

Possible action to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Identifying Information

* Where are you based?

Belgium

* Are you replying on behalf of an organisation?

- No, I'm replying as an individual citizen
- Yes

* What is the name of the organisation?

COFACE - Confederation of Family Organisations in the EU

* What type of organisation is this?

- Central Government / Ministry
- Other public authority (local, regional, equality body, etc.)
- Worker organisation / trade union
- Employer organisation
- European network
- Small or Medium-sized Enterprise
- Large organisation / company
- Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)
- Researcher / academic
- Think-tank / Consultancy
- Media
- International Organisation
- European Institution

Other

What is your organisations's Transparency Register number?

9328339378085

Contributions received from this survey will be published on the European Commission's website (for further information, please consult the privacy statement).

Do you agree to your contribution being published?

- Yes, my contribution may be published under my name (or the name of the entity I represent)
- Yes, my contribution may be published but should be kept anonymous (without my name or the name of the entity I represent)
- No, I do not want my contribution to be published. (The details of your contribution will not be published but it may be used for statistical and analytical purposes)

The purpose of this consultation

In August 2015, the Commission published a "Roadmap" for the initiative 'A new start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families' to replace the 2008 Commission proposal to revise the Maternity Leave Directive[1]. The objective for this initiative is to increase the participation of women in the labour market by modernising and adapting the current EU legal and policy framework to today's labour market to allow for parents with children and/or dependent relatives to better balance family and work life, allow for a greater sharing of care responsibilities between women and men, and to strengthen gender equality in the labour market.

In line with Article 154(2) TFEU, the Commission has launched the first stage consultation with the European social partners to obtain their views on the possible direction of European Union action, in particular on legislative measures concerning family leaves and flexible working arrangements that could address these challenges. In accordance with Article 155 TFEU, during the first stage consultation social partners may inform the Commission on their wish to initiate a negotiation process for a social partner's agreement. In such a case, the Commission suspends its initiative for the duration of the negotiations. If these are successfully concluded, social partners may request their agreement be implemented by the Commission presenting a proposal for a Council Decision.

Legislative and policy measures can be complementary elements in a package in order to improve work-life balance. Therefore the roadmap also outlines possible non-legislative options for the way forward, including comprehensive policy guidance to Member States in the area of work-life balance, as well as reinforced monitoring, better use of EU funds and knowledge-sharing activities.

The purpose of this consultation is to gather views on the development and implementation of a range of possible tools at EU-level to support work-life balance.

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_just_xxx_maternity_leave.en.pdf

A. General Feedback

The background document outlines several challenges to work-life balance and women's participation in the labour market.

*** Do you agree with the description of the challenges?**

- Yes
- No
- Partially
- Don't know

Are there any other challenges that should be taken into account?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Challenge 1

200 character(s) maximum

Impact of technologies: more flexibility and smart working (positive) and shift from culture of presence at the workplace to culture of availability 24/7 (negative)

Challenge 2

200 character(s) maximum

Current promotion of freelance work and entrepreneurship as the only and best solution for all workers, instead of developing WLB solutions useful for both employees and self-employed

B. Policy areas

The background document outlines several key policies that have a positive impact on work-life balance and women's participation in the labour market. These policy areas include:

- * Childcare
- * Long-term care services
- * Family-related leave arrangements for both women and men
- * Flexible working arrangements for both women and men
- * Tax-benefit systems that make work pay for both partners

*** Do you agree that the above list of policy areas is accurate and complete?**

- Yes
- No
- Partially
- Don't know

*** Is there another policy area that is missing?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please specify

200 character(s) maximum

Gender (and subsequently pension) pay gap and gender segregation in the labour market (horizontal and vertical)

Below is a list of possible policy measures.

In your view, which would be the most important measures to improve work-life balance and female labour market participation in your country?

