



Europe sides with people

Coalition of EU NGOs endorses European Commission's comprehensive Work-Life Balance Package

Brussels, 26 April 2017: Today, the European Commission has put forward an ambitious and comprehensive proposal on "[Work-Life balance for working parents and carers](#)". We are pleased to see it reflect our demands for a life-cycle and transversal approach, and contain many of the elements we called for in the past. We are convinced that this initiative has the potential to bring real change in the lives of many Europeans.

We are a Coalition of European networks of NGOs working since 2012 in order to put work-life balance high on the EU agenda and, while regretting the withdrawal of the maternity leave directive proposal in 2015, we warmly welcome today the work-life balance initiative proposed by the European Commission.

First, we welcome the mix of legislative and non-legislative initiatives covering leave schemes as well as provisions of quality, affordable and accessible care services and flexible working arrangements. We believe that this is the right direction. This is what the EU is about, putting the European project into the lives of women, men and children in Europe, showing that Europe does care. The Package must be followed up with serious enforcement and real monitoring across the EU.

We would stress that some of the measures included are particularly helpful, notably the introduction of a paid paternity leave of ten days and a minimum payment at sick leave level of a non-transferable parental leave. Payment, increased flexibility and non-transferability have been proven crucial to increase take-up among fathers. The Directive introduces also a new carers' leave of 5 days per year paid also at sick pay level. This is a welcome step. However, it is regrettable that no legislative measures have been taken to extend protection against dismissal of women returning to work from a period of leave, beyond a better enforcement of existing legislation.

Backing from Member States and monitoring progress will be fundamental. We are reassured to see that the use of EU funds as well as the EU Semester process is linked to realising the work-life balance policies. On childcare, we are surprised to see a revision of the Education and Training 2020 targets instead of the more known Barcelona objectives, however, we would welcome any revision that would align the Education and Training targets to the Barcelona objectives and to the European Quality Framework on ECEC. This revision should include the recognition that investing in quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services will have a positive impact on women's labour market participation as much as on children's development. We also welcome the inclusion in the Directive of home care services and we will work to ensure that in its implementation there will be a stronger focus on individualised support services which will improve the quality of life and access to the labour market of all European citizens and families irrespective their age, background or assistance needs.

Throughout our work to inform and support the development of this initiative, we strongly felt this was the "[last chance for Europe](#)". We therefore endorse and welcome this initiative as a real step forward. We now urge the two co-legislators, the European Parliament and Council of the EU, to seize this opportunity and prove to women, men, children and families that the EU works with and for them, by adopting this Work-Life Balance Package without watering it down.

To this end, we, as an NGO Coalition, will provide decision makers with more detailed analysis of this initiative in the coming weeks. We will continue being critically constructive, exercise our watchdog function and also our role of bridge between the EU and our constituencies, comprised of millions of children, adults, women, men and families in the EU. The European Commission has delivered, it is now up to the European Parliament and Council of the EU to do their share. We will make sure Europeans will be informed at every step of the process.

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