGB VI from the German social Code recognizes so called “Kindererziehungszeiten” for pension. That means that a parent who has stayed at home to take care of their children gains extra pension credits per child (3 for children who were born after 1992 and 2 for children who were born before 1992). These so called “care credits” influence directly the amount of statutory pension and will be paid even if the mother was working in the first three years of the child’s life (up to a specified contribution assessment ceiling). It is possible to transfer the care credits to the father by a joint application of the mother and father.
AUSTRIA
PARENTAL PART-TIME

In 2004 a new law for parental part-time work was implemented in Austria. A parent is entitled to parental part-time work if he/she has been working for the company for at least three years and if the size of the company is more than 20 employees. Based on the parental part-time work regulation, a parent may reduce weekly working hours to any extent and he/she may change working hours (specific days or day times) until the child is seven years old or starts school. Evaluations have shown that 6% of all parents who were eligible made use of parental part-time work in 2007. 14% of parental part-time work users were men, which is rather high compared to male participation rates of other family policy measures, such as the parental leave regulation.

SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
FAMCOMPASS – FAMILY COMPETENCE PASSPORT

The FAMCOMPASS is a tool developed to assess and validate the competences men and women have obtained in family life, in their roles as educators, home makers and care takers. This tool has been used to coach the intake for relevant education and training programmes, to grant exemption from exams and facilitate shorter schooling careers, to allow the validation of these skills and competences on the labour market in the sectors of care, social care and childcare.

IRELAND
MATERNITY AND PARENTING TOOLKIT: IBEC- IRISH BUSINESS AND EMPLOYERS CONFEDERATION

IBEC’s toolkit has been produced to assist employers in proactively and positively managing their workforce during pregnancy, maternity leave and upon return from maternity leave. This toolkit aims to provide employers with a series of practices, templates and examples from which they can learn and that employers can adapt to their company in order to smooth the transition in these periods. It also focuses on the extra difficulties placed in the path of women during times of pregnancy, maternity or adoptive leave and return from leave, which may penalise their earnings and career progression, unless employers are aware of how to handle these changing circumstances appropriately.

PORTUGAL
I-GEN: COMPANIES FOR EQUALITY FORUM

CITE - the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment initiates and facilitates, together with a task force of 7 companies, a forum of 21 companies across different economic sectors – held in 2013 - who committed to introduce 90 measures on gender equality, including parental rights, maternity, paternity and reconciling work and family life. This initiative aims to further progress company commitment to gender equality and to address obstacles to reconciliation. A number of innovative measures have been put in place, including support for reintegration after leave, encouraging fathers to take up parental leave etc. The Forum holds regular meetings, training and awareness raising tools, media etc.
### Maternity Leave in the EU

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**Note on payment**

- **FI**: First 56 days, 90% of salary; remainder (49 days) 70%
- **MT**: 100% of earnings (for 14 weeks) + 4 weeks flat rate
- **IE**: Weekly rate (£230) paid for 26 weeks; the remaining 16 weeks unpaid
- **UK**: First 6 weeks, 90%; next 33 weeks, flat-rate payments of either £138.18 (£170) or 90% of average gross weekly earnings (whichever is lower); the remaining 13 weeks are unpaid.

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3. RECONCILING AT THE WORKPLACE, NOT A MATTER OF SIZE OR SECTOR
Reconciliation policies are still too often seen as being employee benefits only for young parents, especially young mothers and, therefore firstly considered to be policies for a minority only, and secondly policies only large corporations or public sector employers can put in place for only certain types of jobs, mainly managerial and white collar.

However, as described in the previous chapters, it is more appropriate to see reconciliation policies as a new way of doing business, of allowing businesses to access the untapped potential of women, allowing women and men to balance their work, family and private life, creating a more gender equal society and reducing the risk of poverty, especially in old age. Such workplace measures can have a positive impact, among which are reduced absenteeism and turnover, more motivated and engaged employees, enhanced productivity, improved attraction and retention of qualified workforce, swifter return from leaves, and an overall improvement of the wellbeing of staff, all of which will be positively reflected on the bottom line.

More women than men graduate tertiary education, and despite more and more women being managers and business owners, there are only 2.8%\textsuperscript{1} women CEOs at publicly listed corporations in Europe. The glass ceiling is well and truly there for many women, and the lack of solid reconciliation policies and measures at the workplace during the time of transition into parenthood for women means that women drop out on the way to the top. Lack of maternity and paternity policies, lack of public and/or employer supported childcare and elder-care solutions, lack of flexible hours, and ever greater work-pressures are a great source of frustration, as well as the reason behind women staying put in lower levels of their career ladders.

Even in some sectors like academia, which is seen as being one of the most flexible workplaces, with professors and researchers having a high degree of flexibility and control over their schedules, women still do not seem to make it to the top. In 2010, on average throughout the EU-27, 15.5%\textsuperscript{2} of institutions in the Higher Education Sector were headed by women, and just 10% of universities had a female rector.

