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REPORT

on creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance
(2016/2017(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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(Joint Committee meetings – Rule 55 of the Rules of Procedure)

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance (2016/2017(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to Articles 6(a), 8, 10, 153(1), 153(2) and 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Articles 7, 9, 23, 24 and 33 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the European Social Charter of 3 May 1996, in particular Part I and Part II, Articles 2, 4, 16 and 27, on the right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment,
- having regard to Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding¹ (the Maternity Leave Directive),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending the Maternity Leave Directive (COM(2008)0637),
- having regard to its position adopted at first reading on 20 October 2010 with a view to the adoption of Directive 2011/.../EU of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/85/EEC² on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding and on the introduction of measures to support workers in balancing work and family life, asking – among other things – for a two-week period of paternity leave,
- having regard to Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC³,
- having regard to Council Directive 2013/62/EU of 17 December 2013 amending Directive 2010/18/EU implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC, following the amendment of the status of Mayotte with regard to the European Union⁴,
- having regard to Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council

¹ OJ L 348, 28.11.1992, p. 1.

² OJ C 70 E, 8.3.2012, p. 163.

³ OJ L 68, 18.3.2010, p. 13.

⁴ OJ L 353, 28.12.2013, p. 7.

of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC¹,

- having regard to Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation²,
- having regard to Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time³,
- having regard to Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 February 2016 on European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2016⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2015 on maternity leave⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 September 2013 on the application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2013 on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU⁸,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 March 2015 on progress on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2013⁹,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2015 on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post-2015¹⁰,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2015 on the application of 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 occupation¹¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 3 February 2016 on the new Strategy for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Europe post-2015¹²,

¹ OJ L 180, 15.7.2010, p. 1.

² OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

³ OJ L 299, 18.11.2003, p. 9.

⁴ OJ L 14, 20.1.1998, p. 9.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0059.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0207.

⁷ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0375.

⁸ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0074.

⁹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0050.

¹⁰ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0218.

¹¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0351.

¹² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0042.

- having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2016 on the application of Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC¹,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 June 2011 on early childhood education and care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow²,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 June 2015 on equal income opportunities for women and men: Closing the gender gap in pensions,
- having regard to the European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011-2020 adopted by the Council conclusions of 7 March 2011³,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Barcelona European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002,
- having regard to the EU Presidency Trio declaration on gender equality of 7 December 2015 by the Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled ‘Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Commission’s initiative ‘Roadmap: A new start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families’ (December 2015), as well as to the public and stakeholder consultation,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Commission Work Programme 2016: No time for business as usual’ (COM(2015)0610),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Launching a consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights’ (COM(2016)0127),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020’ and its Recommendation on ‘Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage’ of 20 February 2013,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘A better work-life balance: stronger support for reconciling professional, private and family life’, (COM(2008)0635),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 February 2011 on Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow (COM(2011)0066),

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0226.

² OJ C 175, 15.6.2011, p. 8.

³ 3073rd Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 7 March 2011.

- having regard to the Commission progress report on the Barcelona objectives of 29 May 2013 entitled ‘The development of childcare facilities for young children in Europe with a view to sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2013)0322),
- having regard to the Commission’s staff working document ‘The Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019’, in particular its Chapter 3.1. Increasing female labour-market participation and the equal economic independence of women and men,
- having regard to the Commission’s 2015 report on equality between women and men in the European Union (SWD(2016)0054), in particular to the chapter on equal economic independence, pp.10-15,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document ‘Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2015’ of 21 January 2016, in particular its Chapter 3.2. Social protection,
- having regard to the studies of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) entitled ‘Working time and work-life balance in a life course perspective’ (2013), ‘Caring for children and dependants: Effect on careers of young workers’ (2013), and ‘Working and caring: Reconciliation measures in times of demographic change’ (2015) and to the Sixth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (2016),
- having regard to the study of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions on ‘Working time development in the 21st century’ of 2015,
- having regard to the study of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions entitled ‘Promoting parental and paternity leave among fathers’,
- having regard to the report of the European Network of Equality Bodies, Equinet, entitled ‘Equality bodies promoting a better work-life balance for all’ of 8 July 2014,
- having regard to the European Institute for Gender Equality’s 2015 Gender Equality Index and its 2015 report entitled ‘Reconciliation of work, family and private life in the European Union: Policy review’,
- having regard to the European Parliamentary Research Service study of May 2015 entitled ‘Gender equality in employment and occupation – Directive 2006/54/EC, European Implementation Assessment’,
- having regard to the study by Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union entitled ‘Maternity, paternity and parental leave: Data related to duration and compensation rates in the European Union’,
- having regard to the study by Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union entitled ‘Costs and benefits of maternity and paternity leave’,
- having regard to the study by Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union entitled ‘Discrimination Generated by the Intersection of Gender and

Disability’,

- having regard to the study by Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union, of March 2016, entitled ‘Differences in Men’s and Women’s Work, Care and Leisure Time’,
 - having regard to the 2014 Eurocarers Carers’ Strategy, ‘Enabling Carers to Care’,
 - having regard to the European Pact for mental health and well-being of 2008 and its priority ‘Mental health in workplace settings’,
 - having regard to ILO Convention 156 Concerning Family Responsibilities (1981) and ILO Recommendation 165 Concerning Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981),
 - having regard to ILO Part-Time Work Convention 1994, ILO Home Work Convention 1996, ILO Maternity Protection Convention 2000 and ILO Domestic Workers Convention 2011,
 - having regard to the ILO report ‘Maternity and paternity at work: law and practice across the world’ (2014),
 - having regard to the Agreed Conclusions of 24 March 2016 of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 60th session, in particular (e)–(g),
 - having regard to the Joint ILO/UNICEF Working Paper of 8 July 2013 ‘Supporting workers with family responsibilities: connecting child development and the decent work agenda’,
 - having regard to the OECD Better Life Index 2015,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the joint deliberations of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality under Rule 55 of the Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0253/2016),
- A. whereas according to the latest Eurostat data, the birth rate in the EU has fallen in recent decades and the EU faces unprecedented demographic challenges¹ to which the Member States should respond; whereas family-friendly policies are important in order to trigger positive demographic trends, because job insecurity and difficult working conditions may have a negative impact on family planning;
- B. whereas in 2014, 5.1 million children were born in the EU-28, corresponding to a crude birth rate of 10.1; whereas, in comparison, this rate was 10.6 in 2000, 12.8 in 1985 and 16.4 in 1970; whereas the EU faces a serious demographic challenge owing to the ever

