

## Better work-life balance benefits individuals, the economy and society as a whole!



(30 October 2019) The EU Directive on work-life balance, adopted in June 2019, recognises that better work-life balance (WLB) practices should promote the participation of women in the labour market, the equal sharing of caring responsibilities, and address gender pay gaps. If implemented well, the legislation could bring the EU significantly closer to achieving gender equality.

WLB was a key focus of the 2019 the Gender Equality Index. The report demonstrated how reconciling work responsibilities and caring duties is essential to achieving an effective WLB, an issue which disproportionately effects women across Europe. According to the report, not only are women much more likely to take parental leave, but 21% of women between the ages of 50 and 64 care for older or disabled people several days a week, as opposed to 11% of men.

The new EU Directive on Work-life balance encourages men and women to share caring responsibilities, for children and relatives, on an equal basis. Some key

aspects include:

- The right to a minimum of 10 working days of paternity leave compensated at least at the level of sick pay;
- An individual right to 4 months of parental leave, of which 2 months are paid;
- Carers' leave for those caring for relatives due to serious medical reasons;
- Flexible working arrangements not just for parents but also for working carers.

The employment rate of women in the EU is currently 11.5% lower than it is for men. By removing some of the barriers women face in entering the labour force, the new directive could help to stimulate employment and growth, and reduce the cost arising from women's lower employment rate from an enormous €370 billion in 2013, 2.8% of GDP. However, it is essential that national governments go beyond the minimum requirements set out in the directive in order for these barriers to truly be removed, and for both women and men to take advantage of their rights.

More information can be found in the [ETUC report: Rebalance Trade unions' strategies and good practices to promote work-life balance](#). The report contains a toolkit to help Trade Unions lobby for full implementation of the directive at national level by the June 2020 deadline.

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