\textsuperscript{1} ILO publication “Women in Business and Management: Gaining momentum” 2015
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.

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.

Nearly 60% of EU university graduates are women, but they account for less than 33% of scientists and engineers across welfare sectors. In addition to guaranteeing a legal right to a childcare place for all children after the end of the Leave 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.

In these past years, the European Commission has repeatedly underlined the need for innovation in work organisation but also in provision of affordable care for both children and other dependents. However, most of the workplace practices and policies implemented so far in EU countries typically address leave arrangements as well as flexible or reduced working hours. A survey conducted in 2009 in six EU countries (Germany, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Sweden and Poland.) revealed that the proportion of companies offering flexible working hours ranged between 45.8% and 72.7%. Conversely, a much smaller proportion of companies offered childcare (between 1.1% and 3.8%), granted support in finding, organizing or financing childcare (between 2% and 18.3%) and offered their employees special family or household services (between 0% and 5.1%).

Reconciliation policies are not a “one-solution-fits-all” type of policies and adapted instruments must be elaborated and used to fulfil the specific needs of the workers and of the company, according to its size and sector, or developed to favour specifically self-employed and entrepreneurs.

This has a specific importance since more than 99% of all European businesses are, in fact, SMEs and they provide two out of three of the private sector jobs. Of those, nine out of ten SMEs are actually micro enterprises with less than 10 employees, each providing work for two persons, in average.

In this chapter, we will analyse and present how work life balance can be challenging but also approachable in both companies and public institutions of all sizes and sectors, including those where employees are not working in an office or by women entrepreneurs or self-employed.
LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Directive 91/383/EEC supplementing the measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of workers with a fixed-duration employment relationship or a temporary employment relationship.


Communication 2006/0033 final: Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme: Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning.


RECONCILIATION AT THE COMPANY LEVEL, THE WORKING CULTURE

Enterprises face work-life balance challenges for various reasons: bigger companies inherited a Fordist managerial culture, bound to presence at work and are not able to transform diversity into organisational and managerial tools. On the other hand, smaller companies do not have resources nor competences to make use of adequate organisational tools. It is therefore crucial for bigger companies to become the focus of a shift in working culture, competences and knowledge, in order to drive the change also to SMEs, thanks to already developed tools, simple practices and fiscal benefits.

From this, when starting reconciliation programmes or initiatives within companies, a few challenges can arise, in particular: changing the culture of personnel valorisation within enterprises, enhance knowledge about the advantages arising from promotion of worker’s wellbeing and promote knowledge about long absences and maternity management tools and measures for services organisation, functional and organisational flexibility.

Alongside the internal factors, some policy measures and legislation can also work against the cultural change, increasing challenges instead of supporting positive developments. For example, new measures should encompass an analysis of needs of companies, considering them as a partner, in order to individuate innovative tools able to produce mutual advantages (win-win situation) such as: training, new managerial mainstreaming indications, development of technological organisation tools and fiscal benefits.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT: CAREER OR RECONCILIATION CHOICE?

In Europe, 34% of entrepreneurs are women. However, much more could be done to promote this untapped resource of growth at EU and national level. All women wishing to start a business must be supported to do so. On the other hand, self-employment and entrepreneurship should not be the last resort, the only option available, for women to be able to reconcile their work and family life.

Being a freelance, a self-employed or an entrepreneur can, indeed, be riskier and penalize women, especially mothers. Mothers with small children, as a consequence, tend to avoid to undertake this career path, being afraid and aware of the reduction of social protection, job security and lack of company pensions. However, a new trend has arisen in the US with more than 7 million Mompreneurs (women who become entrepreneurs after having children to be able to combine work and family responsibilities) and has arrived in Europe. In the UK, a survey by the Office for National Statistics in 2009 showed that women were nearly five times more likely to cite family as their reason for becoming self-employed.
WORKPLACE CULTURE EFFECTS WORKERS AND COMPANIES BUT ALSO THEIR COMMUNITIES

An unsupportive working culture and the lack of internal policies and practices to favour reconciliation have a negative impact on all stakeholders involved in the productive process, from the worker to the employer, including the community they live in.

Effect on citizens and families:

- Women’s resignation or reduction of work hours (where possible) after family events like childbirth, or a difficult return into the job market after periods spent caring for a disabled or dependent family member;
- Disinvestment on a professional career by women, especially working mothers or carers;
- Gender pay gap and subsequent gender pension gap;
- Demographic decrease and postponed family formation;
- Increase of expenditures for children and dependents’ care caused by lack of flexible working arrangements and/or service provision (with a consequent lower purchasing power for families). Workers are therefore trapped in a situation where they cannot afford dropping out of the labour market but a big share of their income is paid to ensure their possibility to work;
- Increase of stress, burnout and other work related diseases with a significant impact on productivity and increased social security costs.