¹ Eurostat 2015 Demography Report.

decreasing birth rates in most Member States, which are gradually transforming the Union into a gerontocratic society and posing a direct threat to social and economic growth and development;

- C. whereas the traditional concept of women's and men's roles and of the nuclear family is further challenged, as the number of single-parent families, families based on same-sex unions, adolescent mothers, etc. are on the rise in the EU; whereas a failure to acknowledge this diversity amounts to further discrimination and negatively affects people living in the EU and their families;
- D. whereas equality between men and women is a fundamental principle of the European Union, and Articles 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union prohibit any discrimination on grounds of sex and require equality between men and women to be ensured in all areas, including in the achievement of a work-life balance;
- E. whereas the roadmap presented by the Commission is a starting point but certainly not ambitious enough; whereas this opportunity must open a process of reorganisation of the work-life balance situation of women and men in Europe and must contribute significantly to achieving higher levels of gender equality;
- F. whereas well designed and implemented reconciliation policies are to be considered as an essential improvement of the working environment, enabling good working conditions and social and professional well-being; whereas at the same time a good work-life balance promotes economic growth, competitiveness, overall labour market participation, gender equality, reduction of the risk of poverty, and intergenerational solidarity, addresses the challenges of an aging society and positively influences birth rates in the EU; whereas the policies to be implemented to attain these objectives must be modern, concentrate on improving women's access to the labour market and equal sharing of domestic and care tasks between women and men, and be based on the establishment of a coherent policy framework supported by collective bargaining and collective agreements to allow for a better balancing of caring, professional and private life;
- G. whereas reconciling work and private life largely depends on the working time arrangements at the workplace; whereas doubts have been raised as to whether more and longer working hours are beneficial to the economy in terms of increased productivity; whereas a significant proportion of workers in the EU has atypical working hours, including working at weekends and on public holidays and doing shift and night work, and almost half of workers worked in their free time in 2015; whereas current findings indicate that working time arrangements change regularly for 31 % of employees, often at short notice¹; whereas this might raise health and safety concerns, with an increased risk of accidents at work and poorer health in the long term, and make it difficult for workers to reconcile work with duties towards children and other dependants; whereas some sectors are more severely affected, such as the retail services sector where most of those employed are women;
- H. whereas a century ago, in 1919, the ILO introduced the rule of eight hours for working,

¹ Eurofound (2015): First findings: Sixth European Working Conditions Survey.

eight hours for resting and eight hours for spending time with the family and for leisure;

- I. whereas the Commission and the Member States should launch specific measures to foster a new kind of organisation of work, based on quality, adaptable and effective job performance models, in both the public and private sectors, which would enable workers to achieve a work-life balance;
- J. whereas in 2015, the employment rate for men stood at 75.9 % in the EU-28, as compared with 64.3 % for women¹, despite the fact that women are better educated; whereas the number of women in the workforce is even lower when considering employment rates in full-time equivalents, since the share of part-time employment among women is very high in some Member States; whereas in 2013 men spent 47 hours per week on paid work, compared to 34 hours for women; whereas when combining the working hours of paid work and unpaid work at home, young women on average worked 64 hours, compared to 53 hours worked by young men²; whereas GDP per capita losses attributable to gender gaps in the labour market have been estimated at up to 10 % in Europe;
- K. whereas the current employment and social policies, along with the austerity measures imposed, impede growth and development in Europe; whereas these policies impede the attainment of the 75 % employment rate target set for women in the Europe 2020 strategy (it currently stands at 63.5 %); whereas in the current context of EU employment, socio-economic and equality policies, the Europe 2020 strategy is an outdated text and the goals previously set are far from being reached; whereas without proactive policies designed and implemented to help women enter the job market, especially policies that promote a better work-life balance, any target set at EU level cannot actually be reached;
- L. whereas European labour markets are gender segregated³; whereas the Commission also acknowledged this in its communication of 8 March 2016 on the European Pillar of Social Rights (COM(2016)0127, Annex I), stating that ‘women continue to be underrepresented in employment, overrepresented in part-time work and low-paid sectors, and receive lower hourly wages also when performing equivalent work and even though they have surpassed men in educational attainment’;
- M. whereas poverty and widening inequalities have worsened with the macroeconomic policies implemented by the EU and the austerity measures imposed in response to the economic crisis;
- N. whereas the struggle to reconcile family and working life is particularly difficult for single parents, the majority of whom are women; whereas in the 28 EU Member States no less than 34 % of single mothers are at risk of poverty, and children from those families are at a disproportionately greater risk of intergenerational transmission of poverty;
- O. whereas the harmful repercussions of the feminisation of poverty have the greatest

¹ <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

² Eurofound (2013): Caring for children and dependants: Effect on careers of young workers.

³ Eurofound (2015): First findings: Sixth European Working Conditions Survey.

impact on children raised by single mothers who are experiencing serious difficulties in reconciling the role of sole provider with their parenting responsibilities;

- P. whereas gender equality in the labour market benefits not only women but the economy and society as a whole, being a key economic asset to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth and the reduction of occupational inequality, as well as labour market efficiency and fluidity; whereas women entering and re-entering working life leads to an increase in family income, consumption, social security contributions and the volume of taxes collected; whereas women still face discrimination in accessing and staying in employment, as well as a denial of labour rights owing, in particular, to pregnancy and maternity;
- Q. whereas the gender pay gap stands at 16.3 % and whereas the atypical and uncertain forms of working contracts (zero hour contracts, fixed-term contracts, temporary work, part-time jobs, etc.) also affect women more than men;
- R. whereas inequality in the labour market has lifelong consequences and impacts on women's rights, such as pensions, as the 39 % EU gender pension gap testifies, representing more than double the gender pay gap of 16 %;
- S. whereas among the various occupational categories, the self-employed and businesswomen in particular are having great difficulty in achieving a work-life balance; whereas, very often, women who wish to set up a business have difficulty in gaining access to credit, because financial intermediaries are reluctant to grant loans as they consider women entrepreneurs to be more exposed to risk and less likely to make their businesses grow;
- T. whereas stereotypes widely conveyed by society leave women in a subordinate role; whereas these stereotypes start to develop during childhood and are reflected in educational and training choices and continue into the labour market; whereas women are still too often confined to 'women-friendly' jobs and are often poorly paid; whereas these labour market divisions reproduce stereotypes that impose an overwhelming amount of care to be provided mainly by women, leading to women spending two to ten times longer on unpaid care than men¹; whereas gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination have negative implications for women's personal, social and economic independence and prospects, and lead to a higher concentration of women in part-time work, career interruptions and a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, in particular for single mothers, therefore affecting women's autonomy;
- U. whereas family-related types of leave still happen to be grounds for discrimination and stigmatisation for both women and men, despite the existing policy framework and legislation at EU and national level, and this particularly affects women as main carers using family-related leave;
- V. whereas the differences in men's and women's uptake of parental leave shows gender-based discrimination; whereas fathers' participation rate in parental leave in the Member States remains low, with only 10 % of fathers taking at least one day of leave,

