



# **Peer Review on “The financial impact of maternity and paternity leave”**

**Thematic Discussion Paper**

**Undervalued parenthood – how to help mothers and fathers improve their work-life balance?**

**Czech Republic, Prague, 8 – 9 October 2018>**

**DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**



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## 1 Introduction

This paper covers existing challenges related to the reconciliation between work and private life, recent policy initiatives and the impact of measures on female and male labour market participation, pay and pension gaps in the twelve countries participating in the Peer Review: Austria (AT), Croatia (HR), Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), Germany (DE), Ireland (IE), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxemburg (LU), Slovak Republic (SK), Slovenia (SI) and Spain (ES).

Demographic trends in the EU poses a challenge – the population is ageing, and birth rates are low. Participation of women and men in the labour market is becoming more important<sup>1</sup> than before, nevertheless there still exists an unfulfilled need to better reconcile work and family life in many EU countries. The successful reconciliation of work and family life is strongly connected with the availability of flexible forms of work, the availability of financially and geographically accessible childcare (and also eldercare) facilities and clear coherence with family and social policy. Without these factors, families are facing too high costs (which are not only financial) associated with parenthood, which in turn contributes to lower birth rates and low labour participation of women.

Modern work-life balance policies should be designed with a high level of flexibility but also of social security. The labour market should be open for all and reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion, in line with the EU2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights (Pillar).

## 2 Policy context

The key framework for the values underpinning policies dealing with work-life balance are set out in the Pillar which was proclaimed by the European Commission, the European Parliament and by the Council (all Member States) at the Gothenburg Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Sweden on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The main objective of the Pillar is to contribute to social convergence within the European Union by supporting fair and well-functioning labour markets, welfare systems and the provision of essential services. The Pillar is based on three main themes:

- Equal opportunities and access to the labour market,
- Fair working conditions,
- Social protection and inclusion,<sup>2</sup>

which are elaborated in 20 key principles. Only those relevant to the subject matter of this paper are mentioned below:

<b>Gender equality</b>	<i>Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. Women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value.</i>
<b>Work-life balance</b>	<i>Parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to special leaves of absence in order to fulfil their</i>

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<sup>1</sup> Especially the issue of under-representation of women in the labour market as it is they who bear the most significant caring responsibility and are therefore more likely to remain outside the labour market (for a long time).

<sup>2</sup> Source: European Commission [online], EPSR.

	<i>caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them in a balanced way.</i>
<b>Childcare and support to children</b>	<i>Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality. Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.</i>
<b>Secure and adaptable employment</b>	<i>Regardless of the type and duration of the employment relationship, workers have the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection and training. The transition towards open-ended forms of employment shall be fostered. In accordance with legislation and collective agreements, the necessary flexibility for employers to adapt swiftly to changes in the economic context shall be ensured. (...)</i>
<b>Old age income and pensions</b>	<i>Workers and the self-employed in retirement have the right to a pension commensurate to their contributions and ensuring an adequate income. Women and men shall have equal opportunities to acquire pension rights. Everyone in old age has the right to resources that ensure living in dignity.</i>

Source: European Commission [online], EPSR in 20 principles

In April 2017, the European Commission published a proposal for a 'Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers' (as an initiative connected with the Pillar) which contains a list of policy measures (maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, carers' leave, flexible working arrangements) which are designed to support working parents and carers in achieving a balance between their work and family life. The main objective of the directive is the prevention of discrimination against parents and carers in the workplace, and support for women's participation in the labour market. Resulting from an assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of different policy options, a preferred combination of measures was identified which was presented in the draft Directive<sup>3</sup>:

- **Maternity leave:** non-legislative measures to enhance the enforcement of current legislation on dismissal protection, raise awareness on the dismissal of pregnant women and give policy guidance on facilitating successful transitions between maternity leave and employment (including breastfeeding facilities and breaks);
- **Paternity leave:** introduction of an individual entitlement of 10 working days, paid at least at sick-pay level;
- **Parental leave:** revision of currently existing entitlement in order to provide for the right for flexible uptake (i.e., part-time, piecemeal), 4 months leave non-transferable between parents, and payment of 4 months at, at least, sick-pay level;
- **Carers' leave:** introduction of an individual entitlement of 5 days per year, paid at, at least, sick-pay level;

<sup>3</sup> There is quoted an original proposal of European Commission (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1311&langId=en&moreDocuments=yes>), which was discussed on the Council working group on social questions. The general approach was adopted by EPSCO on 21st June 2018. During AT Presidency would be launched a trialog (EP, EC, Council), the original text of proposed measures has been changing during its negotiation. At this moment, we do not know final wording.

- **Flexible working arrangements:** right for parents of children up to 12 and carers to request flexibility in working hours, schedule or place of work for a set period of time, with no obligation for the employer to grant the requested change. (European Commission, 2017b)

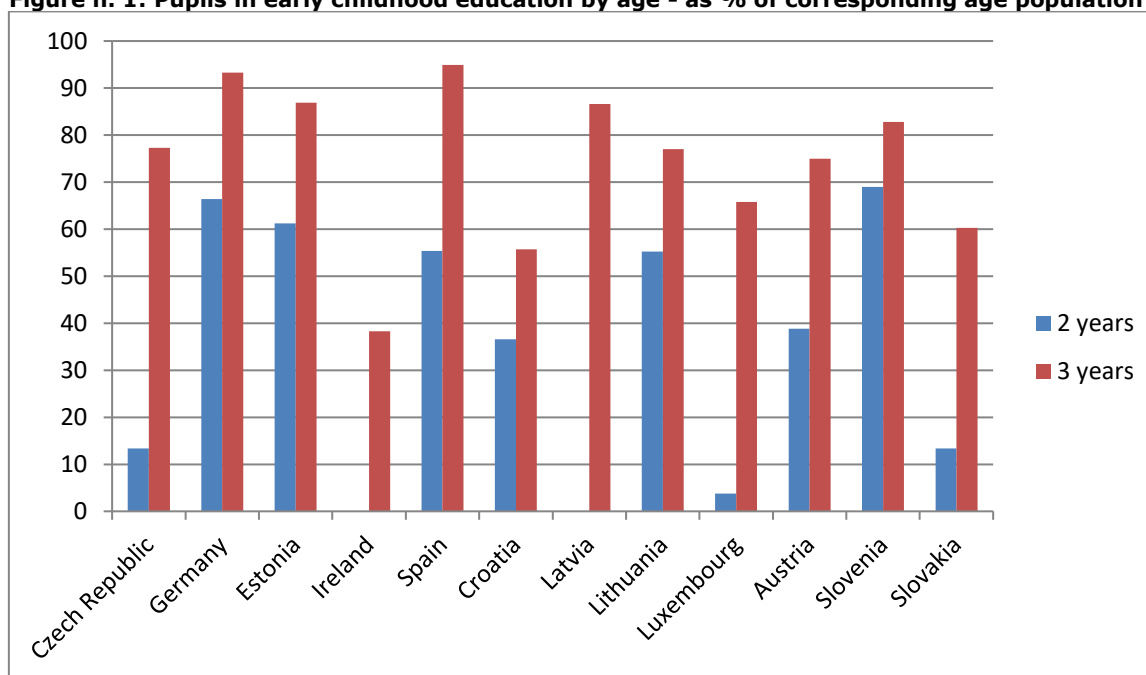
For greater clarity, we divided measures aimed at reconciliation of professional and private life into 4 categories that are elaborated in detail in following separate chapters<sup>4</sup>:

