

Work-life balance: New leave rules for family care ^[1]

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The work-life balance of working families contributes to increasing the inclusiveness of the labour market and to raising individuals' quality of life. It is a comprehensive measure that not only addresses women's underrepresentation on the labour market and the insufficient support available for their career advancement, but also their unequal treatment and opportunities in the labour market. Furthermore, it encourages the strengthening of men's roles as carers in the family, thereby promoting non-discrimination and fostering gender equality. The gender employment gap in the labour market is most acute for parents and people with other caring responsibilities. It overwhelmingly affects women, who are also far more likely to work part-time due to caring responsibilities. This contributes substantially to the gender pay gap, which risks turning into a gender pension gap, rendering women more vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty. In 2015, following the withdrawal of the 2008 proposal to amend the 1992 Maternity Leave Directive, the European Commission committed to replacing that proposal with a work-life balance package, branded the 'New Start Initiative'. The initiative is also strongly linked to the implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, particularly those focusing on gender equality, equal opportunities, worklife balance, childcare and support to children, and long-term care.

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