¹ Eurostat data for 2010, Commission's 2015 report on equality between women and men in the European Union, SWD(2016)0054.

and 97 % of women use the parental leave that is available for both parents; whereas available data confirms that unpaid or poorly paid family-related types of leave result in low participation rates; whereas entirely or partially non-transferable, properly paid parental leave supports a more balanced take-up by both parents and helps to reduce discrimination against women in the labour market; whereas only a few Member States encourage fathers to make the most of paternity or parental leave, leading to men being deprived of the opportunity to participate equally in taking care of and spending time with their children;

- W. whereas it is vital to introduce measures to promote fathers' access to leave, particularly as fathers who take family leave build a better relationship with their children and are more likely to take an active role in future childcare tasks;
- X. whereas Eurofound studies have illustrated aspects that influence fathers' take-up rates of parental leave, namely: the level of compensation, the flexibility of the leave system, the availability of information, the availability and flexibility of childcare facilities and fear of exclusion from the labour market due to taking leave;
- Y. whereas availability of and access to affordable, adequate and quality early childhood education and care (ECEC), care for other dependent persons and high-quality social services is one of the main factors influencing the participation of women in the labour market; whereas there is a lack of sufficient infrastructure offering quality and accessible childcare for all income levels; whereas for 27 % of Europeans the poor quality of childcare makes it difficult to access these services¹; whereas achieving quality services means investing in childcare workforce training²; whereas only 11 Member States have met the first Barcelona target (childcare available for at least 90 % of children between the ages of 3 and the mandatory school age) and only 10 Member States have achieved the second target (at least 33 % of children under three years)³;
- Z. whereas early childhood education and care and children's experiences from the ages of 0-3 have a decisive impact on their cognitive development, given that they develop essential capacities in the first five years;
- Aa. whereas work-life balance policies should also enable parents to fulfil their responsibilities towards their children, ensuring the financial means, time and support necessary for both mothers and fathers;
- Ab. whereas Europe is the continent with the highest number of older citizens and an ageing process that will continue in the coming decades; whereas many Member States lack sufficient long-term care facilities to address the increase in care needs and the stagnation or reduction of the healthy life years indicator; whereas most of the jobs created in formal home care for older relatives are poorly paid and require a low level of qualifications⁴;

¹ Eurofound European Quality of Life Survey 2012.

² Eurofound (2015), Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review.

³ Progress report on the Barcelona objectives of 29 May 2013 entitled 'The development of childcare facilities for young children in Europe with a view to sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2013)0322).

⁴ Eurofound (2013), Caring for children and dependants: Effect on careers of young workers.

- Ac. whereas 80 % of care needs are provided by informal carers in the EU; whereas about 3.3 million Europeans aged between 15 and 34 have had to give up full-time work because they lack care facilities for dependent children or older relatives;
- Ad. whereas ICT and emerging technologies have changed work and employment environments, organisational cultures and structures across sectors; whereas policy-making must stay up to date with technological developments, in order to ensure that social standards and gender equality advance rather than regress in these new circumstances;
- Ae. whereas the combination of care and paid work has an important impact on the sustainability of work and employment rates, in particular for women, who might face at some stage in their life care responsibilities for grandchildren and/or elderly parents¹;
- Af. whereas some legal systems in the EU maintain non-individualisation of tax and social security systems, with women granted only derived rights through their relationship to men, including for access to health and pension services; whereas Member States that impose dependency of the wife/mother are imposing direct discrimination against women and denying full citizenship rights to women through the selective way state services are delivered;
- Ag. whereas targeted labour market and work-life balance policies are required in order to take into account intersectional obstacles faced by vulnerable women in terms of work-life balance and job security, such as women with disabilities, young women, migrant and refugee women, women from ethnic minority backgrounds and LGBTI women;
- Ah. whereas allowing workers time off for personal and training development in the context of life-long learning without being discriminated against benefits their well-being as well as their contribution to the economy with more skills and higher productivity²;
- Ai. whereas the implementation of work-life balance policies will not in itself produce benefits for workers unless it is accompanied by policies to improve living conditions, alongside policies to foster and promote cultural, recreational and sporting activities, among others;

General principles

1. Points 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; considers that achieving a genuine work-life balance requires robust, cross-cutting, structural, coherent and comprehensive policies, including incentives and efficient measures for reconciling work, caring for and spending time with family and friends and time for leisure and personal development; points out that above all a cultural shift in society is needed, tackling gender stereotypes so that work and care are more evenly shared between men and women;

¹ Eurofound report, Sustainable work over the life course: Concept paper (2015).

² CEDEFOP Research Paper: Training leave. Policies and practices in Europe, 2010.