Effect on companies:

- Low productivity for workplaces that are not objective-oriented;
- Increase in absenteeism;
- Loss of crucial resources and competences;
- Less effective investments (since the enterprise could make a better use of existing resources in order to meet worker’s needs);
- Limited well-being and engagement of the workforce;
- Limited ability to find innovative organisational solutions due also to the complexity and rigidity of labour laws and employment policies and high rate of bureaucracy for introducing changes.

Effect on the community:

- Higher expenditures for sickness absence from work which could be reduced by improving the well-being of employees at work;
- More expensive services and lack of correspondence between services and needs since
  - services are requested by those who cannot benefit from flexibility,
  - employees’ working hours are often not compatible with services opening hours.
- Less prosperity and general well-being.
A RECONCILIATION-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT MUST BE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL TO BE EFFECTIVE

In order to create a reconciliation friendly environment, all stakeholders (workers, employers, families and public authorities) must be involved in shaping legislative and practical initiatives. Effective change will happen if a multi-dimensional approach is used, particularly around four axis:

**Cultural**

It is vital to raise awareness, promote and, where necessary subsidise, measures for the dissemination of a new cultural and organisational paradigm that foresees the convergence of interests of both companies and workers. This can be done only by operating with a multi-level and multi-stakeholders’ approach. A fundamental component is awareness of the existence of a “reconciliation environment” and the advantages of a “reconciliation economy”. This must start in university where future managers are trained and be present in employment and training services. Public policies are also key as they would be a major trigger towards a real “reconciliation economy”, on the model of the “green economy”: re-adjusting public policies in order to move towards a model based on a win-win (employers-employee) principle instead of the current dichotomy between employers’ and workers’ interests.

**Economic**

The second axis is a series of reforms in taxation that could support and give incentives to move towards a “reconciliation economy”. For example, supporting a differentiated fiscal system that rewards companies with a lower social impact on their environment, including families and communities, or those who hire women, parents with young children, carers, youngsters and over50s. More than de-taxation, there are other ways that can work towards a reduction of the cost of labour and more reconciliation possibilities, for example: give employees the possibility to make use of flexible work arrangements such as telework, co-working, home-work, short-week, smart working, telecommuting...). It is important, however, that trade unions and employees representatives are involved in this process, to ensure that flexibility is beneficial to all stakeholders and prevent from degenerating into a culture of availability of the employee.

Working in retail, manufacturing or in any other position that requires presence at the workplace, must not prevent workers from accessing flexible working arrangements. While distance-working tools may not be accessible, this should not prevent companies to design specific needs-related solutions (partnerships with service providers for child or dependent care, including non-office opening hours for those working on shifts, possibility to arrange within the unit/team for emergency leaves...). Planning is also a key element and includes also scheduling of working shifts in advance, allowing workers to organise themselves and their families, as a day-by-day change in planned working hours is detrimental to the worker’s well-being, creates a negative spiral of uncertainty and may result in higher costs for last-minute care arrangements, which will be particularly harmful for low-income workers.

**Organisational**

New and digital managerial tools for public and private entities that would support a change towards a more reconciliation-friendly organisation of working places are emerging but are not yet known and promoted enough. Maternity and Flexibility Management tools, digital tools for the access to territorial services or for measuring the impact of the new tools that already in place can support human resources departments or employees’ representatives to develop tailored and needs based tools.

**Legislative**

The legislative pillar is key to keep the system coherent and should design a labour market reflecting the needs of the society, offering flexible and secure solutions to workers and employers. A reconciliation friendly environment goes beyond labour law and must include legal provisions for leave schemes accessible and available for all workers, taxation or fiscal incentives (e.g. de-taxing care services where a personal contribution is required), recognize and promote reconciliation-friendly companies.
RECOMMENDATIONS

**Legislative**

- “Reconciliation economy” on the model of the “green economy”: develop and/or promote a social impact indicator, rewarding those companies with low social impact. Tools for assessment and rewarding mechanisms must be easily accessible (bureaucracy) and appealing. They can include, for example, tax-reductions and incentives, or specific requirements that are included in public procurement and tendering processes.

- The revised Working Time Directive should support a better reconciliation of work, family and private life by granting rights to request specific working time arrangements to fit their outside-of-work responsibilities (e.g. flextime, telework).

- Include in legislation (where it is not the case) the possibility for company-level collective agreements to design specific reconciliation measures, that can be translated in secure and needs-based solutions within each company, making sure that these measures are applicable to all workers or, where not possible, to design specific measures for non-office workers.

**Empowerment**

- Support, promote and award the creation of networks of companies, that come together in order to pool resources and better respond to the needs of their employees and invest in the community through the creation or support to existing services, particularly for care services.