	Highest Priority (max. 3)	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Not important at all	Don't know
*Improving the possibilities and/or incentives for parents and other people with dependent family members to take-up caring responsibilities and work-life balance measures (such as leave and/or flexible working arrangements)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the possibilities and/or incentives for men, in particular, to take-up caring responsibilities and work-life balance measures (such as leave and/or flexible working arrangements)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Better facilitating parents' transitions back to work after taking maternity/parental leave (e.g., adapting workplaces to better allow for breastfeeding, informing them of employment promotion and training opportunities while they are on leave)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Improving the availability of childcare (e.g., number of places)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the affordability of childcare	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the quality of childcare	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the availability of formal long-term care services, including home/community-based services	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the affordability of formal long-term care services	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the quality of formal long-term care services	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the availability of disability-related home support	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving support measures for people with ill/disabled/frail relatives (e.g., financial support, support services)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Removing tax-benefit disincentives for parents/people with caring responsibilities to enter the labour market (e.g., tax disincentives for the lower earning partner to work, benefit traps)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Other policy measure(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please specify

200 character(s) maximum

COFACE highlighted 1 aspect for flexible working arrangements, 1x childcare and 1x LTC to underline that they are all important but consider counter-productive to prioritise over complementary aspects

C. EU-Level Action

*** In your view, is there a need for further EU-level action on measures to address work-life balance challenges?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

*** In your view, is there a need to improve the EU-level legislative framework in order to address the challenges of work-life balance, for example in relation to maternity leave, parental leave, flexible working arrangements, carers' leave and/or paternity leave?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

*** Please explain what type of improvements could be considered as regards the current EU legislative framework.**

500 character(s) maximum

The EU should put forward a coherent legislative package on leave policies, including maternity, paternity, parental and carers' leave. Concerning parental leave, a principle of non-transferability should be applied to increase take up from fathers and age of children should be raised. Proposals for EU level legislation on smart working should be introduced to trigger a change from the culture of "presence at the workplace", being careful to avoid falling into the "culture of total availability"

[NB] A separate consultation is being conducted with the social partners on issues in the current EU legal framework, such as in the area of leaves and flexible working arrangements. The outcome of this public consultation shall not influence the outcome of the consultation with the social partners.

*** In your view, is there a need for further EU-level policy guidance on measures to address work-life balance challenges?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

*** In your view, is there a need for strengthened monitoring at EU-level on measures to address work-life balance challenges?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

*** In your view, could the EU support further exchanges of good practice among Member States and stakeholders in this area?**

- Yes

- No
- Don't know

*** Do you think the EU could develop meaningful benchmarks * in the area of work-life balance policies that could be monitored, for example, through the European Semester process?**

* A benchmark can be defined as “a standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or assessed” (Pearsall, 1999: 125).

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please indicate which policy areas these benchmarks could cover (choose all that apply)

- Childcare
- Long-term care services
- Family-related leave arrangements for both men and women
- Flexible working arrangements for both women and men
- Tax-benefit systems that make work pay for both partners
- Other
- Don't know

Please specify

200 character(s) maximum

Family friendly active inclusion policies

Currently, the EU financially supports Member States in their implementation of work-life balance policies through its funds, notably the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund.

Do you find the current funds and their regulations effective in supporting work-life balance?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please explain

500 character(s) maximum

Structural Funds are a key element but without a comprehensive strategy with benchmarking at EU level (EU Semester) and common standards, they lose their efficiency and potential, as they will only be temporary and not fully sustainable solutions. Work-life balance must be also included as a specific priority in Funds regulation.

Do you think that the EU could provide clearer guidance to national/regional/local authorities on how existing EU funds could be used to financially support work-life balance?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

*** In your view, is there a need for further awareness raising activities on work-life balance policies?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

*** Who should be in the main target group for any awareness-raising activities? Please select 3 from the list below.**

at most 3 choice(s)

- National authorities
- Local / regional authorities
- NGOs
- Employers
- Employees
- General public
- Other
- Don't know

In your view, how effective would the possible new EU-level measures mentioned below be in addressing work-life balance challenges?

	Very effective	Effective	Not very effective	Not effective at all	Don't know
*1. Improved EU-level legislation	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*2. Strengthened EU-level policy guidance	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*3. Enhanced monitoring of work-life balance issues at EU-level and public reporting of the findings	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*4. More exchanges of good practice amongst Member States and stakeholders	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*5. EU-level benchmarks	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*6. Strengthened EU-level financial support	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*7. Clearer guidance to national/regional/local authorities on how existing EU funds can be used	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*8. Further awareness-raising activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*9. Other measures	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please specify

200 character(s) maximum

Support to family-friendly regulations and discussions at company level

Do you think the effectiveness of the above individual measures could be increased by combining them with others?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please specify which measures could be combined by using the numbers in the table below
 (for example, if you think measure 6 should be combined with measure 3 and 5, type in "3,5" next to measure 6).