2. Stresses that reconciliation of professional, private and family life needs to be guaranteed as a fundamental right for all people, in the spirit of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, with measures being available for everyone, going beyond young mothers, fathers or carers; calls for the introduction of a framework to ensure this right as a basic aim of social systems and calls 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; considers that this right should be mainstreamed throughout EU activities that might have a direct or indirect impact on this issue;
3. Points out that the EU is facing unprecedented demographic changes – rising life expectancy, lower birth rates, changing family structures with new forms of relation-building and (co)habitation, late parenthood and migration, which pose new challenges for the EU; is concerned that the economic and financial crisis and subsequent budget cuts have had a negative impact on public finances needed for work-life balance policies and for guaranteeing the availability of and access to quality and affordable services of general interest; calls, therefore, 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;
4. Stresses that the falling birth rate in the EU has been exacerbated by the crisis, given that unemployment, precarious job opportunities, uncertainty about the future and discrimination in the labour market are making young people, in particular young professional women, put off having children for the purpose of remaining active in an increasingly competitive labour market; in this context, calls on the Member States and social partners 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 and that legitimate career aspirations are not opposed to family plans; highlights further that maternity, paternity and parental leave can only be effectively applied with benefits for society and the economy if other policy instruments are applied alongside, including the provision of quality and affordable childcare;
5. Welcomes the Commission's approach to work-life balance policies as key in addressing socio-economic challenges; calls on the European Social Partners to come forward with an agreement on a comprehensive package of legislative and non-legislative measures regarding the reconciliation of professional, private and family life; calls on the Commission, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, to put forward a proposal for such a package as part of the Commission Work Programme 2017 in the context of the announced European pillar of social rights, should it not be possible for an agreement between the social partners to be reached; stresses that legislative proposals should include equality between men and women as a legal basis; calls on the Commission to work in cooperation with social stakeholders towards a pillar of social rights, leading to true social investment that primarily emphasises investment in people;

6. Welcomes the Commission's launch of a public consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights to gather views and feedback on a number of essential principles to support well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems within the euro area;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure relevant policies and measures take account of the increasing diversity of family relationships, including civil partnerships and parenting and grandparenting arrangements, as well as the diversity of society as a whole, in particular to guarantee that a child is not discriminated against because of its parents' marital status or family constitution; calls on the Member States to mutually recognise legal documents with a view to guaranteeing free movement without discrimination;
8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop and implement policies and provide measures that support those who are most disadvantaged or currently excluded from existing legislation and policies, 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;
9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that legislation and policies on work-life balance take into account the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Concluding Observations of the 2015 UN CRPD Committee to the EU;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the well-being and best interests of children are one of the primary considerations in the development, monitoring and implementation of work-life balance policies; calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully implement the Recommendation on Investing in Children¹ and closely monitor its progress; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop and introduce initiatives, such as a Child Guarantee, which would place children at the centre of existing poverty alleviation policies so that every child could have access to free healthcare, free education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition, as part of a European integrated plan to combat child poverty;
11. Considers that child poverty is linked to parents' poverty, and therefore calls on the Member States to implement the Recommendation on Child Poverty and Well-being and to use the indicator-based monitoring framework therein;
12. Stresses the importance of incorporating a lifecycle approach in work-life balance policies and corporate strategies in order to ensure that everyone is supported at different times throughout their life and can actively participate in the labour market with labour rights and in society as a whole;
13. Emphasises that a better work-life balance and strengthened gender equality is essential for supporting the participation of women in the labour market, in particular women carers and single mothers, and for achieving the goal of women's empowerment; underlines that the key to women's economic empowerment is the transformation and

¹ Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 on investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage (2013/112/EU).

adaptation of the labour market and welfare systems in order to take into account women's life cycles;

14. Calls on the Commission and the 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, focusing also on the right and need for men to take up care responsibilities without being stigmatised or penalised; considers that businesses should be targeted and supported in their efforts to foster work-life balance and to combat discrimination;
15. Calls on the Member States to step up protection against discrimination and unlawful dismissal related to work-life balance, which particularly affect female workers, and to ensure access to justice and legal action, including by increasing the amount of information on offer about workers' rights and legal assistance, if required; calls in this context on the Commission and the Member States to propose policies to improve enforcement of anti-discrimination measures in the workplace, including increasing the awareness of legal rights regarding equal treatment by conducting information campaigns, reversal of the burden of proof¹ and empowering national equality bodies to conduct formal investigations on their own initiative of equality issues and help potential victims of discrimination;
16. Highlights that the lack of comparable, comprehensive, reliable and regularly updated equality data makes it more difficult to prove the existence of discrimination, particularly indirect discrimination; calls on the Member States to collect equality data in a systematic way and to make them available, with the involvement of national equality bodies and courts, including with a view to analysing and monitoring these data for the Country-Specific Recommendations; calls on the Commission to take initiatives to further promote such data collection by means of a Recommendation to Member States, and by tasking Eurostat with the development of consultations aiming at mainstreaming data disaggregation on all discrimination grounds in European Social Survey indicators; calls on the Commission to continue to cooperate with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to improve the quantity and quality of sex-disaggregated data in a systematic way;
17. Calls on the Commission to regularly review the progress achieved in critical areas of concern as identified in the Beijing Platform for Action, for which indicators have already been developed by the EIGE, and to take the outcomes of these reviews into account in its assessment of gender equality in the EU;
18. Notes the important role of the national equality bodies in the implementation of the Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC, contributing to awareness raising and data collection, staying in touch with social partners and other stakeholders, addressing underreporting and making complaint processes more accessible; calls on the Member States to strengthen the role, capacities and independence of the equality bodies, including Equinet, inter alia through the provision of adequate funding; calls in particular for strengthening of the organisations provided for in the Equal Treatment

¹ European Parliament resolution of 8 October 2015 on the application of 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, P8_TA(2015)0351.

Directive 2006/54/EC, guaranteeing access to justice and legal action;

19. Considers 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; believes that such training is also of critical importance for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and the police force;
20. Calls on the 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

21. Stresses 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, including by ensuring universal access to affordable and high-quality services of general interest; points in this respect to the need for specific proposals making for better work-life balance;
22. Deplores the persistence of the gender pay gap, which constitutes an infringement of the fundamental principle of equal pay for equal work for female and male workers enshrined in Article 157 TFEU and in particular affects women having and raising children; calls on the EU and the Member States, in cooperation with the social partners and gender equality organisations, to set out and implement policies to close the gender pay gap; calls on the Member States to carry out wage-mapping on a regular basis as a complement to these efforts;
23. Calls on the Commission, in line with the Council conclusions of 16 June 2016 on gender equality, to enhance the status of its strategic engagement on gender equality and to integrate a gender perspective into the Europe 2020 strategy in order to ensure that work on gender equality is not made less of a priority; urges the Commission, therefore, to adopt a post-2015 Gender Equality Strategy and follow up on it through the European Semester, in line with the recommendations of the European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011-2020;
24. Calls on the Member States to put in place proactive policies and appropriate investment aimed and 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, with sustainable and quality employment, in line with Article 27 of the European Social Charter; stresses in particular the need to guarantee reinstatement to the same post or to an equivalent or similar post, protection against dismissal and less favourable treatment as a result of pregnancy, applying for or taking family leave, and a protection period after their return so that they can readjust to their job; reiterates that changes in working hours and/or routines on the return to work (including the need for the employer to justify a refusal) and training periods should also be guaranteed;
25. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to involve the social partners and civil society in gender equality policies; stresses the importance of adequate funding for such

policies, of collective agreements and collective bargaining in combating discrimination and promoting gender equality at work, and of research and exchanges of good practices;

