Basic information

2016/2017(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance **Subject** 4.10.02 Family policy, family law, parental leave 4.15.03 Arrangement of working time, work schedules	

Key players

European Parliament

Joint committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	BLINKEVIČIŪTĖ Vilija (S&D) ŽDANOKA Tatjana (Verts/ALE)	25/11/2015 25/11/2015
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		
	Shadow rapporteur GÁLL-PELCZ Ildikó (PPE) HETMAN Krzysztof (PPE) GENTILE Elena (S&D) WIŚNIEWSKA Jadwiga (ECR) GERICKE Arne (ECR) MLINAR Angelika (ALDE) KUNEVA Kostadinka (GUE/NGL) PIMENTA LOPES João (GUE/NGL) URTASUN Ernest (Verts/ALE) VANA Monika (Verts/ALE) AGEA Laura (EFDD) VON STORCH Beatrix (EFDD) MÉLIN Joëlle (ENF)	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Justice and Consumers	JOUROVÁ Věra

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
10/03/2016	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
10/03/2016	Referral to joint committee announced in Parliament		
12/07/2016	Vote in committee		
02/08/2016	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0253/2016	Summary
12/09/2016	Debate in Parliament		
13/09/2016	Decision by Parliament	T8-0338/2016	Summary
13/09/2016	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/09/2016	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2017(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55 Rules of Procedure EP 59
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CJ21/8/05636

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE580.714	28/04/2016	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE584.019	09/06/2016	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE583.884	14/06/2016	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0253/2016	02/08/2016	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0338/2016	13/09/2016	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2016)876	21/12/2016	

Creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance

2016/2017(INI) - 13/09/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 443 votes to 123 with 100 abstentions, a resolution on creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance.

Parliament recalled that in 2014, 5.1 million children were born in the EU-28, corresponding to a crude birth rate of 10.1. In comparison, this rate was 10.6 in 2000, 12.8 in 1985 and 16.4 in 1970. Hence, the EU faces a serious **demographic challenge** owing to the ever-decreasing birth rates in most Member States.

Faced with unprecedented demographic challenges, Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to put in place positive policies and incentives to support demographic renewal, preserve social security systems and promote the well-being and development of people and of society as a whole.

In this context, it felt that well designed and well-implemented reconciliation policies might greatly promote economic growth, competitiveness, overall labour market participation, gender equality, reduction of the risk of poverty, and positively influences birth rates in the EU.

Reconciliation of professional and private life as a fundamental right: Parliament pointed out that reconciliation of professional, private and family life is a wide-ranging concept that embraces all overarching policies of a legislative and non-legislative nature aimed at promoting appropriate and proportionate balance between the various aspects of people's lives. Reconciliation of professional, private and family life needs to be guaranteed as a **fundamental right for all**, with measures being available for everyone, going beyond young mothers, fathers or carers.

Parliament called for the introduction of a framework to **ensure this right as a basic aim of social systems** and called on the EU and the Member States to promote, in both the public and private sectors, business welfare models respecting the right to a work-life balance.

To meet the challenges of unprecedented demographic changes, Members called on the Commission and the Member States to put in place positive policies and incentives to support demographic renewal, preserve social security systems and promote the well-being and development of people and of society as a whole. They felt it was necessary to **promote family-friendly working environments,** reconciliation plans, return-to-work programmes, communication channels between employees and employers, and incentives for businesses and self-employed workers, in particular to ensure that people are not economically penalised for having children.

Measures to promote reconciliation: Parliament called for legislative and non-legislative measures regarding the reconciliation of professional, private and family life. The Commission was called upon to put forward a proposal for such a package as part of the Commission Work Programme 2017. Members stressed that legislative proposals should include **equality between men and women** as a legal basis.

These measures should include **provisions that support those who are most disadvantaged or currently excluded from existing legislation**, such as single parents, unmarried couples, same-sex couples, migrants, self-employed people or so-called 'assisting spouses', and families in which one or more members have a disability. **The well-being and best interests of children** should be one of the primary considerations.

Reconciliation and gender equality: Parliament underlined that a better work-life balance and strengthened gender equality is essential for supporting the participation of women in the labour market. It called on the Commission and Member States to develop transformative policies and to invest in awareness-raising campaigns to overcome gender stereotypes and to promote a more equal sharing of care and domestic work. Member States should step up protection against discrimination and unlawful dismissal related to work-life balance.

Furthermore, the lack of comparable, comprehensive, reliable and regularly updated equality data makes it more difficult to prove the existence of discrimination. Parliament called on the Commission to take initiatives to further promote such data collection and establish relevant indicators in this area.

Governance and reconciliation: Parliament considered it necessary that adequate training on non-discrimination legislation in employment and case law be provided for employees of national, regional and local authorities and law enforcement bodies, and for labour inspectors. It called on Member States, together with the Commission, to guarantee that rights to social entitlements assigned by public policies are equal in terms of individual rights and equally accessible for women and men, in order to ensure that everyone can enjoy their rights and to enable them to achieve a better work-life balance.

