



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 10 June 2020
(OR. en)

8764/20

SOC 406
EMPL 321
SAN 201
GENDER 94
ANTIDISCRIM 87

NOTE

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| From: | Presidency |
| To: | Delegations |
| No. prev. doc.: | ST 8484/20 |
| Subject: | Impact of Long-Term Care on Work-Life Balance - Presidency Conclusions |

At the Coreper meeting on 10 June 2020, discussions did not lead to consensus on Conclusions on the Impact of Long-Term Care on Work-Life Balance. Due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic which do not allow for formal Council meetings to take place, it is not possible for the Council itself to discuss the text and therefore the Presidency concluded at the Coreper meeting that the text annexed to this note was supported or not objected to by 26 delegations (including the Presidency).

Impact of Long-Term Care on Work-Life Balance

1. **RECALLING** that equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the Treaties and recognised in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) requires the Union to aim, in all its activities, to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between women and men.
2. **STRESSING** that gender mainstreaming is a long-term driver of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as a precondition of gender equality itself, and a way of promoting prosperity, competitiveness and employment, as well as inclusiveness, social cohesion and wellbeing.
3. **REAFFIRMING** that achieving gender equality in the field of work and providing equal opportunities and treatment for women and men is one of the most important goals of the European Union. As women are still under-represented and suffer various forms of discrimination in the labour market, and take on a disproportionate share of unpaid care work and domestic work, the goal is to provide them with the same opportunities in the workplace as men, with a view to reducing the gender gaps in the labour market.
4. **RECALLING** that gender equality and work-life balance are referred to in Principles 2 and 9 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. In particular, Principle 2 states that equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. It also states that women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value. Principle 3 stresses the right to equal treatment and equal opportunities for everyone. Principle 9 specifically states that parents and other persons with care responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Moreover, Principle 18 states that everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home-care and community-based services.

5. **RECALLING** the Commission Communication “A strong social Europe for just transitions”, which calls for improved childcare and long-term care services as one of the ways of ensuring that care responsibilities are shared more equally between women and men, with a view to facilitating women’s participation in the labour market on an equal footing with men.
6. **HIGHLIGHTING** that women are still underrepresented in the labour market as a whole and are more likely to work part-time and in low-paying sectors, and to be paid less, as well as being less likely to work in decision-making positions. In conjunction with more frequent career interruptions, this often leads to gender gaps in social protection coverage, including pensions, and in overall earnings.
7. **STRESSING** that women who undertake informal care responsibilities can, as a result, face adverse economic and health consequences and a higher risk of poverty throughout the life-cycle.
8. **STRESSING** that providing equal access to the labour market and supporting women's full and equal participation therein is crucial in order to achieve equality. It is important for the European Union to reaffirm its determination to further promote equality and non-discrimination in this area.
9. **NOTING** that deep-rooted social norms and structures, cultural patterns and gender stereotypes often explain the unequal division of household and care responsibilities between women and men. On average, women spend more time performing unpaid work compared with men, largely because they assume a greater share of responsibility for childcare and the informal long-term-care of family members. The economic value of unpaid care work remains largely invisible. The division of household and care responsibilities cannot justify discrimination against women or men in the labour market or society.
10. **NOTING** that many children, girls more often than boys, are involved in providing care to dependent family members and that this has a vast impact on their quality of life, education and mental health.

11. **NOTING** that demographic trends, including the rapidly ageing population and longer life expectancy, mean that the need for long-term care will increase in Europe. It is therefore particularly important to promote wellbeing, health and gender equality, as well as respect for the human rights and the inherent human dignity of the elderly.
12. **RECALLING** that, according to Target 5.4 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, unpaid care and domestic work should be recognized and valued through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of equally shared responsibility within the household and the family, as nationally appropriate.
13. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that the EU Member States are actively striving to support independent living at home through formal home-based or community-based long-term care. However, the supply of formal long-term care does not meet demand in many Member States. Therefore, care is often provided informally, usually by family members or other people from the social environment of the care recipient, or undeclared by non-professional carers, in both cases mostly women.
14. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the importance of EU funding for supporting independent living at home through formal home-based or community-based care and **RECALLING** the need for further research on the advantages and drawbacks of different long-term care regimes, especially for women.
15. **RECOGNISING** that in the formal care sector, where women are massively over-represented,¹ the work performed is often characterised by high intensity, high physical and mental strain, atypical working time and low earnings. In some countries, the labour status of many care workers is precarious and they experience difficult working conditions. There is sometimes also a risk of violence in the context of long-term care, particularly to women.

¹ For example, according to EIGE, women account for as much as 82% of home-based formal care providers.