- Support women who wish to become self-employed and entrepreneurs by developing or supporting existing programmes in schools and in employment services, and to stay in self-employment and entrepreneurship by adapting legislation in order to provide them with the same access to leave schemes as employed women in terms of social security payments.
GERMANY /AUSTRIA /ITALY
AUDIT FOR COMPANIES

The audit "BerufundFamilie" is a management tool to support companies to create a family-friendly working environment. Before getting a certificate an auditor first identifies company needs through discussions with management and employees, leading to the establishment of a company plan, with goals to be achieved in a set period. After three years, an external auditor assesses achievements and, if the assessment is positive, the company receives the certificate for another three years. After the success of the audit in Germany the berufundfamilie gGmbH created a European work and family audit, which can be accessed also in Austria and in Italy. The Italian implementation has been selected by the EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality as Good Practice in the Field of Reconciling Work and Family Life.

SPAIN
EFR FAMILY FRIENDLY CERTIFICATION

It is a private management tool to assess how family-friendly internal policies are in any type of organisations from SMEs, large companies, to NGOs or public authorities. It includes a set of 30 indicators regarding the quality of employment, temporal and physical flexibility, gender equality etc. It has been developed as an ISO norm with Spanish Standardisation body AENOR and is recognized by the Spanish Ministry of Social affairs and by the UN as a best practice. More than 400 organisations in 20 countries have already been certified. An external evaluator assesses how the organisation performs in relation to these indicators and if it is positive, it receives the certification.

FRANCE
NATIONAL FUND FOR FAMILY ALLOWANCE (CNAF)

The CNAF has contributed to several studies on the non-standard hours/days of work in the prospect of gender equality at work, namely on the basis of four experimentations (2005) of non-standard hours childcare provisions (before and after usual open hours of traditional childcare services).

In 2010, the “Pays Bassin d’Arcachon-Val de l’Eyre” [a French local community], in association with the local CAF (Caisse Allocation Familiale/local Fund for Family Allowance) among others, launched an experimentation in 13 municipalities to organize the provision of non-standard hour childcare facilities.

FRANCE
PARENT-FRIENDLY CHARTER FOR SMALL AND LARGE COMPANIES

"Parent-friendly charter for small and large companies - Charte de la parentalité en entreprise". It was launched in 2008 with the objective to encourage companies to propose their employees who are parents a working environment which is better adapted to their family responsibilities. 500 companies have already signed it. An Observatory on parenthood in companies was also set up with the companies who have signed the charter.
Belgium
Charter for a Family-Friendly Company of the Gezinsbond (Flemish Family Organisations Network)

When a company subscribes to this Charter it has to subscribe not only to the value of gender equality but also apply the principle that every family friendly measure that the company offers, must be open to men and women workers equally. Further on, the company promises to give the opportunity to a person that worked part-time for family reasons, to invest in an ambitious career path after that period.

Germany
The German State “Rheinland-Pfalz”

The German state “Rheinland-Pfalz”, called the “Landeswettbewerb Firma & Familie” (held in 2012/2013). This was a competition for SME having family friendly measures. It appeared to be a good method to find some “hidden champions” of reconciliation within SMEs. In Germany most of the good examples come from large-scale enterprises. A brochure with the winning examples and best practices has been published in August 2014.

Italy
Network of Enterprises

Various enterprises unite to share investments and welfare solutions. For example “Valore D” organizes workshops for over 50 enterprises working on Parental&Leave Management, FlexiManagement and Smart Working. Welfare Benefit. The “Giunca” network is a formal agreement signed by around 10 companies of different sizes but in the same area (Varese province). The companies share training, safety and welfare initiatives (care services, campus, credit products with low rates, purchase of school books) and manage at the same time to provide employees with services and save money since, thanks to the high number of employees, it can obtain good prices and good services for all the workers. The welfare and work-life balance shared program can be profitable also for micro and small enterprises.

Finland
The Family-Friendly Workplace

Family-friendly practices at the workplace consist in a series of attitudes and actions. The Finnish Family Federation developed an on-line self-assessment tool for companies and workplaces to find out how family-friendly their workplace is. A family-friendly workplace means that employers offer different policies and services to employees who take care of family members, such as parents or parents to-be, or those who take care of their spouse or another member of their family.

The Family-friendly workplace test is available in Finnish and English.
DATABASES AND RESOURCES
FOR MORE EXAMPLES OF RECONCILIATION IN COMPANIES

There are a number of collections and selections of practices aimed at providing workers with a reconciliation friendly working environments which have been compiled by European Institutions, NGOs, research centres...

Each of them may have a specific target but could be a resourceful tool for companies or policy makers that wish to trigger change in their company or constituency. The list is not exhaustive.

EU LEVEL
EIGE

“Good practices on reconciling work and family life.”

