

3 December 2018

Statement on the Work-life balance Directive proposal negotiations: A swift agreement is needed more than ever

Today, a triologue meeting among the Council of the EU, Parliament, and Commission to reach a common text on the EU Work-Life Balance Directive proposal is taking place. **We believe that policymakers should make a real effort to reach a political agreement before the end of the year in order to have time to approve the text formally and ahead of the EU elections in May 2019. This directive proposal is very much needed and it will show European parents and carers that the EU is aiming at improving the current working conditions and well-being.**

In addition, the first Eurobarometer on Work-Life Balance released on 26 October 2018 by the European Commission¹ and MMM welcomes its publication. **8 in 10 Europeans expressed satisfaction with work-life balance although 70% of respondents have no caring responsibilities.**

We regret that 70% of respondents had no caring responsibilities as the survey shows this particular demographic group has a good work-life balance but not working parents and carers. It is commonly known it is the caring responsibilities which create difficulties to combine paid and unpaid care work, especially for mothers who perform a high share of it. In addition, no questions were made concerning the current maternity leave legal framework and the need to revise or extend the current 14 weeks at EU level.

The publication of the Eurobarometer was timely, as has occurred during the triologue negotiations among the EU institutions to reach a final text on the EU Work-Life Balance Directive proposal. Make Mothers Matter highlights it brings new relevant data coming from citizens into the debate.

It is clear that a significant proportion of Europeans are not willing to take family leave at any cost to their income and they have to be adapted to their needs in order to be used. In order to encourage Europeans to take advantage of the opportunities given to them, we support:

- ten days paternity leave paid at least 80% of their previous earnings,
- improvement of the parental leave scheme by having more flexibility in the uptake (full-time, part-time, and 50% transferability) and payment of at least 80% of their earnings until the child is 12 years old
- the right to request flexible working arrangements for parents of children under 18 years old and carers (flexible schedules, reducing working time and telework)
- a carers' leave scheme of 5 days per year paid at least 78% of previous earnings.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/84205>

The eurobarometer was carried out by phone in the 28 Member States on the issue of work-life balance policies. 26,758 respondents expressed their stances on work-life policy and the challenges they face in their workplace currently. The respondents were asked about:

- the availability of family leaves and flexible working arrangements in their workplace
- attitudes towards the use of these family-friendly working arrangements by male and female workers, etc.
- modalities which would encourage workers to avail of them

In particular, the Eurobarometer survey found that only 41% of European fathers took or are thinking of **taking paternity leave** or **51%** among working men with care responsibilities.

On parental leave:

- More than half of women have taken or are thinking of taking it whereas less than a third of men are planning on doing the same.
- Nearly three in ten (29%) of workers with care responsibilities say that they could **not financially afford to take it**
- **48% of workers with care responsibilities** mentioned receiving **more financial compensation** during the leave period would encourage fathers to take parental leave
- 41% of European fathers believe they would be more encouraged to take more parental leave with **more financial compensation** during the period of leave (75% of their salary), then a **choice** to take the leave in **blocks or part-time**, or with **better guarantees** in respect of their career

On family leave:

- 42% of women believe that taking family leave has a **negative impact on their career**
- 25% of Europeans say that it is **not easy for employees** to take it
- Four in ten respondents would take family leave at **75% of their current salary**

On flexible working conditions:

- They are **not available for one in three Europeans** aged less than 65
- More than half of Europeans without access to flexible working arrangements would opt for **Flexitime**, which allows employees to create an individualized work schedule accommodating other responsibilities and informal work
- **3 in 10 Europeans agree that managers and supervisors usually discourage** employees from making use of flexible work arrangements
- A majority of Europeans who are not currently in work agree that **flexible work arrangements would give them a better chance of entering paid work**

Make Mothers Matter will be contacting the organisation that conducted the survey to request more data on the specific responses of workers with caring responsibilities.

Get involved:

Until the EU Work-Life Balance Directive is formally adopted, we are calling on everyone to spread the word and support us by getting involved in the latest social media wave using the hashtag #IWantWorkLifeBalance to show the EU institutions parents and carers demand a new directive on work-life balance.

For more information:

https://data.europa.eu/euodp/data/dataset/S2185_470_ENG

<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/84205>

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