16. **RECOGNISING**, moreover, that people who undertake informal care responsibilities may have to continue providing this care, due to their relationship and the specific needs of the care receiver. It is essential to provide support for informal carers, especially given the gap between the supply and demand for formal, affordable, quality long-term care.
17. **REAFFIRMING** the importance of qualified carers and also the need to enhance the provision of long-term care in many Member States as well as to raise the social status of long-term care employees.
18. **REAFFIRMING** that the availability, accessibility and affordability of quality care services are the key prerequisites for enabling carers, especially women, to enter or stay in the labour market, and to reconcile work, family and private life. Social and health services addressing the care needs of dependent children and family members can facilitate the participation of women in the labour market and their economic independence and their social inclusion, as well as the equal sharing of responsibilities with men. However, recent studies have revealed significant systemic challenges linked to the fact that long-term formal care services in many Member States are underdeveloped and inaccessible.
19. **RECOGNISING** the importance, when providing services and support to children, in particular those with disabilities and their families, of respecting the best interests of the child as the primary consideration, as well as the importance of a family environment for the growth and wellbeing of children.
20. **NOTING** that single-parent households, in particular those with children with disabilities, heavily depend on the availability of formal care services, since the daily informal care responsibilities in such households very often fall entirely on the shoulders of one parent. Women are at a greater disadvantage in this context since they make up almost 85% of one-parent households in the EU.

21. **RECALLING** that the recently adopted Work-Life Balance Directive introduces carers' leave for workers when they need to care for a family member and provides the right for them to request flexible working arrangements. The implementation of this Directive should facilitate better reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for both women and men.
22. **WELCOMING** the research note on “Gender equality and long-term care at home”² prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which shows that the shortage of long-term care services puts the economic independence of women at risk, and that the need to provide informal long-term care can have an adverse impact on women's labour market participation, work-life balance, wellbeing and health.
23. **TAKING NOTE** of the outcome of the High Level Conference "Participation of women in the labour market - Benefit for society", held in Zagreb on 30-31 January 2020, which focused on the link between the employment rate of women and the various obstacles they face when entering or returning to the labour market, including especially the availability, quality and affordability of home-based long-term care.
24. **RECOGNIZING** the Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which offers a comprehensive roadmap for action by the EU and, where appropriate, the Member States for advancing gender equality by means of specific actions and gender mainstreaming, with due regard to their respective competences and to specific national circumstances.
25. **NOTING** that the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the functioning of social and economic structures, including the long-term care sector, strongly affecting workers and care receivers, both women and men.
26. This document builds on previous work and political commitments voiced by the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and relevant stakeholders in this area, including the documents listed in Annex.

² Doc. 7893/20 ADD 1.

WE INVITE THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their competences and taking into account national circumstances and respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners, to:

27. Consider developing comprehensive long-term care strategies that also address the issues raised in this document, involving all relevant stakeholders.
28. Taking into account projected future needs and supply, take stock of all long-term care services and associated social protection available at the national level and, where relevant, improve existing measures or introduce new ones, with a view to the provision of services that are of good quality, adequate, comprehensive, accessible and affordable, including health and social services and adequate social protection covering long-term care.
29. Further promote independent living by providing appropriate residential communities, personal assistance and quality home-based and community-based care and improve their availability, affordability and accessibility, while recognising that independent living can and should also be promoted in all forms of residential care.
30. Raise awareness among relevant stakeholders, with the participation of the social partners, of the fact that offering family-friendly working arrangements to both women and men contributes to the higher satisfaction, well-being and productivity of workers, thus improving sustainability and competitiveness in the long run.
31. Strengthen the efforts to boost women's participation and gender equality in the labour market by promoting equal sharing of care and household responsibilities between women and men and by supporting the equal take-up of parental and carers' leave by women and men.
32. Promote the economic empowerment of women and men by mainstreaming the make-work-pay approach.
33. Improve the recognition of the value of unpaid work and its contribution to society and economic growth.

34. Address the employment and skills needs within the formal care services sector, including by improving working conditions, including, where appropriate, labour rights, health and safety, pay, social protection, and investing in the training of persons providing long-term care, including home-based care and community-based care. Explore how digitalisation can be better integrated into formal care, for example, by fostering the development of the accessibility and delivery of services using new technologies.
35. Adopt policies and take action to remove any risk of violence faced by recipients and providers of long-term care services, who are often women.
36. Take measures to mitigate occupational gender segregation, both horizontal and vertical, and to address its causes and effects, including by taking steps to increase the representation of men in the care sector, especially by providing educational and career opportunities and by raising awareness about such opportunities as well as about the societal and economic importance of the care sector.
37. Strengthen investments to improve the provision of care services and ensure an adequate and skilled workforce and appropriate infrastructure, including through requesting support from EU funds.
38. As appropriate, recognise the rights and responsibilities of informal carers and establish support measures for them.

WE CALL ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, in accordance with their respective competences, to:

39. Step up efforts to challenge and eliminate stereotypical assumptions with a view to promoting equal sharing of care responsibilities by men and women, for example through awareness raising, media campaigns and education.
40. Promote gender equality in the workplace, including by introducing measures that help all workers to reconcile work, family and private life.
41. Foster the exchange of best practice at the local, national and EU level and promote mutual learning between Member States.