EUROFOUND

“Company initiatives for workers with care responsibilities for disabled children or adults”

SOCIAL PARTNERS

“Gender Equality toolkit: 100 initiatives by social partners and in the workplace across Europe”
Flexible working hours

Childcare and elder-care

Convenience services

Emergency childcare

Tele-working

Line managers

In-house training and support

Company culture

Care for disabled relatives

Job-sharing, top-sharing

Childcare and elder-care

Convenience services

Emergency childcare

Tele-working

Line managers

In-house training and support

Company culture

Care for disabled relatives

Job-sharing, top-sharing
4. Childcare, Education and Parenting
The areas of childcare, education – pre-school, school and to a lesser extent after school – as well as parenting support are competences of Member States. They are, however, an important area to explore when discussing reconciliation policies as many of the policy measures or employer-led initiatives to improve reconciliation are often aimed at supporting young parents with childcare solutions. It has been clearly expressed throughout this document that reconciliation policies are to be considered as a review and improvement of the working environment in order to improve the working conditions and well-being of all employees and workers, not only parents of young children, as well as it contributes to the productivity and success of the company. However, it is undeniable that childcare arrangements, their availability, affordability, accessibility and quality are a pivotal factor for women’s employment and for gender equality, and thus reconciliation of work and family life for working parents.

Having children is a transition point in the lives of fathers and mothers, and a crucial point in the employment path of women, in terms of wages, career advancement and getting hired in the first place. Young women still face discrimination in the workplace because of their potential motherhood and because of the role of primary carer they take later on. Adequate provision of childcare solutions, together with other elements such as more gender equal leaves policies, could support women reach their full potential and reduce discrimination.

In addition we have to make a point to mention that having children with special needs poses additional financial and organisational challenges for families, in terms of healthcare and complementary therapies, accessible, inclusive childcare and schools, specialised support staff, public transport, commuting...

When discussing childcare solutions (or other out of school educational arrangements), it is also important not to misinterpret them as simple “child placements” to allow parents to work, but to fully recognise their educational role in the healthy development of children.

Working parents rely on a patchwork of solutions, comprising of formal childcare institutions, babysitters and nannies, the help of grandparents, after-school activities, summer day-camps and others. None of these offer 100% coverage, and therefore there needs to be, and always will be a combination of them used by parents simultaneously.
A lot of focus seems to be on helping working parents of very young children balance their work and family life through different support measures (nurseries, early childhood centres, Kindergartens, baby-sitters or through employer supported childcare, like childcare-vouchers...). However, during the 15-25 years that children and young people go through the education system, there are a number of challenges for parents. Firstly the annual school timetable is not exactly compatible with a parent’s full-time job, and as dual-earner couples and families are on the rise, the challenge is even bigger. There is of course a great variation among the different systems across Europe in terms of daily school-schedules, with some flexibility at the beginning of the day and towards the end of the day, typically with child-minding on the school premises. In some countries schools offer extra-curricular activities (sport, language, music, art) on the school premises, which makes working parents’ lives easier, and fills the after-school hours with meaningful activities for children. Yet they are not available everywhere, and their costs also varies greatly. Another key issue are the school-holidays, typically between 12-15 weeks per year, with parents only having 4-6 weeks paid vacation, which is not compatible, especially the long summer holiday has its roots in the agricultural calendar, and is now perhaps ripe for a review.

In addition, teens and young adults may also need the attention and time of their parents for crucial life transitions, for which there is generally no “leave” foreseen, apart from the regular paid vacation. Many mental health problems may also manifest themselves in teenagers (eating disorders, anxiety, depression...) and require parents’ attention.

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

- **4%**: Childcare is of insufficient quality
- **25%**: Lack of availability of childcare services
- **53%**: Childcare is too expensive

Even though, as mentioned above, childcare and education are competences of the Member States or regions in some cases, there are still a number of initiatives at EU level, that aim to foster exchange of best practice, linkages to other relevant EU policies, and a more holistic approach to reconciliation measures and policies.
Another important point is the sometimes conflicting interests of working parents and children in terms of commuting, childcare location, hours and regularity, and through testimonies we see, that there is still a lot to be done in many of the Member States to improve access, quality and affordability. Policies and solutions need to take into consideration the best interest of the child, as it is laid down in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and find compromises, where also the best interest of working parents and those of the employers are taken into consideration.

Parenting support classes, groups offered by public authorities, civil society organisations, typically family organisations are not there to offer solutions in terms of the working times of parents, or the compatibility with school schedules, however, they are a very valuable resource in offering childcare solutions, in the form of childcare centres, play-groups or babysitters. They also provide practical, pragmatic suggestions and discussion-groups for working parents to finding different solutions for managing their work-load and time, to be more present in the lives of their children (e.g. food and shopping delivery, new ways of cooking, household help...).