1. availability of childcare facilities;
2. availability of flexible working arrangements;
3. family and social policy tools;
4. addressing gender inequalities (in childcare, in salaries, in pensions etc.).

## 2.1 Availability of childcare facilities

The provision of affordable, accessible and high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services is very important for parents' participation in the labour market. At the Barcelona Summit in 2002, Member States agreed to increase formal childcare provision to ensure that by 2010 at least 33 % of children under three years of age and at least 90 % of children between three and the mandatory school starting age, will have access to formal childcare services.<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 shows that not all Member States had reached the Barcelona targets in 2015.

Figure n. 1: Pupils in early childhood education by age - as % of corresponding age population



Source: Eurostat (data 2015).<sup>6</sup>

This raises the question how best to enhance policy provision in this area. Three policy measures can be envisaged to respond to ensure more uptake of childcare for parents.

<sup>4</sup> In chapters 2.1, 2.2., 2.3 and 2.4 there are general information and graphs related to participating countries. In Chapters 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, there are concrete activities and measures that are implemented to improve work-life balance for families and carers.

<sup>5</sup> The Barcelona targets focus only on the accessibility. Despite the availability of childcare provision, some families may decide not to enrol their children. It is important to mention that the EU statistics are in fact not about access but about childcare enrolment.

<sup>6</sup> There are not available data for age population of 2 years old pupils for Ireland and Latvia.



Policy measure		Objectives
1	Increasing the budget to create more childcare places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce inequalities and improve equal opportunities among children at an early age.</li> <li>To promote formal childcare arrangements for vulnerable children and stimulate their social development.</li> <li>To allow parents (especially single mothers) to return to work.</li> </ul>
2	Providing guaranteed childcare places	
3	Guidelines on the quality of childcare provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To prevent barriers to the establishment of new childcare services.</li> </ul>

Source: European Commission, 2018

Various Member States have taken measures with the objective to increase the availability and use of childcare provision. However, there are still discrepancies in the level, affordability and quality of ECEC provision in Europe (as figure 1). The increased effort in the improvement of ECEC provision and quality should stay one of the EU priorities because it is strongly connected with the issue of reconciliation of work and family life and female participation in the labour market.

## 2.2 Availability of flexible working arrangements

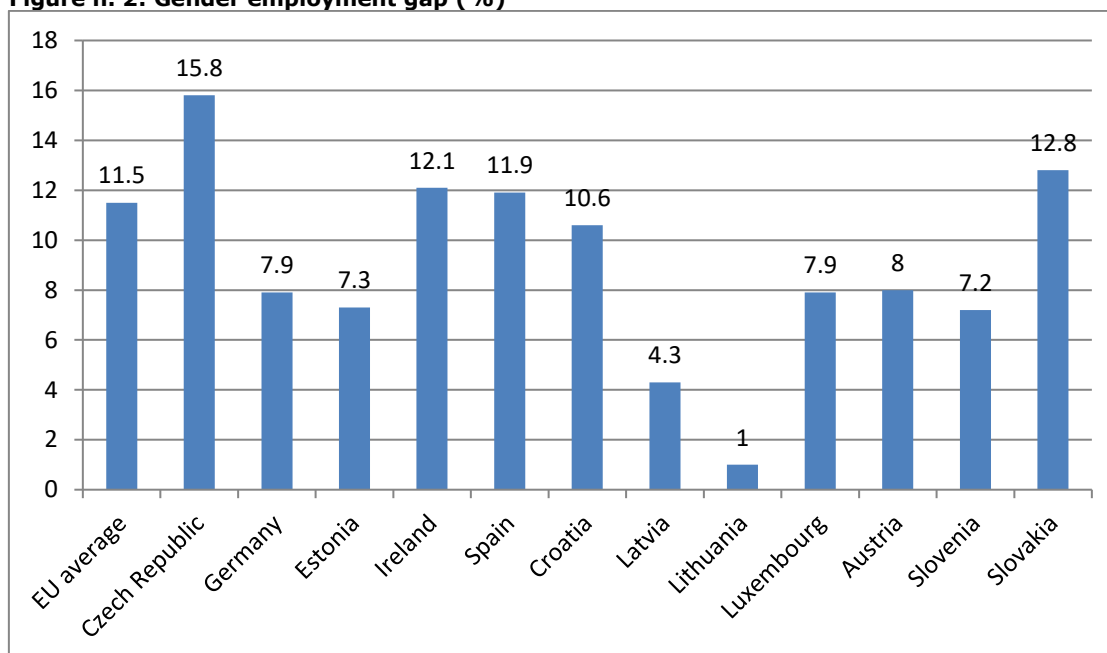
The situation on the EU labour market improved in 2016 and the first half of 2017, with progress being achieved towards the EU2020 strategy employment rate target<sup>7</sup>. However, the current employment rate of 72.2% continues to fall short of the 75% target and significant differences remain between male and female employment rates (see also Figure 2 below). Despite general positive trends in labour market, there are still challenges that are connected especially with flexible working arrangements and their availability in various Member States.

Increasing the flexibility of working time is an important element of the European employment strategy because it helps to boost productivity, enhances employee's satisfaction and employers' reputations (European Commission, 2009). Flexible working arrangements also have strong positive impacts on female employment. In addition, when working time policies take better account of a life course perspective and allow for more support and flexibility, they can enable better sharing of care responsibilities and paid work between men and women (Eurofound, 2017a). Shortened working hours (part time) are used especially by women during the parenting; the working hours of women decline in this phase, while the working hours of men increase. However, men express more and more a wish for shorter working hours in order to share care responsibilities. In terms of working hours, autonomy (in the working hours/time arrangements), most of the employees having the possibility to manage their own working time declare that it is easier for them to balance work and family life. Home-working on a regular basis is used more often by women, however this arrangement also results in a side effect – it leads to work beyond normal working hours (often unpaid) (Eurofound, 2017b). However, the fact that far more women than men work in such arrangements creates a gender imbalance which has a negative impact on women's position in the workplace and their economic independence (CEC 2006, p. 5).