42. Step up efforts to promote gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, including areas related to employment, healthcare and social policy. Include gender mainstreaming in key debates and processes shaping the future of the European Union, for example, by integrating it into high-level debates and political documents in different areas and emphasising the link between gender equality, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.
43. Develop and improve the collection of relevant data, disaggregated by sex and age, as well as by disability where appropriate, making full use of existing data sources and expertise, including Eurostat, EIGE, Eurofound and the Fundamental Rights Agency and national statistics, and building upon the work in this context of international organisations such as the Council of Europe, ILO and WHO. Seek to make all relevant statistics widely available. The statistics should allow the measuring and monitoring of formal and informal care work, and of long-term care needs and supply.
44. Take action to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on care receivers, including the elderly, and on workers, and on society and the economy at large, including the long-term care sector.

WE CALL ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION to:

45. Support Member States in their efforts to increase women's participation in the labour market, promote gender equality, and invest additional efforts into awareness-raising about the obstacles and challenges women face.
46. Support Member States in improving the provision of quality long-term care services and other measures for tackling obstacles to the participation of women in the labour market, including by promoting the exchange of best practice and measures to improve working conditions in the care sector, in order to better acknowledge and value the work carried out by professional and non-professional carers.
47. Consult the social partners on the possible direction of Union action to improve working conditions for professional carers, with a view to closing the gap between the supply and demand for formal quality long-term care in Member States.

WE CALL ON THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE AND THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE to:

48. Contribute to the improvement of the design and to the implementation of long-term care policies by fostering the exchange of best practice and promoting mutual learning between Member States and other relevant stakeholders such as the social partners.
49. Continue developing common sex-disaggregated indicators to monitor and assess progress towards common objectives in order to adjust policies and actions related to the access to, and the availability, quality, affordability and sustainability of, long-term care, as well as its impact on the gender gaps in the labour market, taking into account national contexts and specificities.

WE CALL ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE to:

50. Integrate the issues raised in this document in the forthcoming Joint SPC-EC Report on Long-Term Care (2021).

References

1. EU interinstitutional

European Pillar of Social Rights

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf

2. EU legislation

Council 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. OJ L 373, 21.12.2004, p. 37–43.

Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast) (OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23–36).

Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79–93).

3. Council

All Council Conclusions on gender equality and other relevant subjects, including especially those cited below:

- Council Conclusions on Women and the Economy: Reconciliation of work and family life as a precondition for equal participation in the labour market (17816/11)
- Council Conclusions on Moving towards more inclusive labour markets (7017/15)
- Council Conclusions on Enhancing the Skills of Women and Men in the EU Labour Market (6889/17)
- Council Conclusions on Enhanced measures to reduce horizontal gender segregation in education and employment (15468/17)
- Council Conclusions on Enhancing Community-based Support and Care for Independent Living (15563/17)

- Council Conclusions on Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Key Policies and Measures (10349/19)
- Council Conclusions on the Economy of Wellbeing (13432/19)
- Council Conclusions on Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (14938/19)

4. Trio Presidency

Trio Presidency Declaration on Gender Equality signed by Romania, Finland and Croatia (15 March 2019)

Joint Declaration on “Gender Equality as a Priority of the European Union today and in the future”, proposed by the Austrian, Estonian and Bulgarian Trio Presidency, Informal Meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers, 12 October 2018, Vienna

5. European Commission

Commission Recommendation 2014/124/EU of 7 March 2014 on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency (OJ L 69, 8.3.2014, p. 112–116)

Communication from the Commission of 26 April 2017: "An initiative to support work-life balance for working parents and carers" (COM(2017) 252 final)

EU Action Plan 2017-2019: Tackling the gender pay gap (COM(2017) 678 final)

Commission Staff Working Document. Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019. (14746/15)

Report on the development of childcare facilities for young children with a view to increase female labour participation, strike a work-life balance for working parents and bring about sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe (the "Barcelona objectives") (COM(2018) 273 final)

Commission Recommendation (EU) 2018/951 of 22 June 2018 on standards for equality bodies (OJ L 167, 4.7.2018, p. 28–35)

Challenges in long-term care in Europe - A study of national policies 2018. European Social Policy Network.

2019 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/annual_report_ge_2019_en_0.pdf

Common European Guidelines on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care and Toolkit on the Use of European Union Funds for the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care.

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/social-inclusion/desinstitut/

Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. 6678/20. (Commission reference: COM(2020) 152 final.)

European Commission. Advisory Committee for Equal opportunities for women and men - *Opinion on challenges for gender equality in a rapidly ageing society*, October 2019.

Communication on A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions. (COM(2020) 14 final.)

6. European Parliament

Resolution of 14 March 2017 on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014-2015 (P8_TA(2017)0073)

Own initiative report on Care services in the EU for improved gender equality (2018/2077(INI))

7. EIGE

"Gender equality and long-term care at home," 2020. 7893/20 ADD 1.

"Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market," 2017. 12709/17 ADD 2 REV 1

"Poverty, gender and intersecting inequalities in the EU" 2016.

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/poverty-gender-and-intersecting-inequalities-in-the-eu>

8. Eurofound

Striking a balance: Reconciling work and life in the EU, 2019.

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef18065en.pdf

9. European Economic and Social Committee

The impact of social investment on employment and public budgets (SOC 496/2013)

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/impact-social-investment-employment-and-public-budgets>

10. Other

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment)

The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

ILO report "Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work", 2018.

http://ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_633135/lang--en/index.htm