In this chapter therefore we aimed at exploring the legal framework and showcase some examples from across the EU, where solutions for children and parents go hand-in-hand and are not mutually exclusive.
LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Communication 2011/664 final: *Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow.*

The conclusions of the European Council of 15-16 March 2002 which led to the so-called Barcelona targets of providing childcare to at least 90% of children between 3 and 6 years old and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age.

European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2011 on Early Years Learning in the European Union (2010/2159(INI)).

**Article 5:**
Children have the right to appropriate direction and guidance to exercise their rights

**Article 12:**
Children have the right to be heard and participate

**Article 18:**
Governments should develop appropriate services to support families, including assistance with childcare for working parents

**Article 23:**
Children with disabilities have the right to appropriate care

**Article 28:**
Children have the right to good quality education

**Article 31:**
Children have the right to culture, leisure, rest and play.
AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND QUALITY CARE SERVICES AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

According to the EU Council’s Conclusions (2011) on early childhood education and care (ECEC) and the Barcelona Targets, ECEC services and policies are perceived as beneficial to the development of the children and society on multiple levels.

In most European countries, parents’ needs for available childcare places are not being met. There are two dimensions to this aspect, on the one hand each child should have an affordable place if the family needs one (universalism), and on the other the opening hours must also serve the interest of the working parents, keeping in mind the child’s biorhythm and well-being.

While crèches/nurseries tend to be the most sought-after form of childcare for the 0-3 age group, parents’ needs are as varied as their work, family, cultural, social, geographical, etc. situations. Single parents, low income families, parents working non-standard hours (weekends, weekdays after 6 pm), jobseeker parents, parents still in education - all these situations require different types of childcare. Promoting the development of a single type of childcare provision like nurseries/crèches that are often only open during “standard” office hours is nowhere near enough since they don’t offer care schemes for non-predictable working hours and are therefore not meeting the needs of a substantial part of the parents.

In addition to the coverage in terms of available places, there is the need of 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 facilities locally and to address their needs, without forgetting the employees of these childcare facilities who also have a right to a family life. Examples can be given of many types of childcare provision that address different needs:

- **Emergency childcare**: for children under the age of 3 whose parents are unemployed and on work training schemes, are going for a job interview and/or have found a job.

- **Drop-in, part-time babysitting services**, that cater for jobseekers, or parents with occasional work, or self-employed, or those who are not in employment but still need childcare.

- **Care services for sick children**: parents who cannot care for their sick child can have a sitter to look after him/her at home.

- **Multi-purpose childcare facilities**: offer regular or occasional childcare according to what families need.

- **Out-of-hours childcare**: for children up to the age of 12 before 7 am and/or after 6 pm, or even night-nurseries.

- **Employer supported childcare**: run by one or more companies in partnership, providing childcare at or near the parent’s workplace, or in a purpose built company childcare facility.

It must be emphasised that formal childcare cannot be just a sort of formalized child minding or babysitting service that merely enables parents to work. Childcare absolutely must form part of a long term educational plan that is in harmony with the educational programme for the 3-to-compulsory school age group, and addresses the five domains of childhood development: physical, social, emotional, language development and cognitive skills. Parents, families and children themselves must be informed and involved in all processes.

- **Funding of ECEC** varies greatly across the different European Member States in terms of where the funding is coming from, and the mix between public and private funding. ECEC may be subsidised via payments to families (through tax relief, allowances or vouchers), via payments to ECEC providers, or through a combination of both. There are two issues linked to funding: one is the lack of available places due to lack of funding, which really hampers employment options of young mothers, and secondly costs of childcare, which in the most extreme cases can be 2000-3000 EUR per month for a full-time crèche, which again results in the trade-off between the mother’s salary versus the childcare costs, and can result in the labour market drop-out. There should be a public contribution to ECEC, yet there is no universal agreement on the level of financing.
SKILLS FOR CHILDCARE PROFESSIONALS

High-quality learning and childcare benefits children, families and their communities. It is possible to improve outcomes and attainment for children, by giving parents new opportunities to return to work, boost family incomes, and support sustainable, economic growth. However, in order to achieve this, we need to set out a longer-term ambition to transform childcare skills learning and development provision as this can help boost economic activity and support additional early years jobs – for the current workforce. Therefore, we need to ensure that the development of the workforce matches the scale of need. By boosting skills, ensuring high quality and recognising the value of those we entrust to give children the best start in life, it is important to attract the best to deliver the transformation in childcare. And by pursuing a European shared vision we can secure access, quality, professionalism and recognition of childcare and early years as a career of choice.