<sup>7</sup> The employment rate (in population at age 20-64) has seen the largest increase after the crisis by 1 percentage point to 71.1% in 2016. This trend continued in 2017 when the employment rate reached 72.2 %. (Eurostat).

In all Member States, women are underrepresented in the labour market. We can measure it by the **gender employment gap** (Figure 2), which is the difference between the employment rates for men and women<sup>8</sup>.

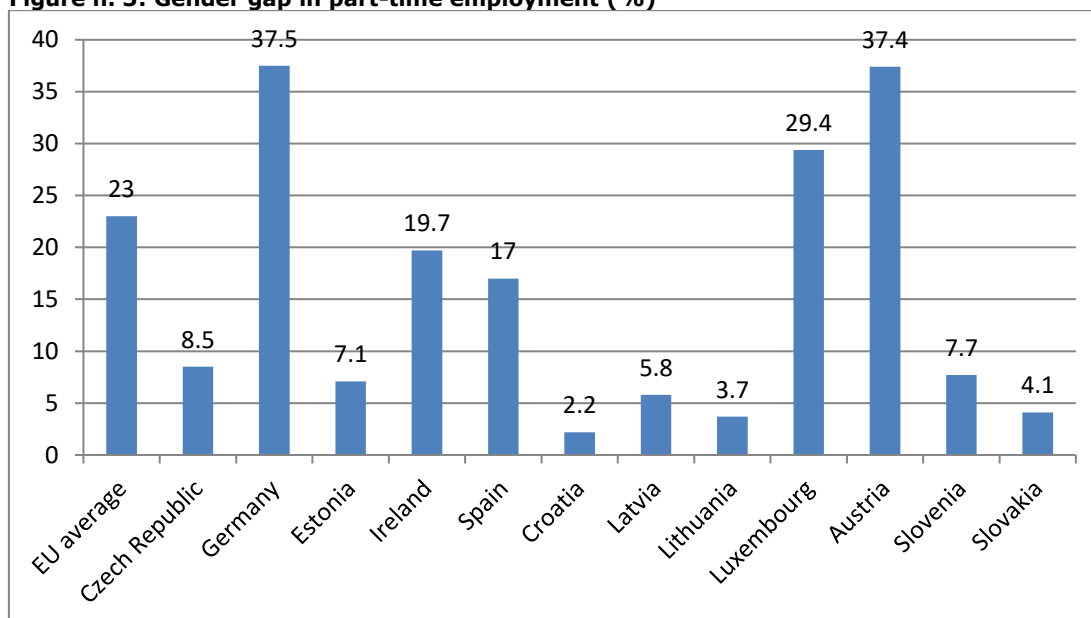
Figure n. 2: Gender employment gap (%)



Source: Eurostat, 2017.

Unequal participation in the labour market by gender is also reflected by the large **gender gap in part-time employment** (Figure 3).

Figure n. 3: Gender gap in part-time employment (%)

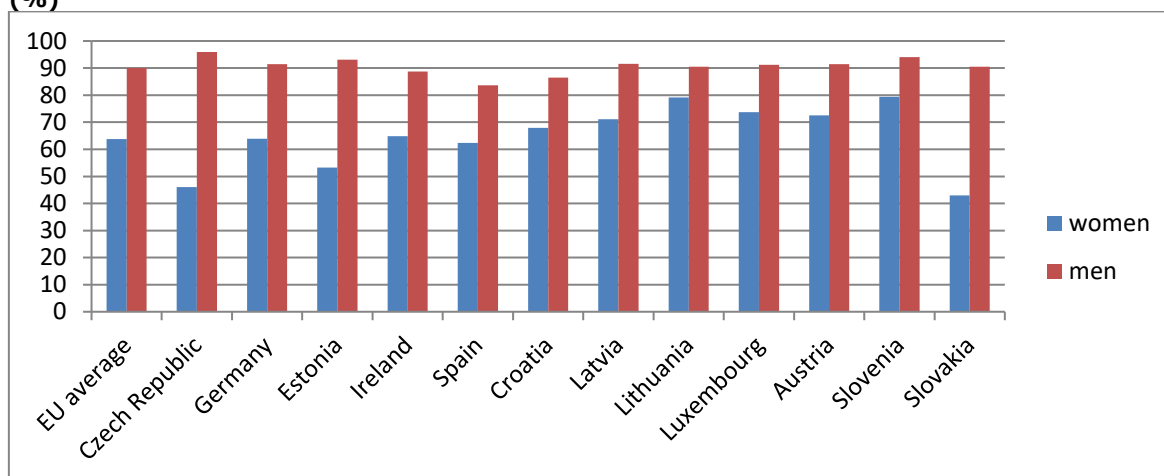


Data: Eurostat, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Rates of women employment are higher in countries with well-designed gender-balanced work-life balance measures (notably Sweden and Denmark).

Gender gaps in employment are especially acute for those with caring responsibilities, because women tend to carry these responsibilities<sup>9</sup> more often than men (Figure 4) (Joint Employment Report 2018, p. 36).

**Figure n. 4: Employment rates of men and women (25-54 years old) with children under 6 years (%)**



Source: Eurostat, 2016.

This raises the question of how best to enhance policy provision in this area. Three policy measures are envisaged for ensuring more flexible work arrangements and uptake of part-time working arrangement. While part-time working arrangement may also result in gender pay gap and gender pension gap, it also ensures a higher female labour participation. Overall, a combination of both flexible and part-time working arrangements together with the provision of childcare services can lead to better results in terms of sharing of care responsibilities and higher female employment.

Policy measure		Objectives
1	The "availability" of flexible and part-time working arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase employment rate of women and decrease gender employment gap.</li> <li>To encourage women to re-enter into the labour market while their child is still very young.</li> <li>To promote various types of flexible working arrangements for both women and men in order to meet the needs of the carers and the employers, taking into account opportunities offered by modern working patterns and technology.</li> </ul>
2	Right to flexible working time arrangements for carers	
3	Limitation of tax-benefit disincentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To tackle economic disincentives to work for second earners.<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>

Source: European Commission, 2017a

<sup>9</sup> Despite various policy initiatives, gender gap in care provision is still highly influenced by social and cultural norms. (Eurofound 2017)

<sup>10</sup> Tax-benefit disincentives can discourage second-earners (most often women), from entering the labour market or working additional hours. When coupled with high costs for childcare and long-term care services, high tax rates and reduced benefits for second earners in a household can magnify the financial disincentives for women to stay or enter into work. (European Commission, 2017a)

## 2.3 Family and social policy tools

Studies suggest that paternity, maternity and parental leave policies can have a positive impact on child development, the reconciliation of work and family life and the reduction of gender inequality in the labour market (Stratigaki, 2004).

