

New rights to improve work-life balance in the EU enter into application today ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

As of today, all Member States must apply EU-wide rules to improve work-life balance for parents and carers adopted in 2019. These rules set out minimum standards for paternity, parental and carers' leave and establish additional rights, such as the right to request flexible working arrangements, which will help people develop their careers and family life without having to sacrifice either. These rights, which come in addition to existing maternity leave rights, were achieved under the European Pillar of Social Rights and is a key milestone towards building a Union of Equality.

Work-life balance for parents and carers

The Directive on work-life balance aims to both increase (i) the participation of women in the labour market and (ii) the take-up of family-related leave and flexible working arrangements. Overall, women's employment rate in the EU is 10.8 percentage points lower than men's. Moreover, only 68% of women with care responsibilities work compared to 81% of men with the same duties. The Directive allows workers leave to care for relatives who need support and overall means that parents and carers are able to reconcile professional and private lives.

- **Paternity leave:** Working fathers are entitled to at least 10 working days of paternity leave around the time of birth of the child. Paternity leave must be compensated at least at the level of sick pay;
- **Parental leave:** Each parent is entitled to at least four months of parental leave, of which two months is paid and non-transferable. Parents can request to take their leave in a flexible form, either full-time, part-time, or in segments;
- **Carers' leave:** All workers providing personal care or support to a relative or person living in the same household have the right to at least five working days of carers' leave per year;
- **Flexible Working Arrangements:** All working parents with children of up to at least eight years old and all carers have the right to request reduced working hours, flexible working hours, and flexibility in the place of work.

Next steps

As set out by President von der Leyen in her Political Guidelines, the Commission will ensure the full implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive, which will help bring more women into the labour market and help fight child poverty. The Commission will support Member States in applying the new rules including through the European Social Fund+ to improve the quality and accessibility of early childhood education and care systems.

Member States are required to transpose the Directive into national law by today. In a next step, the Commission will assess the completeness and compliance of the national measures notified by each Member State, and take action if and where necessary.

Members of the College said

Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra **Jourová**, said: *“Over the past two years many Europeans have taken steps to focus on what truly matters to them. With more flexibility and new rights, the Work-Life Balance Directive provides them with a safety net to do so without worrying. Across the EU, parents and carers now have more guaranteed leave with fair compensation. It means we can care for the people we love without sacrificing the love of our work.”*

Vice-President for Democracy and Demography Dubravka **Šuica**: *“Through the work-life balance Directive, EU citizens will now have more time to care for those vulnerable family members who need it. Introducing carers' leave is an important step that shows that the EU cares for its citizens in all stages of life. As a society we must care about caring. We have recently seen how fragile health can be and how important the solidarity of society is. Flexible work arrangements and the possibility to take time off when needed most show how the EU is a true society of solidarity. We are laying the foundations for creating a modern workplace fit for citizens and all family members.”*

Commissioner for Equality, Helena **Dalli**, said: *“The EU Work-Life Balance Directive encourages men and women to share parenting and caring responsibilities better. Men and women alike deserve an equal chance to take parental leave and carers' leave, as well as equal opportunities to be*

part of and thrive in the labour market. This directive gives people the tools to divide their household and care duties fairly.”

Background

The Work-Life Balance Directive is the outcome of years of work by the Commission to encourage Member States and the European Parliament to improve legislation on leave available for parents and to introduce for the first time in EU legislation the right to carers' leave. The Commission first tabled a proposal in 2008 to reform older legislation on maternity leave which it withdrew in 2015 after negotiations stalled. In order to broadly address women's underrepresentation in the labour market, the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services was embedded in Principle 9 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council on behalf of all Member States and the Commission in Gothenburg in November 2017. The Work-Life Balance Directive is one of the actions of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan to further implement the Pillar principles. The Directive proposal was adopted on 13 June 2019 and Member States had three years until 2 August to implement it in national law. The new rules are in addition to the rights under Directive 92/85 on pregnant workers, according to which women have the right to a minimum of 14 weeks of maternity leave with at least two being compulsory. Maternity leave is compensated at least at the national sick pay level.

It also goes hand in hand with the Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions, which the Member States had to transpose into national law by 1 August (press release). The Directive updates and extends the rights for the 182 million workers in the EU, particularly addressing insufficient protection for workers in more precarious jobs, while limiting the burden on employers and maintaining flexibility to adapt to changing labour market conditions.

Related link: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on work-life balance for parents and carers [3]

Region: Europe [4]

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Source URL (modified on 28 Sep 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/09/new-rights-improve-work-life-balance-eu-enter-application-today>

Links

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