COORDINATION OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS FOR AN EASIER MOBILITY WITHIN THE EU LABOUR MARKET

Due to the high prevalence of labour market mobility, working parents may encounter obstacles to transfer their very young and school-aged children between the different countries’ school systems. This is particularly challenging for posted workers, seasonal workers, migrant care-workers, where in addition, the left-behind parent may have to shoulder additional child-care responsibilities and encounter additional difficulties to reconcile work and family life.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy and legislative

- Guarantee a legal right to a childcare place for all children after the end of the Leave period.
- View ECEC as an important investment, and thus improve public finances to 0-3 childhood care and education places, which should lead to the improvement of accessibility and capacity, as well as lower the costs for parents.
- Support the mobility of families within the EU by an enhanced promotion of the harmonisation of basic competence levels of school-aged children throughout the EU.
- Monitor, evaluate, communicate and promote early years and childcare competence frameworks ensuring European-wide compliance.

Employment and parenting support

- to support working parents to be physically and emotionally available for their children – by family-friendly measures, incentives for employers to offer flexible working hours in to support of parenting, etc.

Services

(coverage and standards)

- Promote flexibility and diversity in childcare provision.
- Ensure provision of quality services, in the best interest of both the children and their parents, attached to a European wide quality assurance system.
- Improve the standing, recognition and qualifications of childcare professionals including skills and qualifications, career progression, recruitment and retention, and workforce planning – to ensure that all those working in early years settings have the right skills and experience to deliver high-quality early learning and childcare across Europe.
- Promote early years and childcare as a career of choice.
- Improve inclusiveness of early childhood education and care for children with special needs, through physical adaptation, additional staff resource, specialised training for staff.
- Guarantee a healthy balance of childcare availability and access in urban and rural (remote) areas to ensure that all parents have access to childcare within a reasonable distance from their work or their home.
NORTHERN IRELAND
"TOY BOX", EARLY YEARS, THE ORGANISATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, BELFAST

Rights-based outreach service; Traveller parents and children engage in the HighScope model of play; Children freely construct their understanding of the world from the active involvement of people, materials and ideas; Project staff observe, interpret, evaluate and nurture the growth of children and parents within their roles; Toybox shaped interventions with young Traveller children and they also compliment practice in schools.

SCOTLAND
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT- GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD

No matter where they live or whatever their needs, children, young people and their families should always know where they can find help, what support might be available and whether that help is right for them. The Getting it right for every child approach ensures that anyone providing that support puts the child or young person – and their family – at the centre.

Getting it right for every child is important for everyone who works with children and young people – as well as many people who work with adults who look after children. Practitioners need to work together to support families, and where appropriate, take early action at the first signs of any difficulty – rather than only getting involved when a situation has already reached a critical point.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
"MOBILE KINDERGARTEN", SOS CHILDREN’S VILLAGES

Various activities with children (provided by pre-school teachers) in accordance with SOS Kindergarten curriculum, results in parent-teacher meetings, preparation for elementary school education (perception, coordination, socialisation, civic education, intellectual development, working skills, language and math skills, science/nature …); Activities for parents of children attending “Mobile Kindergarten” - several times during a school year (topics: Child Protection Policy, Health, nutrition and care, Psychophysical development of pre-school age children, Learning by playing…); Knowledge and information exchange among teachers.

GERMANY
THE COORDINATION CENTRE FOR MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

The coordination centre works together with policy makers and key players in the field of early childhood education and care to significantly increase the number of male educators working in ECEC facilities. It has been working closely with different partners since early 2010, with the support of their educators, ECEC provider programme directors, administrators, policy makers, academics and parents. The findings of its qualitative and quantitative surveys on “Male Educators in Kitas” provide ample evidence of this support. The Coordination Centre is affiliated with the Catholic University of Applied Social Sciences Berlin (KHSB) and is funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). The activities of the center focus on public relations work, information provision, advice, networking and support for those working in the field of ECEC.
ROMANIA
“A GOOD START IN LIFE”, CENTER “STEP BY STEP” FOR EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, LOCATED IN BUCHAREST, (CEDP)

Organizing an adequate learning space (explore and experiment); Training courses for professionals involved (ECD philosophy); Training of personnel for “child centred” education; Meetings and trainings with parents and professional staff; Monitoring of all kindergarten’s groups included in project; Technical support for all kindergartens in the project.

IRELAND
PARENTS’ TRAINING PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL PARENTS’ COUNCIL PRIMARY IN IRELAND

The scope of trainings range from giving special support for migrant parents to understand child care and education systems (in a printed form in 16 languages, accompanied by personal advisory services) to specialised trainings such as for example supporting your child to build healthy friendships and relationships, parental involvement and board of management trainings, policy development training and anti-bullying training. They also provide an ALCUIN Award winner training course for teachers to cooperate with parents and family.

DENMARK
“PARENTS PROMOTE COMMUNITY - INCLUSION IN THE SCHOOL” SKOLE OG FORAELDRE AND DET CENTRALE HANDICAPRÅD (DENMARK)

As 95% of children with disabilities in Denmark will attend mainstream inclusive schools by 2015, the project was aiming to promote the importance and the benefits of an all-inclusive approach to education.