Women and men as equal earners and equal carers: Parliament stressed the need to eliminate gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work and to promote equal sharing of responsibilities, costs and care for children and for dependants between women and men, but also within society as a whole.

It called on Member States to put in place **proactive policies** and appropriate investment designed to support women and men entering, returning to, staying and advancing in the labour market, after periods of family and care-related types of leave.

It urged the Commission, therefore, to adopt a post-2015 Gender Equality Strategy in line with the recommendations of the European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011-2020.

Family- and care-related types of leave: noting that the Commission has withdrawn the revision of the Maternity Leave Directive, Members called for an ambitious proposal with high-level standards, in order to ensure a better work-life balance. The Commission and Member States must ensure that women are paid and covered by social protection for the duration of maternity leave.

The Commission should also propose:

- a paternity leave directive with a minimum of a compulsory two-week fully paid leave;
- a carers' leave directive which supplements the provision of professional care, enables workers to care for dependants and offers the carer adequate remuneration and social protection;
- minimum standards applicable in all Member States to address the specific needs of adoptive parents and children and to establish the same rights as for natural parents.

It also called on Member States to **provide adequate income replacement and social protection during any type of family- or care-related leave**, in particular to ensure that low-income workers can benefit from leave measures on an equal footing with others.

As regards **parental leave**, Parliament called on the Commission and the social partners to consider offering an appropriate extension of the minimum duration of parental leave with adequate income replacement and social protection from **four to at least six months** and to increase the age of the child for which parental leave can be taken.

It considered that promoting the individualisation of the right to leave arrangements, as well as the **role of fathers** in bringing up their children by taking up leave, is essential to achieving a gender-balanced reconciliation of work and private life.

Against this backdrop, it called on the Member States to introduce '**care credits**' through labour and social security legislation for both women and men as equivalent periods for building up pension rights in order to protect those taking a break from employment to provide informal, unpaid care to a dependant or a family member.

Care for dependants: Parliament called on the Member States to support fiscal policies as a powerful lever enhancing work-life balance and to foster employment of women. It stressed that the **care of children with disabilities** presents a particular challenge for working parents, **which should be recognised by society and supported by public policies**. It called on the Member States, in providing pre-school childcare, to place emphasis not only on accessibility, but also on the quality of that care, in particular for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with disabilities.

Quality employment: Parliament pointed out the high levels of working poor throughout Europe, with some people having to work more and longer, even combining several jobs, in order to earn a living wage.

Member States and the social partners are called upon to develop a wage policy framework with effective measures combating wage discrimination and ensuring adequate wages for all workers, for example through the introduction of **minimum wages at national level** that guarantee a life in dignity.

Parliament pointed out that work-life balance must be based on workers' rights and security on the labour market, and on the right to take time off without it being curtailed by increased mobility and flexibility requirements. Increased flexibility can result in an **intensification of the labour market discrimination** currently experienced by women – in the shape of lower wages, non-standard forms of employment and disproportionate responsibility for unpaid household tasks.

In this context, it supported '**smart working'** as an approach to organising work through a combination of flexibility, autonomy and collaboration, which **does not necessarily require the worker to be present in the workplace** or in any pre-defined place and enables them to manage their own working hours, while nevertheless ensuring consistency with the maximum daily and weekly working hours laid down by law and collective agreements.

Parliament went on to point out that excessive and irregular working hours and insufficient rest periods are major factors in increased levels of stress, poor physical and mental health and occupational accidents and diseases.

It called for measures to increase '**quality of life'**, which refers to the overall well-being of individuals in a society. Members called on Member States to promote measures aiming to put in place **adequate minimum income schemes**, in line with national practices and traditions, to enable all people to live a life in dignity, to support their full participation in society and to ensure independence throughout the life cycle.

Creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance

2016/2017(INI) - 02/08/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the joint own-initiative report by Tatjana ŽDANOKA (Greens/EFA, LV) and Vilija BLINKEVIČIŪTĖ (S&D, LT) on creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance.

Members recalled that in 2014, 5.1 million children were born in the EU-28, corresponding to a crude birth rate of 10.1. In comparison, this rate was 10.6 in 2000, 12.8 in 1985 and 16.4 in 1970. Hence, the EU faces a serious **demographic challenge** owing to the ever-decreasing birth rates in most Member States.

In this context, Members felt that well designed and well-implemented reconciliation policies might greatly promote economic growth, competitiveness, overall labour market participation, gender equality, reduction of the risk of poverty, and positively influences birth rates in the EU.