	The number(s) of the measure(s) to which you would combine this measure (max 6)
1. Improved EU-level legislation	2 3 5
2. Strengthened EU-level policy guidance	1 3 4 5 7
3. Enhanced monitoring of work-life balance issues at EU-level	1 2 4 5 7
4. More exchanges of good practice among Member States and stakeholders	2 3 5 6 7
5. EU-level benchmarks	1 2 3 4 6 7
6. Strengthened EU-level financial support	4 5 7 8
7. Clearer guidance to national/regional/local authorities on how existing EU funds can be used	2 3 4 5 6 8
8. Further awareness raising activities	2 5 6 7
9. Other measure (if specified above)	2 4 5 6 8

If you have any additional comments and/or suggestions, feel free to use the open answer box below.

1500 character(s) maximum

COFACE regrets that the previous proposal for a Maternity Leave Directive has been withdrawn but welcomes this initiative and its composite approach that aims to put forward a comprehensive framework to support working parents and carers. However, COFACE would like to stress that reconciliation policies should be aiming to provide a supportive environment for all workers, regardless of their employment status (employee, self-employed..) and must not be considered solely as benefits for younger mothers, fathers or carers. COFACE believes that an EU level comprehensive and coherent initiative on work-life balance that would include legislative measures for leave policies, a monitoring and benchmarking system for care services provision within the EU semester and policy guidance for implementing better flexible working arrangements at Member States and company levels. COFACE would strongly highlight that all these measures must have an internal coherence so to be able to provide adequate support to families along the life-cycle becoming safety nets, preventing situations of vulnerability and poverty, plus avoiding legislative and policy loopholes. COFACE regrets the format of this consultation that ask respondents to prioritise among aspects of the same service (e.g. quality, affordability, accessibility and availability) that are necessarily complementary to one another. European Reconciliation Package: <http://www.coface-eu.org/en/Publications/European-Reconciliation-Package/>

Background Documents

Background Doc BG (/eusurvey/files/dc24054a-23e3-42ef-a7ab-e290979f48dd)

Background Doc CS (/eusurvey/files/5367e84c-c4ec-421c-9123-f06815e02a90)

Background Doc DA (/eusurvey/files/2e81a83b-52c0-4c17-a3a6-8834b001154b)

Background Doc DE (/eusurvey/files/b4aa5e36-d1f4-4c5b-b21e-62f1cd6f0541)

Background Doc EL (/eusurvey/files/c26f27d9-4424-4efd-a907-f3801b7fd0c1)

Background Doc EN (/eusurvey/files/9e9b2435-490a-4d99-b9e3-d90456d43cb0)

Background Doc ES (/eusurvey/files/3fc9e8bb-dad9-4749-a353-ae3913a098b)

Background Doc ET (/eusurvey/files/d1666456-6efc-4b44-b6ed-dcf55247b52a)

Background Doc FI (/eusurvey/files/94094072-1f76-48dc-9c47-5d1f5690153c)

Background Doc FR (/eusurvey/files/6a3e3413-4eb2-4cfe-b4d9-4064331c840d)

Background Doc HR (/eusurvey/files/b5916d33-28ef-4f41-a429-5483a060f2f1)

Background Doc HU (/eusurvey/files/beb4cd69-fc94-4e17-91bf-b11497aa1f21)

Background Doc IT (/eusurvey/files/8bc96cb6-3a05-4ce1-ba76-22a93f71128d)

Background Doc LT (/eusurvey/files/0fe97693-2b5d-474a-86ab-b5f8d6dc6422)

Background Doc LV (/eusurvey/files/69ab3e04-af5a-4ad6-8d5d-b7360ada1204)

Background Doc MT (/eusurvey/files/bfb34fda-70d3-4f82-a5ec-d481d6ce0445)

Background Doc NL (/eusurvey/files/373ccf66-e7fc-4071-bd66-7a0696bd1e49)

Background Doc PL (/eusurvey/files/2a74ff96-be99-4be4-8cfc-980cbed8adf6)

Background Doc PT (/eusurvey/files/777551de-6f0f-4d24-95fe-103f0b358449)

Background Doc RO (/eusurvey/files/ea7ea588-0555-4da7-8b55-8542ec3ee03f)

Background Doc SK (/eusurvey/files/5d0513e4-455f-443e-a083-da44caf915c5)

Background Doc SL (/eusurvey/files/70a45731-f9cf-48ef-85a4-2a34a5729eb6)

Background Doc SV (/eusurvey/files/a8f78b35-98d0-4663-a03f-e7b8bcd363f1)

Contact

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