UNITED-KINGDOM
THE CHILDCARE VOUCHER

The Childcare voucher is a system by which employers can help their employees to afford high quality childcare for their children up to 15 years old. It is offered through a salary sacrifice arrangement by which employees agree to forego part of their salary and receive a corresponding value (between £35 and £25 per week) in childcare voucher which is exempted from tax and National Insurance Contribution. This sum is directly allocated to the payment of the facility that parents are free to choose. Employers also benefit from national insurance exemptions of up to 12.8% of the voucher’s value. A survey conducted in 2013 among 1,600 employers currently offering childcare vouchers (70% are SMEs) reveals that:

- 97% of employers offer childcare vouchers because they consider it important to support parents with childcare costs;
- 94% of employers want to create family-friendly environment;
- 65% said that offering childcare vouchers was important for their employee retention strategies.
ITALY
THE TATA-CARD IN THE AOSTA VALLEY REGION (POLICY, REGIONAL LEVEL)

The Tata Card is a childcare solution implemented to ease local access to childcare facilities which is restricted in this region due to the geographical situation. The card is accessible to all families and can also be provided by the regional authorities to families with low income (grant covering from 30% to 90% of the service loaded on the card). The card gives access to family-nannies facilities (so-called Tata) who are registered after having followed a specific training. Each Tata takes care of maximum four children enabling the provision of dedicated services (beyond traditional day-care facilities) for instance teaching children about nature of the region and foreign languages basics. 134 families with children from 0 to 3 years old have benefited from the system in 2012.

FRANCE
THE CAF SYSTEM

The CAF system directly subsidizes facilities that provide care for children under 6 years (multi-option centres, full-time child care centres, drop-off centres, and more) in order to support the development of childcare options (by funding grants for childcare facility managers) and to make the childcare less expensive for parents. There are three types of subsidies: investment subsidies, operative subsidies (Single service provision – Prestation de service unique) and support for the development of additional child-care options through the “childhood and youth” (“enfance et jeunesse”) contract.

The CAF system also finances Child minder meeting points (Relais assistantes maternelles/RAM) which are places for registered child-minders, parents and early-childhood professionals to come together and exchange information and experiences. Parents can also come to a RAM to receive free information on all available childcare options. Regarding parents opting for a individual childcare service (child-minder or home-based childcare provider) and depending on their means, CAF covers a part of the person’s salary and all or part of his/her welfare contributions). Parents using an individual care solution (child-minder or employee at home) are reimbursed of their social contributions and receive financial support depending on their income.

To improve the quality of the information available to families and facilitate their search for childcare facilities, the Family Branch launched www.mon-enfant.fr in 2009. The website lists nearly all of the childcare facilities in France, child-minder information points, child-parent drop-in centres and childcare day centres funded by CAF offices as well as the contact details of child-minders who wish to appear on the website.
The ERP - European Reconciliation Package - was developed throughout the “2014: Year of Reconciling Work and Family Life in Europe” campaign, which was led by COFACE.

The content of the ERP is based on knowledge that was generated during the campaign years, as it also includes many of the ideas and principles of the “Roadmap” document, mainly in the Introduction.

The ERP is also the result of a collaborative effort of COFACE members, researchers, policy makers and employers, and takes inspiration from the three conferences organised by COFACE in 2014:

- “Families in the Crisis - Finding work-life balance in a difficult economic context” held in April in Athens (Greece) in collaboration with COFACE’s Greek Member KMOP and under the auspices of the Greek Presidency of the EU,
- The “Employers’ Forum for Work Life Balance” held in September in Helsinki (Finland) in collaboration with COFACE’s Finnish Member Väestöliitto,
- “A sustainable care system for Europe in the context of reconciling work and family life” held in Rome (Italy) in November, in collaboration with COFACE’s Italian member “Anziani e non solo”, with the support of AIAS and under the auspices of the Italian Presidency of the EU.

The ERP was written by Paola Panzeri and Agnes Uherezcy and proofread by Martin Schmalzried, COFACE. It also contains input from a broader stakeholder group, the 2014 Alliance, which was originally set up to support the COFACE-led campaign to have 2014 designated as the European Year of Reconciling Work and Family Life, and continued to be involved during the implementation phase of 2014. The 2014 Alliance was set up in 2012 by Zoltan Vadkerti, the Communication for the campaign was managed by Ana Perez Mendez and all financial and organisational aspects were handled by Florian Charron.

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The 2014 Alliance is a diverse group of civil society networks, local authorities, academia and work-life balance professionals. The 2014 Alliance consists of the following organisations:
COFACE AISBL
RUE DE LONDRES 17, 1050 BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
SECRETARIAT@COFACE-EU.ORG  ☎ +32 2 511 41 79
WWW.COFACE-EU.ORG