Reconciliation of professional and private life as a fundamental right: Members pointed out that reconciliation of professional, private and family life is a wide-ranging concept that embraces all overarching policies of a legislative and non-legislative nature aimed at promoting appropriate and proportionate balance between the various aspects of people's lives. Reconciliation of professional, private and family life needs to be guaranteed as a **fundamental right for all**, with measures being available for everyone, going beyond young mothers, fathers or carers.

Members called for the introduction of a framework to **ensure this right as a basic aim of social systems** and called on the EU and the Member States to promote, in both the public and private sectors, business welfare models respecting the right to a work-life balance.

To meet the challenges of unprecedented demographic changes, Members called on the Commission and the Member States to put in place positive policies and incentives to support demographic renewal, preserve social security systems and promote the well-being and development of people and of society as a whole. They felt it was necessary to **promote family-friendly working environments,** reconciliation plans, return-to-work programmes, communication channels between employees and employers, and incentives for businesses and self-employed workers, in particular to ensure that people are not economically penalised for having children.

Measures to promote reconciliation: the committee called for legislative and non-legislative measures regarding the reconciliation of professional, private and family life. The Commission was called upon to put forward a proposal for such a package as part of the Commission Work Programme 2017. Members stressed that legislative proposals should include **equality between men and women** as a legal basis.

These measures should include **provisions that support those who are most disadvantaged or currently excluded from existing legislation**, such as single parents, unmarried couples, same-sex couples, migrants, self-employed people or so-called 'assisting spouses', and families in which one or more members have a disability. **The well-being and best interests of children** should be one of the primary considerations.

Reconciliation and gender equality: Members underlined that a better work-life balance and strengthened gender equality is essential for supporting the participation of women in the labour market. They called on the Commission and Member States to develop transformative policies and to invest in awareness-raising campaigns to overcome gender stereotypes and to promote a more equal sharing of care and domestic work. Member States should step up protection against discrimination and unlawful dismissal related to work-life balance.

Furthermore, the lack of comparable, comprehensive, reliable and regularly updated equality data makes it more difficult to prove the existence of discrimination. Members called on the Commission to take initiatives to further promote such data collection and establish relevant indicators in this area.

Governance and reconciliation: the committee considered it necessary that adequate training on non-discrimination legislation in employment and case law be provided for employees of national, regional and local authorities and law enforcement bodies, and for labour inspectors. It called on Member States, together with the Commission, to guarantee that rights to social entitlements assigned by public policies are equal in terms of individual rights and equally accessible for women and men, in order to ensure that everyone can enjoy their rights and to enable them to achieve a better work-life balance.

Women and men as equal earners and equal carers: Members called on Member States to put in place proactive policies and appropriate investment designed to support women and men entering, returning to, staying and advancing in the labour market, after periods of family and care-related types of leave. They also urged Member States to **replace household unit models by the individualisation of taxation and social security rights** in order to ensure that women have individual rights and to counter dependency status through their partners or through the state.

Family- and care-related types of leave: noting that the Commission has withdrawn the revision of the Maternity Leave Directive, Members called for an ambitious proposal with high-level standards, in order to ensure a better work-life balance. The Commission and Member States must ensure that women are paid and covered by social protection for the duration of maternity leave.

The Commission should also propose:

a paternity leave directive with a minimum of a compulsory two-week fully paid leave;

a carers' leave directive which supplements the provision of professional care, enables workers to care for dependants and offers the carer adequate remuneration and social protection;

minimum standards applicable in all Member States to address the specific needs of adoptive parents and children and to establish the same rights as for natural parents.

Care for dependants: the report called on Member States to examine the possibility of gradually **bringing school hours into line with full-time working hours**, by means of free out-of-school activities both at the end of the school day and in school holiday times, in order to help workers achieve real balance between their working, family and private lives. It also called on Member States to support **fiscal policies** as a powerful lever enhancing work-life balance and to foster employment of women, by introducing **a tax credit for child care and care of elderly or other dependants based on fiscal incentives and benefits.**

Quality employment: Members pointed out the high levels of working poor throughout Europe, with some people having to work more and longer, even combining several jobs, in order to earn a living wage. They pointed out that work-life balance must be based on workers' rights and security on the labour market, and on the right to take time off without it being curtailed by increased mobility and flexibility requirements. In this context, they supported '**smart working'** as an approach to organising work through a combination of flexibility, autonomy and collaboration, which **does not necessarily require the worker to be present in the workplace** or in any pre-defined place and enables them to manage their own working hours, while nevertheless ensuring consistency with the maximum daily and weekly working hours laid down by law and collective agreements.

Members went on to point out that excessive and irregular working hours and insufficient rest periods are major factors in increased levels of stress, poor physical and mental health and occupational accidents and diseases.

They called for measures to increase '**quality of life'**, which refers to the overall well-being of individuals in a society. In this context, they called on Member States to promote measures aiming to put in place **adequate minimum income schemes**, in line with national practices and traditions, to enable all people to live a life in dignity, to support their full participation in society and to ensure independence throughout the life cycle.