26. Urges the 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;
27. Considers that promoting women's participation in the labour market and their economic independence is crucial for meeting the Europe 2020 target of a 75 % overall employment rate and would boost GDP; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen policies and increase investment supporting female employment in quality jobs, particularly in sectors and positions where women are under-represented, such as the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and green economy sectors, or senior management positions across all sectors;

Family- and care-related types of leave

28. Notes that the Commission has withdrawn the revision of the Maternity Leave Directive and calls for it to put forward an ambitious proposal with high-level standards, in close cooperation with the social partners and consultation with civil society, in order to ensure a better work-life balance; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that women are paid and covered by social protection for the duration of maternity leave in order to support families and combat inequalities, strengthen women's social and economic independence and avoid them being financially penalised for having children; stresses that maternity leave must be accompanied by effective measures protecting the rights of pregnant women and new, breastfeeding and single mothers, reflecting the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation and the World Health Organisation;
29. Calls for improved coordination of different types of leave at EU and Member State level in cooperation with the social partners; points out that better access to different types of leave provides people with life-cycle leave perspectives and increases employment participation, overall efficiency and job satisfaction; notes that where there are no provisions for leave, or where the existing ones are considered to be insufficient, the social partners could have a role to play in establishing new provisions or updating current ones for maternity, paternity and parental leave; calls on the Commission and the Member States to reconsider leave policies to accommodate the role of working grandparents in caring for their grandchildren;
30. Calls on the 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;
31. Calls on the Commission to publish an implementation report on the Parental Leave Directive and calls 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; stresses that parents should be given flexibility to use the leave in fractions or all together; calls on the Member States

and the social partners to reconsider their systems of financial compensation for parental leave with a view to reaching an adequate level of income replacement that acts as an incentive and also encourages men to take parental leave beyond the minimum time period guaranteed by the directive; reiterates that parental leave should be equally shared between parents and that a significant part of the leave should remain non-transferable¹; underlines that both parents must be treated in the same way in terms of rights to income and the duration of leave;

32. Notes the increased vulnerability of working parents of children with disabilities; calls, therefore, on the Commission to improve and strengthen the provisions of Directive 2010/18/EU regarding the conditions of eligibility and detailed rules for granting parental leave to those who have children with a disability or serious or long-term incapacitating illness; calls on the Member States in this respect to extend the possibility of parental leave for these parents beyond the statutory age of the child provided for in the directive and to grant them additional maternity, paternity (where it exists) and parental leave;
33. Believes 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 and the Europe 2020 employment target for women and men;
34. Calls on the Commission, in order to allow parents with children or people with dependants to achieve a better work-life balance, to bring forward well-grounded and coherent initiatives on:
 - (1) a paternity leave directive with a minimum of a compulsory two-week fully paid leave,
 - (2) 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; calls for employee-driven flexibility and sufficient incentives for men to take up carers' leave,
 - (3) 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,while acknowledging that some Member States have already taken proactive measures on paternity leave and carers' leave;
35. Calls 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 and to recognise the value of the work of these carers for society as a whole; encourages the Member States to exchange best practices in this area;

¹European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2016 on the application of Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC, P8_TA(2016)0226.

Care for dependants

36. Calls on the Member States to effectively implement the Barcelona targets by 2020 and to endorse the 2014 quality framework on early childhood education and care;
37. Recalls that investing in social services, including infrastructure, generates considerable employment effects, also leading to significant additional income for the public sector in employment taxes and social security contributions; asks the Member States to invest in high-quality early childhood education and care and elderly and dependant care services; calls on them to ensure the availability, affordability and universal access to such services by considering, for example, increasing public expenditure on care services, including independent living schemes, and by making better use of the EU funds; calls for the MFF revision to be used also to step up investment in social services and infrastructure, in particular with the help of the ESF, the ERDF and the EFSI; calls on the Member States to consider granting free access to care services for families living in poverty and social exclusion; also notes the disproportionate impact that insufficient investment in public care structures and services has on single parents, the vast majority of whom are women;
38. Stresses the need to recognise the work done by people who devote their time and skills to caring for elderly and dependent persons;
39. Highlights 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 and collective bargaining; calls 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;
40. Calls on the 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, especially with reference to women as it is they in the main who reduce their working hours to be able to care for their children;
41. Calls on the 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;
42. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to introduce targets on care for elderly persons, persons with disabilities and other dependants, similar to the Barcelona targets, with monitoring tools which should measure quality, accessibility and affordability; calls on Eurostat, Eurofound and the EIGE (for its Gender Index), to collect relevant data and to carry out studies to support this work;
43. Calls on the Member States to strengthen the network of specialised services providing care to elderly persons and specifically to build up home service networks; in this sense, also stresses the need for policies on care for elderly persons to be tailored to individual

needs and, if possible, for emphasis to be placed on their preferred place of care;

44. Calls on the Commission to work towards European qualitative standards for all care services, including on their availability, accessibility and affordability, which would support Member States in raising care standards; recalls the existing frameworks such as the European Quality Framework for Long-term Care Services, from which inspiration should be drawn; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop policies to enable and accommodate deinstitutionalisation of long-term care, where possible and with the support of community-based care;
45. Points out that an important element in achieving quality services is investing in the workforce¹; calls, therefore, on the Member States and the social partners to promote decent working conditions and quality employment for care workers, including through decent pay, recognition of care workers' status and the development of high-quality vocational training pathways for care workers;