All Member States provide some type of parental and maternity leave scheme (based on EU directive<sup>11</sup>); paternity leave scheme is applied in some of them or the inclusion of fathers in childcare is already involved in the parental leave. However, the type, duration and compensation of these leave provisions vary in each European country.

There are still some serious barriers to the uptake of parental and paternity leave by fathers across Member States. These obstacles are connected with perceptions of the social and cultural norms about gender roles in supporting a child's development, and the lack of employment support and flexibility for fathers wishing to receive leave (European Commission, 2018), but also the level of compensation. Annex n. 2 (at the end of the paper) describes the various schemes of parental leave in selected Member States. Parental leave across the Member States is transferable in general; however, there are differences in length of the leave as well as the benefit amount. In Table n. 1, various schemes of paternity leave in selected Member States are presented. There are still big differences in length of leave but also in the amount of benefit and the extent to which such leave is transferable. The option of carers' leave for workers caring for seriously ill or dependent relatives is another important measure that must be mentioned in relation to the work-life balance theme. Families (and especially women) do not only care for children but also parents or sick or disabled relatives.

**Table n. 1: Schemes of paternity leave in selected Member States.**

Member State	Paternity leave – length	Benefit in % of the previous salary
Czech Republic	7 days	70 %
Germany	- <sup>12</sup>	67 %
Estonia	10 days	100 %
Ireland	2 weeks	€ 235 per week
Spain	4 weeks	100 %
Croatia	-	-
Latvia	2 weeks	80 %
Lithuania	1 month	100 %
Luxembourg	10 days	The state pays the employee's salary from the third day of paternity leave.
Austria	28-31 days	Benefit in total amount of € 700.
Slovenia	15 days	90 %
Slovak Republic	-	-

Source: Missoc [online]

This raises the question of how best to enhance policy provision in this area. Four policy measures aim at promoting higher uptake of leaves.

<sup>11</sup> European Commission. 2017b. *Proposal for a DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU*. [online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52017PC0253&from=EN> [2018-08-20].

<sup>12</sup> In Germany, there is no explicit paternity leave but fathers can use parental leave from the birth of child until child is 36 months.

Policy measure		Objectives
1	Promoting sharing of leave entitlements and greater flexibility in leave use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To promote and improve work-life balance for both parents.</li> <li>To achieve greater gender equality and facilitate career progression of both mothers and fathers.</li> <li>To encourage more fathers to take up leave entitlements.</li> <li>To achieve equal sharing of parental responsibilities and reduce the gender pay gap.</li> <li>To improve the health of mother and child by the greater involvement of the fathers.</li> </ul>
2	New leave entitlements or its extensions for fathers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To enhance fathers' engagement in supporting the development of young children.</li> </ul>
3	Provision of greater financial security during leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To enhance financial support with childcare.</li> <li>To achieve greater balance between family and professional life and reduce the gender pay gap.</li> </ul>
4	Carers' leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To enable parents and other people with caring responsibilities to better balance their work and family lives.</li> <li>To encourage a better sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men.</li> <li>To achieve higher employment of women with positive impact on families' economic prosperity, social inclusion and health.</li> </ul>

Source: European Commission, 2017a

Recent trends and changes in parental, maternity and paternity leave have a common aim of higher level of gender equality and equal sharing of work and family obligations between both parents (see also chapter 3 below for examples). But there are still many opportunities across Europe to design and implement other policies that promote the well-being of both parents and support them in better reconciliation between work and family life.

## 2.4 Gender inequality

Gender inequality is a huge concern in the EU. Although stereotypes about men's and women's role still persist in the society, the EU has made significant progress in gender equality over the last decades. In general, gender equality strategies mostly aim at following areas:

- **Ensuring equal pay (for work of equal value)**, addressing direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of sex in remuneration systems.
- **Segregation in occupations and sectors**, when the representation of men and women varies from one economic sector to others, as well as gender segregation in education.
- **Equality in decision making**, when within the sectors and occupations, women are less likely to be promoted and to attain management responsibilities.

- **Care penalty**, when the gender stereotypes are being applied within the care and women suffer from low employment especially because of so called motherhood penalty (European Commission, 2017).

However, despite existing legislation and policy measures in these areas, gender pay and pension gaps persist in the labour market where women are still over-represented in lower paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making positions. The issue of gender inequality is very broad, but attention is focussed on the gender pay and pension gap in this paper because of the link with work-life balance measures.

#### **2.4.1 Gender pay gap**

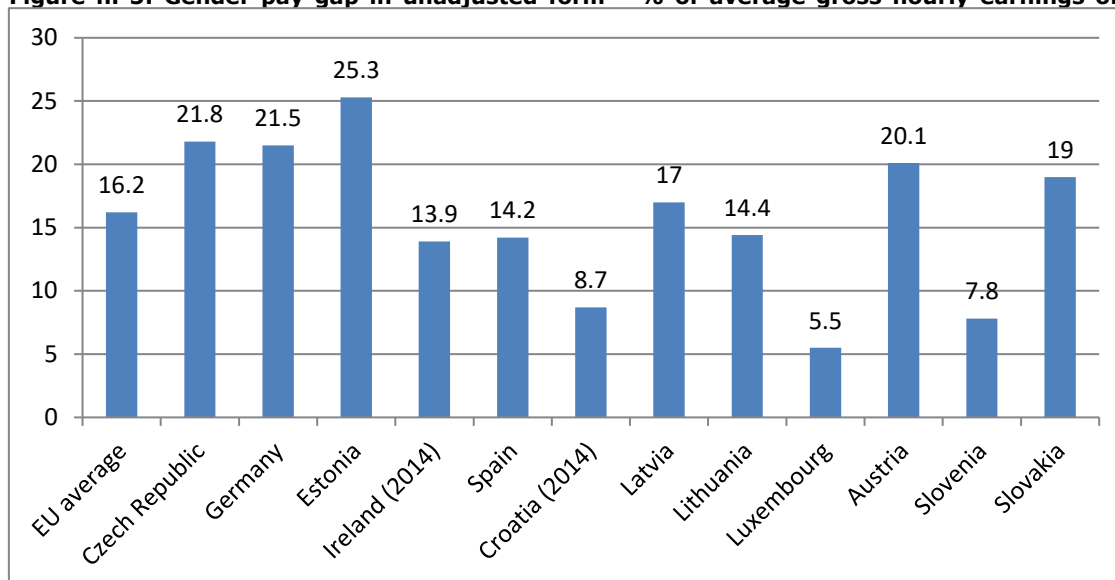
The gender pay gap is defined as the relative difference in the average gross earnings of women and men within the economy as a whole. There are significant differences between EU countries, with the gender pay gap ranging from less than 10 % in Slovenia or Luxembourg, to more than 20 % in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria, reaching 30 % in Estonia. The gender pay gap is not an indicator of the overall inequality between women and men – it must be interpreted with other indicators linked to the labour market, especially those that reflect the different working patterns of women. In countries where the female employment rate is low, the pay gap is lower than average. On the other hand, a high pay gap is characteristic for a labour market that is highly segregated when women are more concentrated in a restricted number of sectors and/or professions or in which a significant proportion of women work part-time (European Commission, online<sup>13</sup>). We can see from the data that the gender pay gap is smaller in the public sector and, finally, the pay gap is larger for married employees and significantly smaller among singles (Plantenga and Remery, 2006).

