



The Social Protection Committee

2016 SPPM THEMATIC REVIEWS

Reconciliation between private and public life

➤ **Challenges highlighted during the review:**

- Social challenge: inadequate or ill-designed work-life balance policies contribute to women's underrepresentation in the labour market, and in turn women's reduced earnings, lower social security contributions and their higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, especially in old age.
 - Economic challenge: the underutilization of women's skills and competences in the labour market negatively affects Europe's competitiveness and growth.
 - Demographic challenge: Europe's ageing population is likely to have much greater long-term care needs.
 - Changing mindsets: modern families require policy rethink, including the need to encourage sharing of caring responsibilities between men and women, and take-up of occupational rights. While social norms shape policies, policies can also have a role in shaping attitudes.
- **Vision:** Reconciliation policies should target all persons with caring responsibilities and aim at a holistic approach going beyond women in general and young working mothers in particular.
- **Overarching objective for reconciliation policies:** Work towards building a parent and carer-friendly policy framework in which caring responsibilities do not represent a barrier to entering the labour market or advancing in one's career. Such a policy framework would have strong positive externalities for gender equality, reducing poverty and social exclusion and supporting employment and growth.
- **Operationalisation through a reconciliation policy mix:** There is no one-size-fits-all policy solution and Member States use different policy mixes tailored to the specific needs of working parents and carers.

Key policy parameters identified for reconciliation:

- Leaves – adequate pay and social security contributions, limited transferability between parents, flexibility (i.e., to take in pieces or part-time), bonuses/incentives for fathers;
- Flexible working arrangements – reduced working hours, flexible working schedules, telework;
- Childcare – availability, affordability, access, quality, sufficient opening hours, broad eligibility criteria;
- Long-term care – availability, provision of home-based care and not just institutional care, respite services, quality;

- **Transferability of best practices:** While all Member States have their own policy mix of reconciliation policies, there is a high potential for innovation transfer between national policy frameworks and sharing best practices in this area could have promising impacts on policy development.