Quality employment

46. Points 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; emphasises how important it is that work-life balance must not be established by introducing precarious working conditions and increasing the number of non-standard forms of employment; notes that women are over-represented in non-standard forms of employment, which gives rise to social and economic insecurity; notes a persistent pay gap in all Member States between gross pay and wage and that this is not only related to the different features of the parties concerned but also to the different market conditions; stresses that wages should be based on the working performance and the local cost of living and not exclusively on quantitative standards; calls on the Member States and the social partners 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, in line with national practices; calls on the Member States to support collective bargaining as an important factor in developing wage policies;
47. Points 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; stresses the fact that 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 – if a clear gender mainstreaming approach is not taken beforehand;
48. Calls on Eurofound to further develop its activities in monitoring employment quality through its European Working Conditions Survey, based on its concept of job quality as comprising: earning, prospects, working time quality, skill use and discretion, social environment, physical risk and work intensity; calls on Eurofound, furthermore, to develop its research on policies, social partner agreements and companies' practices

¹ Eurofound (2015), Early childhood care: working conditions, training and quality of services – A systematic review.

which are supportive of job quality¹; calls on Eurofound to keep monitoring the incidence of working time arrangements and to provide analyses of public policies and social partner agreements in this field, including an assessment of how these are negotiated and support work-life balance; calls on Eurofound to develop research on how dual worker households manage their working time arrangements together and how best to support them;

49. Stresses that, on the one hand, 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; points out, on the other hand, the differences in the personal and family situation of every worker and therefore considers that employees should be given the possibility to make use of flexible working arrangements in order to adapt these to their specific circumstances along the life cycle; considers that such employee-oriented flexibility can promote higher employment rates among women; stresses that employees and employers have a shared responsibility to design and agree on the most appropriate arrangements; calls on the Commission to map the situation in the Member States of a 'Right to request flexible working arrangements';
50. Supports '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; underlines, therefore, the potential of smart working for a better work-life balance, in particular for parents returning to or entering the labour market after maternity or parental leave; rejects, however, a shift from a culture of presence to a culture of permanent availability; calls on the Commission, the Member States and the social partners, when developing smart working policies, to ensure that these do not impose an additional burden on the worker, but rather reinforce a healthy work-life balance and increase workers' well-being; stresses the need to focus on achieving job outcomes to prevent abuse of these new forms of work; calls on the Member States to promote the potential of technology such as digital data, high-speed internet, audio and video technology for smart (tele)working arrangements;
51. Highlights that alternative business models such as cooperatives and mutuals have enormous potential to advance gender equality and a healthy work-life balance, particularly in the emerging 'smart working' digital environment, given the higher levels of employee participation in decision-making; calls on the Commission and the Member States to research the impact of cooperatives and alternative business models on gender equality and work-life balance, especially in technology sectors, and set out policies to promote and share best practice models;
52. Is concerned about the increased amount of involuntary part-time work, particularly among women with caring responsibilities, which increases their risk of in-work poverty; stresses that when a worker chooses part-time work, the quality of their employment and non-discrimination against them as compared to full-time workers

¹ Eurofound report on 'Trends in job quality in Europe' (2012) and Eurofound report on 'Convergence and divergence of job quality in Europe 1995-2010' (2015).

must be guaranteed in line with the Part-time Workers Directive¹, and calls on the Commission to follow up on the application of this directive; asks the Member States to ensure that part-time workers, workers facing job discontinuity and workers with career gaps or with periods where fewer hours were worked have the right to access a decent pension scheme without any form of discrimination;

53. Is concerned about the abuse of zero hour contracts in some Member States and use of exploitative contracts, involuntary temporary contracts, irregular, unpredictable and excessive working hours and low-quality internships, which make a healthy work-life balance impossible in the long run; calls, therefore, on the Member States and social partners to urgently tackle the situation of precarious employment, faced in particular by young people and women;
54. Points out that excessive and irregular working hours and insufficient rest periods, job insecurity and the disproportionate output required, are major factors in increased levels of stress, poor physical and mental health and occupational accidents and diseases; points out that flexitime and predictable working hours positively influence the work-life balance²; calls on the Member States and the social partners to secure working hours and to ensure a weekly rest period through the implementation of all relevant legislation; recalls the Commission's obligation to follow up on the implementation of the Working Time Directive and to consider initiating infringement proceedings against Member States who are failing to comply with it; recommends, to this end, close monitoring of takeovers and/or sales of companies with the aim of countering the trend towards the weakening of the provisions in employment contracts on working hours and rest periods;
55. Calls further on the Commission and the Member States, the social partners and stakeholders to focus on innovative organisation in the workplace and to balance both the work-life needs of women and men and business productivity/profitability; notes that the positive link between increasing women's employment, work-life balance and business competitiveness, in terms of reducing absenteeism, output gap, turnover, talent attractiveness, loyalty, resources reallocation for developing welfare plans, increasing living standards and time freeing, has been widely proven by the best practices in Europe in a number of large enterprises and SME networks;
56. Highlights that women and LGBTI persons face specific gender-based obstacles and sources of stress at work, including harassment, exclusion, discrimination or gender stereotypes, which negatively impact their well-being at work and threaten their mental health and their ability to progress in their career; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take further steps to tackle these adverse conditions by ensuring proper implementation of relevant anti-discrimination legislation, as well as gender-sensitive life-long learning programmes, and work with trade unions and civil society organisations;
57. Calls on the Member States to build up and strengthen national labour inspection bodies by providing them with the financial conditions and financial and human resources to

¹ Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC.