As indicated above, the size of gender pay gap is linked to the employment rate of women in a particular country. The gender pay gap is higher in countries with higher employment rates because the sectoral and occupation segregation experienced by women has a more significant impact on the gender pay gap as the number of women in the labour market increases. Figure n. 5 gives an overview of the gender pay gap throughout the Member States. The highest gender pay gap is in Estonia (with the highest employment rate of women – 75 %) and on the other hand, Luxembourg has the lowest one; although it is not the state with the lowest employment rate of women (68 %).

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<sup>13</sup> European Commission, the gender pay gap situation in the EU [online]. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu_en).

Figure n. 5: Gender pay gap in unadjusted form - % of average gross hourly earnings of men



Source: Eurostat (data 2016)

The European Commission has adopted an Action Plan that consists of a broad and coherent set of activities to tackle the gender pay gap, aimed at being mutually reinforcing (Annex n. 1).<sup>14</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Gender pension gap

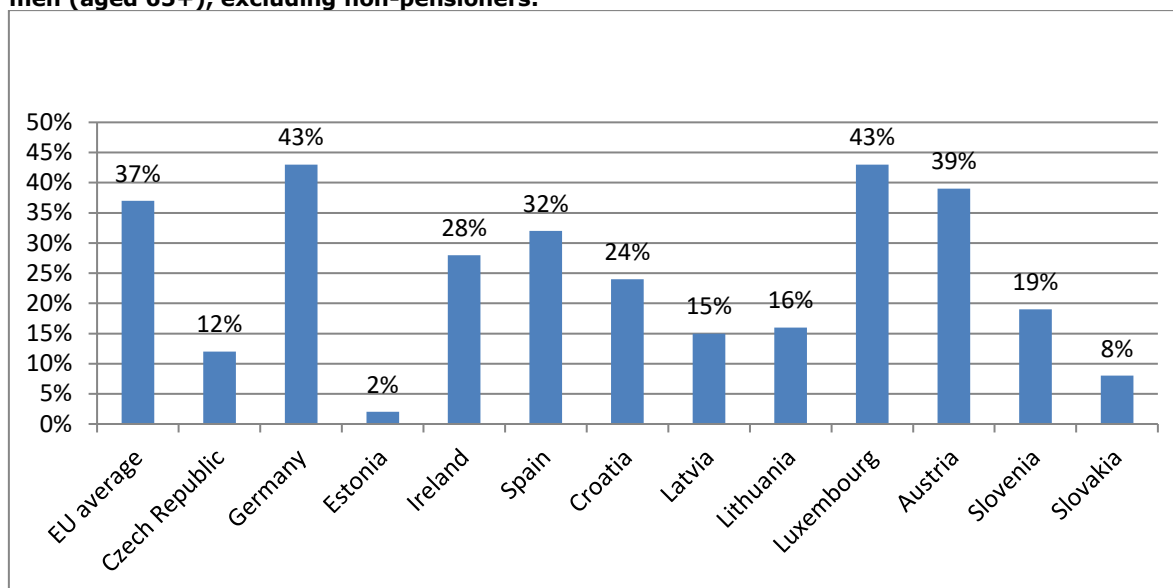
Old age pensions represent a significant part of social protection expenditure in all EU Member States, adding up to around 39 % of total social protection expenditure. (European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), p. 7). In the context of current demographic trends (not least population ageing), it is important to focus not only to ensure the sustainability of systems of social protection, but also their fairness and equal access for the whole population (EIGE, p. 8).

The gender gap in pensions varies significantly between Member States – while some countries show signs of progress, the situation has worsened in others. Pension benefits in the EU are based on gainful activity over the life course. As women’s life courses often include periods of unpaid care work, they are more likely to facing disadvantage (Frericks and Maier, 2008). Increasing women’s participation in the labour market has been identified as a way to reduce women’s risk of old age poverty, caused by insufficient pension benefits (Zaidi, Gasior and Zólyomi, 2010).

The following figure gives an overview of the gender gap in pensions across the Member States. The highest gender gap in pensions can be found in Germany and Luxembourg, while the lowest one is evident in Estonia and Slovakia. The gender pension gap is influenced especially by the historical conditions in labour market or approach to childcare provision of a particular Member State.

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, Gender equality [online].

