



Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights – Commission adopts first concrete initiatives*

Brussels, 26 April 2017

Making the European Pillar of Social Rights a reality for citizens is a joint responsibility.

[Work-Life Balance](#)

While most of the tools to deliver on the Pillar are in the hands of Member States, as well as social partners and civil society, the European Union institutions – and the European Commission in particular – can help by setting the framework and [giving the direction](#). In addition to proposing the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Commission today also puts forward a number of legislative and non-legislative initiatives related to work-life balance, the information of workers, access to social protection and working time.

First and foremost, this work carried out under the leadership of Vice-President Dombrovskis and First-Vice President Timmermans includes a proposal aimed at improving the conditions for working parents and carers to combine their family lives and professional careers.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"Living in the 21st century means we need a 21st Century attitude towards life and work, towards women and men. Our daughters and sons shouldn't have to fulfil the role models of our grandparents. There is no one 'right' balance. It is about choice, and it is high time we give all people a real choice in how they want to shape their lives, rearing their children, pursuing a career, caring for their elders, living their lives."*

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, commented: *"Increasing women's participation on the labour market is not only a question of fairness, it also presents a triple win. It is good for working parents and carers who will enjoy a better balance between their private and professional lives, it's good for businesses which will profit from attracting and keeping talent, and good for Member States that lose out €370 billion every year due to the gender employment gap today."*

"Balancing work and family life is a daily challenge for women and men all over Europe," said Věra **Jourová**, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality. *"It is our duty to deliver the right framework so that people can make their own choice. Our new proposal aims to strengthen the rights and improve the conditions for working parents and carers to reconcile work and family responsibilities. It will give more flexibility and better protection to mothers, fathers and carers, whether they wish to take time off caring for their children, benefit from flexible working arrangements or wish to go back to work."*

The proposal on **work-life balance** sets a number of new or higher minimum standards for parental, paternity and carer's leave. It includes the new right for fathers to take at least 10 working days off around the birth of a child. The proposal also envisages that the existing right to four months' parental leave can be taken for children up to 12 years of age, compared to just a non-binding guideline on the age of 8 years today. Parental leave also becomes an individual right for mothers and fathers without a transfer of the four months to the other parent, a strong incentive for men to also make use of this possibility. For the first time a carer's leave of five days per year will be introduced, in case of sickness of a direct relative. All of these family related leave arrangements will be compensated at least at the level of sick pay. The proposal will also give parents of children up to 12 years old and carers the right to request flexible working arrangements, like reduced or flexible working hours or flexibility on the place of work. It takes account of the needs of small and medium-sized undertakings and seeks to make sure that they are not disproportionately affected.

The proposed measures are intended in particular to increase possibilities for men to take up parental and caring responsibilities. This will benefit children and help increase women's participation in the labour market, thereby reducing the difference between men and women in employment which stood in 2015 still at 11.6%p and increases even to 30% when families have young children under the age of 6. This is one of the elements leading to the gender pay (16.3%) and pension gap (40%). Member States may entrust social partners with the implementation of this Directive as long as the results sought under this directive are guaranteed.

In addition to this legislative proposal, the Commission also launches today two social partner consultations, reflecting the importance of the contribution of social partners in delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and in line with their role under the Treaties. The first consultation of the social partners concerns modernising the **rules on labour contracts**. The Written Statement Directive (91/533/EEC) gives employees starting a new job the right to be notified in writing of the essential aspects of their employment relationship. This right remains highly relevant, but may have to be adjusted in the light of new realities and practices on the labour markets to ensure fair working conditions also in a changing world of work. Therefore the Commission wishes to open a debate on minimum safeguards every worker, including those working in non-standard employment, would deserve. The Commission intends to propose a revision of this directive by the end of the year.

The Commission is also starting a consultation of social partners on **access to social protection**, to define possible new rules in this area. Rights and obligations associated to social protection have been developed over time primarily for workers employed on standard contracts, whereas this has been insufficiently developed for people in self-employment and non-standard employment. Today's more flexible working arrangements provide new job opportunities especially for the young but can potentially give rise to new precariousness and inequalities. The Commission wants to close the gaps and explore ways to ensure that everyone who works has access to social protection coverage and employment services on the basis of their contributions.

Finally, the Commission adopted today a clarification of the **Working Time Directive**, providing guidance on how to interpret various aspects of this directive in line with a growing body of case law. This will help Member States implement the *acquis* correctly and avoid further infringements.

Background

Delivering on the principles and rights defined under the European Pillar of Social Rights is a joint responsibility of the EU institutions, Member States, social partners and other stakeholders. The European Commission will help to set the framework and lead the way on how to implement the Pillar, in full respect of Member States' competences and taking into account the diversity of situations across Member States and today's and tomorrow's realities. What each of the principles of the Pillar means in practice, also compared to the "*acquis*", and whether the Union has a legal competence to act, is further explained in an accompanying document.

The legislative and non-legislative initiatives presented today are illustrative of both the substance of the issues to be tackled and the ways of doing inspired by the Pillar. A number of principles and rights included in the Pillar will require further legislative initiatives to become effective, as exemplified by the proposed directive on work-life balance. Where needed, existing EU law will be updated, complemented and better enforced, as exemplified by the clarification on the Working Time Directive. In all cases, the Commission will seek wide consultation and participation of all stakeholders, and the social partners play a particular role, as exemplified by the two new consultations.

All of the initiatives adopted today are part of the [2017 Commission work programme](#). Further initiatives at EU level may be discussed in the context of the Commission's annual work programme.

For more information

[MEMO: Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights – Questions and Answers](#)

[Factsheet: A NEW START TO SUPPORT WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS](#)

[Communication: An Initiative to Support Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers](#)

[Directive on Work-Life Balance](#)

[Commission's statement accompanying the Commission 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](#)

[Further information on the 20 principles and rights under the European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

[First phase consultation of Social Partners under Article 154 TFEU on a possible revision of the Written Statement Directive \(Directive 91/533/EEC\) in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights – C\(2017\) 2611](#)

[SWD: REFIT Evaluation of the 'Written Statement Directive' \(Directive 91/533/EEC\) – C\(2017\) 2611](#)

[First phase consultation of Social Partners under Article 154 TFEU on a possible action addressing the challenges of access to social protection for people in all forms of employment in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights – C\(2017\) 2610](#)

[Working Time Directive: Interpretative Communication on Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of](#)

[working time – C\(2017\) 2601](#)

[Investing in Children Recommendation - SWD on implementation: Commission Staff Working Document - Taking stock of the 2013 Recommendation on 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage'](#)

[Active Inclusion Recommendation - SWD on implementation: Commission Staff Working Document on the implementation of the 2008 Commission Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market](#)

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Follow Marianne Thyssen on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), #SocialRights

Follow Vera Jourovà on [Twitter](#)

* Updated on 27/04/2017

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