² Eurofound European Working Conditions Survey.

give them an effective presence on the ground and thereby enable them to combat job insecurity, unregulated work, and labour and wage discrimination, particularly from the point of view of equality between men and women;

58. Calls on the Member States to fully implement the Equal Treatment Directive 2006/54/EC and on the Commission to revise the directive, and to promote among companies the implementation of plans on gender equality, including actions on desegregation, the development of pay systems and measures to support women's careers; stresses the importance of the role of equality bodies in assisting victims of discrimination and addressing gender stereotypes; calls on the Member States to put in place legislative measures ensuring the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men at work;
59. Reiterates its call to the Council to swiftly adopt the proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
60. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to guarantee social security, social protection and remuneration in the case of sick leave in order to enable a genuine work-life balance;

Quality of life

61. Points out that 'quality of life' is a broader concept than 'living conditions' and refers to the overall well-being of individuals in a society, identifying a number of dimensions of human existence as essential for a rounded human life¹;
62. Underlines that leisure inequality and unequal sharing of responsibilities between women and men can have an impact on women's personal development, learning of new skills and languages and participation in social, political, cultural and community life, and especially on women's economic situation;
63. Stresses that any form of discrimination against women, including gender segregation, pay and pension gaps, gender stereotypes and high levels of stress in managing professional and private life are reflected in women's high physical inactivity rate and have a huge impact on their physical and mental health²; reiterates the importance of combating stereotypes by promoting and defending gender equality during all stages of education, from primary school onwards; calls on the Member States and social partners to conduct and support awareness-raising and information campaigns as well as programmes that promote gender equality and combat stereotypes;
64. Underlines the importance of lifelong learning for the self-development of workers, including staying up to date with ever-changing working conditions; encourages the Commission and the Member States to promote lifelong learning; calls on the Commission, the Member States and the social partners to develop and put in place policies that provide for educational and training leave, as well as in-work vocational

¹ Eurofound 3rd European Quality of Life Survey.

² Study by Parliament's Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union, of March 2016, entitled 'Differences in Men's and Women's Work, Care and Leisure Time'.

training and life-long learning, including in Member States other than their own; calls on them to make learning inside and outside work, including paid study opportunities, accessible to all workers and in particular to those in disadvantaged situations, and with an emphasis on women employees in sectors where women are structurally underrepresented;

65. Calls on the Member States, in coordination with the Commission, to exchange good practices on incentives for families, such as free public transport passes, family discounts for cultural and tourist attractions, and discounts on education- or training-related products or services;
66. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to combat social and economic inequalities; calls on the 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;
67. Deplores the situation many grandparents are in where, at an age when they should be enjoying peace and a well-deserved retirement, they are swamped with family responsibilities as they have to care for their grandchildren because their children are unable to balance their working and family lives without their help;
68. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Over the past decades, the reconciliation of professional, private and family life has become recognised as a fundamental right. Whereas some initiatives have already been taken both at European and national level, it is still an area in which further progress has to be made to ensure a satisfactory work-life balance for all. This does not only improve a person's own well-being but also benefits society as a whole, also because people with a satisfactory work-life balance are more productive at work. This requires transforming the working environment as well as stepping away from the idea that (paid) work is the only useful and therefore valuable way for a person to spend his time. It is furthermore important to incorporate a lifecycle approach in work-life balance policies to ensure everyone is supported at different moments throughout their life and can actively participate in the labour market and in society as a whole.

The European Parliament has decided to draft this own-initiative report to bring more attention to the debate and to prompt the Commission to step up its work in this field in general, but also more specifically as a reaction to the roadmap and public consultation published in 2015 titled 'A new start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families'. The objective for this Commission 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 other dependent relatives to better balance family and work life, allow for greater sharing of care responsibilities between women and men, and to strengthen gender equality in the labour market.

In the opinion of the rapporteurs, who welcome the Commission initiative, the need to modernise work-life balance framework at the EU level is obvious for several main reasons: society has seen demographic changes spurring more care needs, new ways of working have emerged, unemployment is still at unprecedented high levels, the diversity of family relationships and parenting arrangements has increased, parenthood still has strikingly negative effects on the employment rates of women and the current EU framework is falling very short of addressing this most important aspect of persisting gender inequality.

Women are increasingly well-qualified, even outperforming men in terms of educational attainment¹, and yet they continue to be under-represented in the labour market, or employed in jobs below their skill level. Overall low pay, a higher concentration in part-time work and greater interruptions in careers due to caring for others (children and/or dependent relatives) contribute to a greater risk of poverty and social exclusion for women as well as a large gender pension gap (40%). In addition to that, gender employment gap is causing higher poverty levels among children and households in general, in families, where only one of the parents is employed. Finally, absence of work-life balance solutions influences people's decision to leave the labour market or reduce their working hours after having children and/or having to care for a dependent relative, the choice of if or when to have children, or how many children to have and has continuous negative effect on Europe's demography which we

¹ In 2014, 42.3% of women (30-34) had tertiary education or higher compared to 33.6% of men.

cannot afford to have. To sum up, according to estimates, gender employment gap is costing EU around 370 billion euros per year, or 2.8% of EU GDP¹.

The aim of this report and of work-life balance policies in general is not only to promote gender equality in employment and other spheres of life, but also to give children the possibility to reach their full potential by providing them with high quality early childhood education and care, access to leisure, cultural and sport activities and time with their parents. Proper work-life balance policies will also help to ensure a higher quality of life and security for other dependants, in particular older dependants and dependants with disabilities or long-term illnesses.

The Rapporteurs are deeply concerned with the fact that current measures in place in Member States are not always improving, or even worsening the situation, causing negative effects on the well-being of all people as well as on their employment participation and productivity. There is a need for strong action at both European and national level for legislative measures, including on different types of leave, combined with non-legislative measures, such as awareness and information campaigns, controlling mechanisms and monitoring of the situation.

The Rapporteurs are convinced that for reconciling work, private and family life there is no 'one-size-fits-everyone' solution, and the appropriate balance has to be found for every person, in order to fit their personal and family's needs.

Action needed at EU level to improve work-life balance

It is time for the EU to take action to promote an upward convergence among Member States in work-life balance solutions. It is crucial if we are to achieve real gender equality, fight in-work, child and female poverty, make better use of people's skills and talents, and take action to tackle demographic challenges in the EU. There is both the need to modernise the existing EU legislation, to address shortcomings or lack of legislation in certain areas as well as to strengthen the coordination between Member States in order to ensure a level playing field regarding the costs and benefits of reconciliation policies.