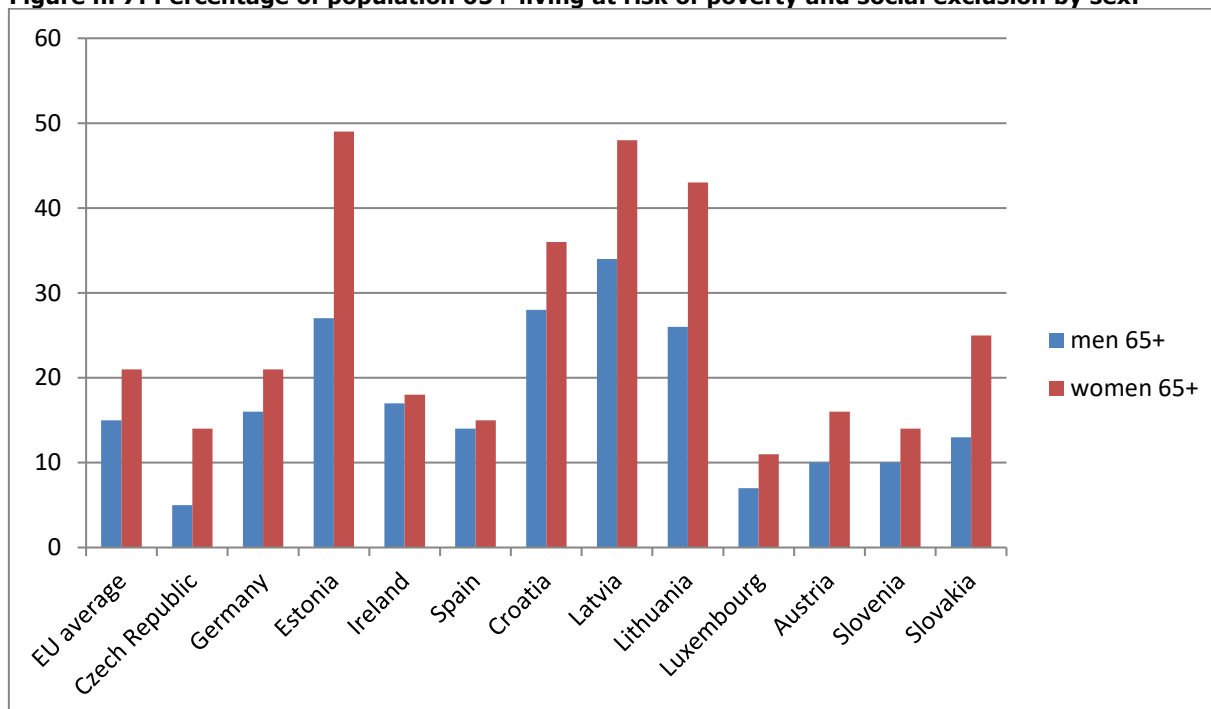
**Figure n. 6: Gender gap in pensions measures the difference in pensions between women and men (aged 65+), excluding non-pensioners.**



Source: Eurostat, SILC in European Commission, 2018 (2018 report on equality between women and men in the EU, data from 2016).<sup>15</sup>

Figure n. 7 describes the situation of women and men at risk of poverty across the Member States. Women are generally more vulnerable to poverty risk in old age. This also results from the greater likelihood for women to face periods of unemployment and/or inactivity due to child care.

**Figure n. 7: Percentage of population 65+ living at risk of poverty and social exclusion by sex.**



Source: Eurostat, 2016

<sup>15</sup> There are no publicly available data for gender pension gap provided by Eurostat. For this reason, we use the Report by European Commission.



Reducing the gender gap in pensions can be addressed only by an assessment of the current situation in relation to the distribution of pension benefits and pension's distribution and an examination of inequalities between women and men throughout their working lives.

This raises the question of how best to enhance policy provision in this area. Four policy measures aim at addressing the gender pay gap and gender pension gap.

Policy measure		Objectives
1	EU Treaty and directives about men's and women's equality <sup>16</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ensure equal pay for work of equal value.</li> <li>- To enhance the transparency of pay systems.</li> </ul>
2	EU recommendation about the transparency of remuneration process	
3	Country specific recommendations/Commission Recommendations	
4	Focus on the gender segregation in education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To reduce occupational segregation.</li> </ul>

Source: European Commission, 2017c

### 3 National approaches

A range of EU Directives (and Treaty provisions) provide a common floor of rights in relation to gender equality and work-life balance. But each country has its own historical, cultural, political and economic conditions and development which lead to differences in national approaches to social and family policy.

The following chapter follows the same structure as above, dividing the presentation of key measures into four categories. In selecting examples, preference has been given to measures considered to be best practice<sup>17</sup> by the Member State implementing them. As the host country for the peer review we have also mentioned measures applied in the Czech Republic.

#### 3.1 Availability of childcare facilities

In this category, three main policy initiatives were identified:

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<sup>16</sup> Examples of EU directives and treaties about gender equality: Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council 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/EEC; 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 (recast); Commission Staff Working Document – Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019; Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, part three: Union Policies and International Actions, title X: Social Policy, article 157; Communication from the Commission. Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men; Women's Charter Declaration by the European Commission on the occasion of the 2010 International Women's Day in commemoration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of a Declaration and Platform for Action at the Beijing UN World Conference on Women and of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>17</sup> In chapter 3.2 (Availability of flexible working arrangements) we have mentioned measures of member states with insufficient policy in this area, because most of the Member States already have appropriate measures.

- Increase the available budget to create more childcare places
  - Since 2008, the German government has introduced four investment programmes to improve the child care system. Since August 2013, parents have the legal right to receive a childcare place for all their children (once they reach 1 year old). In 2017, **Germany** increased its budget for childcare facilities by EUR 1.126 billion with the aim of creating 100 000 additional childcare places by 2020 thanks to funding for the fourth and most recent programme (2017–2020).<sup>18</sup>
  - In 2014, the Children Groups' Law came into force in the **Czech Republic** with the support of the European Social Funding for the establishment of these facilities. Two years later, there were ESF calls created for newly created micro-nurseries. Currently children's groups are provided in more than 780 facilities that can place over 11 000 of children<sup>19</sup>. Micro-nurseries are part of a specific project realized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for children under the age of four. This project is still in the testing period and its legal framework is being prepared. Currently there are 72 facilities all over the Czech Republic.
- Provision of guaranteed childcare places
  - **The Czech Republic** has implemented a measure to guarantee childcare places for children over three in public kindergartens. Since 2017, there are guaranteed places for children aged four and over, since September 2018 there are guaranteed places for children aged three and over in public kindergartens.
- Guidelines on the quality of childcare provision
  - In September 2017, the **Czech** government approved a new Family Policy Strategy which includes a number of concrete measures for childcare (free pre-primary education, implementation of quality standards, and unification and simplification of hygiene requirements).<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2 Availability of flexible working arrangements

In this category, three main policy initiatives were identified:

- **The extension of flexible and part-time work arrangement** (telework, flexitime, reduced working hours or job sharing):
  - In **Slovakia**, there is a new legislative framework for job-sharing including its definition, substitutability and responsibility of workers, and its termination.
  - In **Germany**, there is also a new legislative framework for job sharing.
- **Right to flexible working time arrangements for carers** - The majority of Member States provide flexible working time arrangements for carers of dependent persons.
  - In **Lithuania** flexible working hours apply when the carer of a disabled child is a single parent.
  - In **Ireland**, flexible arrangements are restricted or depend completely on the employer's discretion and carer's leave cannot be taken on a part-time basis.
  - On the contrary, in **Austria** parents with children are entitled to work part-time until the child's seventh birthday (or school entry at a later date) if they are working in companies with more than 20 employees and if they have been continuously employed with their present employer for at least three years.

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<sup>18</sup> European Commission [online], Country profiles – Germany.

<sup>19</sup> Children attending the children's group are mostly younger than three years (16 % of children up to the age of two, 48 % of children up to the age of 3, 31 % of children up to the age of five and 5 % of pre-school children). Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs estimates that children's groups have affected approximately eight thousand of families so far.

<sup>20</sup> European Commission [online], Country profiles – the Czech Republic.

Parents working in companies with less than 20 employees may enter into an agreement on part-time work with the employer until the child's fourth birthday (European Commission, 2016).

- Limitation of tax-benefit disincentives
  - In the **Czech Republic**, there is an option to use tax-benefit for the wife or husband<sup>21</sup> whose income is up to EUR 2 635 in tax period. Unfortunately, this policy does not contribute to increasing women's employment rate.

### 3.3 Family and social policy tools

In this category, four main policy initiatives were identified:

- **Promotion sharing of leave entitlements and more flexibility in the use of leave**
  - In 2017, the **Estonian** government introduced the Family Benefits Act, covering aspects related to parental leave<sup>22</sup> - parents have 515 days of leave per child to be used over a period of 3 years. From July 2020, fathers will receive an additional 30 days of parental benefits. The Family Benefits Act also allows parents to work during parental leave without losing their entitlement to the parental leave benefit.
  - From March 2017, parents in **Austria** can use the option of a so-called 'partner bonus' of EUR 500 for each of them, in case both parents equally share the leave provision and allowance.
  - Since 2014, parents in **Latvia** are entitled to choose either to receive leave until the child is 12 months old or to take leave until the child is 18 months old. Parents have the right to receive parental benefits and work at the same time.
  - According to the **Croatian** legislative framework, maternity leave lasts until the child is 6 months old, and it can be transferred to the father after the obligatory period of 28 days before and 70 days after the birth. Also, maternity allowance can be transferred to fathers.
  - In the **Czech Republic**, maternity leave entitlements can be transferred from a child's mother to a father.<sup>23</sup>
- **New leave entitlements or its extensions for fathers**
  - Since 2018, fathers in **Slovenia** are entitled to 30 days of paid paternity leave and each parent to 130 days of parental leave.<sup>24</sup>
  - Since 2017, employed fathers in **Spain** are entitled to four weeks of paternity leave during or after maternity leave on a full- or part-time basis.<sup>25</sup>
  - Since February 2018, fathers in **the Czech Republic** have an entitlement of seven days' paternity benefit within first six weeks after birth, adoption or fostering of a child, and to claim up to 70 % of their daily assessment base.
  - In **Austria**, new measure entitled 'family time bonus' gives additional financial support (bonus of EUR 22.60 daily) to working fathers who intensively and

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<sup>21</sup> The tax-benefit on wife or husband is applied for married couples, where one of the partners stays at home and takes care of a child or another family member and the second one has a job. The partner carrying out the gainful activity can then deduct the income tax.

<sup>22</sup> These changes are planned to be implemented gradually from 2018 to 2020 with the aim to encourage more fathers to take up leave entitlements and improve the work and family life balance in the country.

<sup>23</sup> According to Czech legislation, maternity leave equates to 28 weeks which include 6–8 weeks before and 20–22 weeks after the child birth. The provision can be shared with father after the completion of the sixth week.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission [online], Country profiles – Slovenia

<sup>25</sup> And recent data provided by the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security informed that the number of fathers receiving paternity leave (196 873) almost reached the numbers of mothers taking maternity leave (200 618).

exclusively take care of their families and interrupt their job, directly after the birth of their child, for at least 28 days.

- In **Slovakia**, the right to receive maternity leave benefits was extended to fathers.<sup>26</sup>
- From January 2018, the paternity leave has been extended from two to ten working days in **Luxembourg**.<sup>27</sup>
- **Provision of greater financial security during leave**
  - From May 2016, the minimum level of maternity leave benefit was increased in **Slovakia**. Benefit provided to mothers during maternity leave has been increased from a prior level of 65 % to 75 % of the base salary (with a monthly ceiling of one and a half times the national average monthly wage).
  - In **Spain**, mothers who are eligible to receive maternity benefit can get 100 % of their previous earnings during maternity leave, which in 2017 was up to a maximum of EUR 3 751.20.<sup>28</sup>
- **Carer's leave**
  - From 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018, there is long-term caregiving allowance for insured persons providing domestic care for their relatives or persons living in the same household in **the Czech Republic**. It is connected with the benefit in amount of 60 % of the daily assessment base which can be paid to carer up to 90 days.
  - In **Germany**, there is an option of unpaid carer's leave for close relative up to 6 months (EK 2006).
  - **Slovenia** does not provide a carer's leave; however, there exists a support of persons intending to take care of a close person. The carer must have the same permanent residence as the disabled person or it must be a family member of such person. A person can only become a carer if they have left employment or have declared themselves unemployed with the intention of becoming carer, as well as persons who are part-time employed. The carer is entitled to EUR 734.15 gross per month for loss of earnings.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.4 Gender inequality

This chapter is divided into two sub-themes: Gender Pay and Pension Gap. Information here is limited to more general activities or areas that are closely linked to this subject rather than specific policy measures.

- **Gender Pay Gap**

- In the **Czech Republic**, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs manages a project (called "22 % k rovnosti – 22 % to Equality") aiming at the equalization of men's and women's remuneration. A number of measures have already been implemented as part of the project, e.g. government institutions' methodical materials<sup>30</sup>, analytical tool Logib<sup>31</sup>, online wages calculator, detailed analysis of the remuneration process or education level.

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<sup>26</sup> As a result, the amount of fathers receiving maternity leave benefits has increased from 837 in 2016 to 1,767 in 2017. This represents 7 % of all recipients. (European Commission, 2018)

<sup>27</sup> European Commission [online], Country profiles – Luxembourg

<sup>28</sup> Additionally, mothers who do not meet the eligibility criteria for maternity benefits, in 2017 received a flat-rate benefit of €537.84 per month or €17.93 per day, for 42 calendar days. In addition, the non-contributory benefit is extended to a total of 56 calendar days for lone mothers, large families, multiple births and disabled children.

<sup>29</sup> European Commission [online], Country profiles – Slovenia

<sup>30</sup> These methodical materials give recommendations for governmental institutions (The Department of Employment or State Labour Inspection Office) in equal remuneration process evaluation.

<sup>31</sup> Logib is software enabling the employers' organizations to control the equality in remuneration process without sharing personal data of their employees.

- In **Germany** in 2018, a Transparency of Remuneration Act has been implemented enabling, in general, employees to gather information about the average remuneration in order to prevent remuneration inequalities based on sex. The right to be informed includes only the remuneration process in companies with more than 200 workers, only one employer and the same work performances can be compared. There are no sanctions set for employers applying unequal pay in the Act, the only sanction may be the damage to reputation and wage payment duty following the corresponding decision of the court.<sup>32</sup>
- Since 2017, **Estonia** has implemented gender aspects into the basic career counselling system. The Ministry of Social Affairs has prepared training course for counsellors working with young people. The Ministry has also created the first "family friendly employer" label for employers involving gender equality and supporting the work-life balance<sup>33</sup>.
- **Gender Pension Gap** is interconnected with all mentioned policies and measures but there are two key areas in tackling gender gap in pensions:
  - Combatting gender segregation in the labour market by tackling inequalities in labour force participation and working time.
  - Promoting the availability, affordability and quality of (child) care facilities and services is essential.<sup>34</sup>

## 4 Conclusions

This paper describes the issue of work-life balance and the impact of parenthood on men and women. The presentation of policy approaches was divided into 4 categories (availability of childcare facilities, availability of flexible working arrangements, family and social policy tools, addressing gender inequalities) that were described using available data.

In a modern 'liquid' society (Zygmund, 2000), modern work-life balance policies should be designed with a high level of flexibility but also of social security, with the aim of reducing the risk of poverty and exclusion for all and also to eliminate gender inequalities in line with the EU2020 Strategy and with the principles of the Pillar.

Despite existing EU-level measures and those in Member States, the challenges persist, and the current measures in place are not capable to adequately address the problem. That is the reason why the EU has stipulated the formulation of enhanced work-life balance policies as one of the main priorities in future.

The whole theme of the impact of maternity and paternity is strongly connected to women's low levels of labour market participation, the unequal distribution of caring responsibilities between parents (and carers) and to the lack of effective possibilities for parents to balance those responsibilities with the demands of their working lives. These issues are intensely influenced by cultural values and background which are different in Member States. Also, the political will and public opinion varies in EU countries. So, the EU should continue to provide policy guidance and encourage Member States to implement measures in areas linked to work-life balance.

## 5 Priority topics for discussion:

- **Flexibility vs. security**
  - How to deal with the problem that increasing flexibility (in work arrangements) is often connected with lower level of social security?

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<sup>32</sup> European Commission, 2018b.

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, 2018b.

<sup>34</sup> EIGE, 2015. Research gap in pensions in EU.

- **Childcare facilities**

- How to persuade parents (or all society) that childcare facilities (kindergartens, nurseries) are suitable for children under 3 years old?<sup>35</sup>

- **Gender equality**

- How to support equal distribution of caring responsibilities in countries where traditional division of roles (man as breadwinner, woman as carer) remains?
- How to soften consequences of gender gap in pensions?

- **Life cycle**

- How to design policies with the emphasis on different needs in different life cycles of people?

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<sup>35</sup> In Post-communist countries, there still persists the idea that children under 3 years have to stay with mothers or there is a high risk of children's impaired mental development in other cases.

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## 7 Annexes

### Annex n. 1: The Action Plan on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap

The Action Plan prioritizes 8 areas for action:

1. Improving the application of the equal pay principle
2. Combating segregation in occupations and sectors
3. Breaking the ceiling: initiatives to combat vertical segregation
4. Tackling the care penalty
5. Better valorizing women's skills, efforts and responsibilities
6. Fighting the fog: unveiling inequalities and stereotypes
7. Alerting and informing about the gender pay gap
8. Lending hands: enhancing partnerships to tackle the gender pay gap

Source: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0678>

### Annex n. 2: Schemes of parental leave in selected Member States

Member State	Parental leave – length	Payment	Involvement of fathers
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Parental leave can be taken for max. 4 years.	The parent can flexibly choose the benefit duration (total amount of EUR 8 500).	If both parents are employees, each of them is entitled to take parental leave, but only one is entitled to the allowance.
<b>Germany</b>	Parental allowance can be claimed during the first 14 months after the birth of a child. Parental Allowance Plus can be obtained during the first 28 months after the birth of a child.	Approximately 65 % of previous income (parental allowance is at least EUR 300 and at most EUR 1.800, parental allowance plus is at least EUR 150 and at most EUR 900 a month)	Parental leave is individually available to each parent. It cannot be split or transferred between parents.
<b>Estonia</b>	Parental leave can be taken until the child reaches the age of 3 years.	100% of the reference wage for the period of 435 days (minimum EUR 500 and maximum EUR 3 000 per month).	Periods of leave can be shared between parents.
<b>Ireland</b>	18 weeks to be taken before the child's 8th birthday.	Parental leave is unpaid.	Parents can be on leave at the same time.
<b>Spain</b>	Parental leave can be taken until each child reaches 3 years.	Parental leave is unpaid and the period is treated as contributory.	Parental leave is an individual right of workers, men or women.
<b>Croatia</b>	Parental leave can be taken for 4	120% of the insurance base of	Leave is an individual

	months per parent and per child until the child is 8 years old.	the previous income (with a ceiling of EUR 530 per month for the first 6 months and 70% thereafter).	entitlement and 2 months can be transferred to the other parent if both parents agree.
<b>Latvia</b>	Parental leave can be taken for 1 or 1.5 years.	EUR 170 per month for children up to 1.5 years and EUR 43 per month for children between 1.5 and 2 years of age.	Leave is a family entitlement: the benefit is granted to one of the parents but the periods of leave may be shared between parents. No period is reserved for use by one or other of the parents.
<b>Lithuania</b>	Parental leave can be taken until each child reaches 2 years.	Until the child is 1 year old, the amount of the allowance is 100% of the beneficiary's Compensatory Wage. Until the child turns 2, the allowance is 70% up until the child's 1st birthday and 40% up until the child's 2nd birthday.	Parental leave is not transferable.
<b>Luxembourg</b>	Parental leave can be claimed for 4 or 6 months.	5/3 of the minimum social wage (EUR 3 300 per month) and cannot be less than the minimum social wage (EUR 2 000 per month).	Parental leave is a personal right for each parent, which cannot be shared or transferred between parents.
<b>Austria</b>	Parental leave can be taken until each child reaches 2 years.	The parent can flexibly choose the benefit duration (365 to 851 days). The benefit for the shortest option is EUR 34 per day and EUR 15 for the longest option.	Leave can be shared twice between the parents (with a minimum duration of at least two months).
<b>Slovenia</b>	Parental leave can be taken for 130 calendar days per parent.	90% of the basis from which the contributions for parental protection have been calculated in 12 consecutive months,	100 days can be transferred from the mother to the father (30 days are the mother's exclusive right).

		Parental allowance is EUR 250 per month.	
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	Parental leave can be taken until each child reaches 3 years.	EUR 215 per month	Parental leave is an individual entitlement. Parents can take parental leave at the same time.

Source: MISSOC [online]. Available at:



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