Sufficient shared leave arrangements. Lack of paid leave arrangements for fathers compared to mothers, or insufficient incentives to use them, supports gender inequality when sharing work and family care obligations between women and men, instead of addressing it. With women being the main users of family-related leave, their position in the labour market is weakened as regards employability, pay or career development, while at the same time men are not supported or motivated to take up time to spend with and care for their family. To address this, this report calls on the Commission to:

- present a proposal for a revised **Pregnant Workers (Maternity Leave) Directive 92/85/ECC**, which currently dates back to 1992 and which was adopted under the EU competence in workplace health and safety. Currently existing directive provides for 14 weeks of paid maternity leave and the protection against dismissal. Revision should

¹ Eurofound (forthcoming), 'The Gender Employment Gap – Challenges and Solutions' estimates the public finance costs (income transfers/benefits) as well as foregone income (e.g. foregone earnings, foregone taxes and social security contributions) of the gender employment gap.

aim at prolonging paid maternity leave with a diverse formula of payment to allow for accommodation of specific needs and traditions in different Member States;

- present a **Paternity Leave Directive** to ensure that men take up their share of caring responsibilities, foreseeing a minimum mandatory and non-transferable paid leave for fathers;
- present an implementation report of the **Parental Leave Directive 2010/18/EU**,
- put forward a **Carers' leave directive**, as a supplement to the provision of affordable professional care and to enable workers to care for dependents.

During the past crisis, austerity measures have resulted in a *lack of accessible, available and affordable quality care services* for children, older relatives, family members with disabilities or those with illnesses, which puts pressure on people and women in particular, to reduce their working time, opt for part-time work or interrupt their careers. Ultimately this hinders participation in the labour market, as well as progression in employment and personal development. It is therefore necessary to change the stereotypes on women and men's role and make the change to a society where women and men are equal earners and equal carers.

The crisis also caused an increase of working poor throughout Europe with people having to work more and longer, even combining several jobs, in order to earn a decent income. The impact on women has been even higher since in general they already earn less for the same work performed by men. For these reasons it is important to put in place measures that ensure adequate wages for all workers, and to close the gender pay gap.

Understanding the role of working arrangements and promoting good practices. Different working arrangements, such as telework, flexible working hours or part-time work can never be an obligation for anybody, but always have to stay a choice for the worker concerned, so it does not cause an additional burden for the personal and family situation of both women and men.

Labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance can only be created and a *quality life* can only be achieved, if people have enough time outside of work for personal development, for example through education and training, and for leisure. The Commission should therefore step up its actions towards Member States that fail to properly implement the Working-time Directive. Furthermore, Member States are encouraged to put in place measures supporting educational and training leaves and career breaks.

MINORITY OPINION

on creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance (2016/2017(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and
Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Rapporteurs: Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Tatjana Ždanoka

Minority opinion tabled by EFDD MEP Beatrix von Storch

In the eyes of the EU a woman is first and foremost a female worker. According to the 'Agenda 2020' target, 75% of women are to be integrated into the formal labour market. Freedom of choice is definitely unwelcome. However, women (of child-bearing age) are also deemed to have a role in overcoming the population crisis, namely by becoming mothers. Two irreconcilable policy approaches are competing for the same target group. The loser is the family, for the EU Treaty speaks only of workers, but not of fathers and mothers. The EU is seeking nonetheless to control family life and regulate values and norms within the family. This report procedure is intended to legitimise re-education in order to create an unlimited supply of human labour for the labour market. What matters is certainly not family and parenthood: the idea is that all women should be primed for the labour market. The EU sees parenthood as one of the biggest obstacles to a (full-time) occupation. This is reminiscent of *The ABC of Communism*, §79, 'Preparation for school life', (1920): 'Social education will make it possible for socialist society to train the coming generation most successfully, at lowest cost, and with the least expenditure of energy. ... It has enormous economic advantages. ... millions of mothers will thereby be freed for productive work ... They will be freed from the soul-destroying routine of housework, and from the endless round of petty duties which are involved in the education of children in their own homes.' I refuse to endorse thinking of that kind.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	12.7.2016
Result of final vote	+: 50 -: 4 0: 9
Members present for the final vote	Laura Agea, Daniela Aiuto, Maria Arena, Guillaume Balas, Beatriz Bacteria Basterrechea, Malin Björk, Viliija Blinkevičiūtė, Ole Christensen, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Martina Dlabajová, Lampros Fountoulis, Iratxe García Pérez, Elena Gentile, Anna Hedh, Czesław Hoc, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Agnes Jongerius, Jan Keller, Elisabeth Köstinger, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Jean Lambert, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Javi López, Morten Løkkegaard, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Jens Nilsson, Maria Noichl, Emilian Pavel, Marijana Petir, Pina Picierno, Marek Plura, Terry Reintke, Sofia Ribeiro, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Jordi Sebastià, Michaela Šojdrová, Jutta Steinruck, Yana Toom, Marita Ulvskog, Ernest Urtasun, Ángela Vallina, Beatrix von Storch, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Renate Weber, Tatjana Ždanoka, Jana Žitňanská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Georges Bach, Rosa D'Amato, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Arne Gericke, Ingeborg Gräßle, Krzysztof Hetman, Kostadinka Kuneva, Constance Le Grip, Marc Tarabella, Monika Vana, Julie Ward, Gabriele Zimmer
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Afzal Khan, Jude Kirton-Darling, Sławomir Kłosowski

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

50	+
EPP	Georges Bach, Ingeborg Gräßle, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Krzysztof Hetman, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Constance Le Grip, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Marek Plura, Sofia Ribeiro, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi
S&D	Maria Arena, Guillaume Balas, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Ole Christensen, Iratxe García Pérez, Elena Gentile, Anna Hedh, Agnes Jongerius, Jan Keller, Afzal Khan, Jude Kirton-Darling, Javi López, Jens Nilsson, Maria Noichl, Emilian Pavel, Pina Picierno, Jutta Steinruck, Marc Tarabella, Marita Ulvskog, Julie Ward
ALDE	Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Yana Toom, Renate Weber
GUE/NGL	Malin Björk, Kostadinka Kuneva, Gabriele Zimmer
VERTS/ALE	Jean Lambert, Terry Reintke, Jordi Sebastià, Ernest Urtasun, Monika Vana, Tatjana Ždanoka
EFDD	Laura Agea, Daniela Aiuto, Rosa D'Amato

4	-
EPP	Anna Maria Corazza Bildt
ALDE	Morten Løkkegaard
EFDD	Beatrix von Storch
NI	Lampros Fountoulis

9	0
EPP	Elisabeth Köstinger, Marijana Petir, Michaela Šojdrová
ECR	Arne Gericke, Czesław Hoc, Sławomir Kłosowski, Jana Žitňanská
ALDE	Martina Dlabajová
GUE/NGL	Ángela Vallina

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention