Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1769 (2006)[1]

The need to reconcile work and family life

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The reconciliation of work and family life allows men and women to achieve economic independence, and fulfil themselves both professionally and personally, while also assuming their family obligations. It contributes to the increased participation of women and men in professional, public and political life.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly notes, however, that the aim of reconciling work and family life is far from being achieved in many Council of Europe member states. However, the absence of measures facilitating this reconciliation primarily penalises women, since they still carry most of the responsibility for running the home, bringing up young children and very often looking after their dependant parents or other elderly dependants as well. Thus, the absence, inadequacy or inaccessibility of care and support structures for children or old people obliges women with family responsibilities to work part time or stop working altogether.

3. This inequality is aggravated still further by the fact that access to the labour market and professional careers is in any case harder for women. Persistent wage discrepancies between women and men make it economically logical that, when children are born, it is the woman who stops working. Moreover, we still have a work culture which tends to attach too much importance to long working days, taking no account of workers' – and above all women workers' – family obligations.

4. The Assembly is convinced that measures making it easier to reconcile work and family life are a factor for growth and employment – particularly of women – and provide an answer to the challenges posed by the ageing of the population. The Assembly thus supports the efforts to promote reconciliation made by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union which, in its Lisbon Strategy, aims to achieve a 60% employment rate for women by 2010, with child-minding facilities for at least 33% of children under 3 and 90% of children from the age of 3 to the age of compulsory schooling respectively.

5. The Assembly considers that reconciling work and family life is a "win-win" process for workers, public partners and socio-economic players, who must ensure, however, that measures taken for this purpose are aimed at both women and men with a view to promoting gender equality. It also emphasises that political determination on the part of Council of Europe member states is vital to defining innovative, negotiated solutions aimed at promoting a work/family balance and so making a real contribution to equal opportunities for women and men on the labour market.

6. The Assembly recalls Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (96) 5 on reconciling work and family life, whose general principles are still valid and relevant. However, the persistent discrimination which women still encounter, particularly on the labour market, should prompt the Council of Europe to encourage member states to introduce practical measures and devise proactive policies. These policies, offering both incentives and where necessary a coercive approach, should encourage employers to promote the reconciliation of work and family life, and therefore equal opportunities for women and men to access the labour market, pursue careers and cope with family obligations.

---

1. Assembly debate on 6 October 2006 (31st Sitting) (see Doc. 11019, report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Ms Pericleous Papadopoulos). Text adopted by the Assembly on 6 October 2006 (31st Sitting).

7. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers assess the implementation of its Recommendation No. R (96) 5 and identify specific legal measures which member states or firms have taken or can take to truly promote the reconciliation of work and family life, bearing in mind the need to promote equal opportunities for both sexes.

8. Moreover, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to address a recommendation to the member states asking them:

8.1. to fully implement Recommendation No. R (96) 5 on reconciling work and family life;

8.2. to endeavour to reach the goals set in the European Union's Lisbon Strategy (child-minding facilities for at least 33% of children under 3 and 90% of children from the age of 3 to the age of compulsory schooling), also in non-European Union member states, and institute a dialogue between national governments, local and regional authorities and social partners on how best to reach these goals;

8.3. to take measures making it easier to reconcile work and family life which target women and men, including:

8.3.1. uaranteeing equal wages for women and men, thus ensuring that financial decisions do not necessarily disadvantage women workers;

8.3.2. identifying the need for child-minding facilities and determining the number of dependant persons, so that suitable structures can be provided and their effectiveness assessed;

8.3.3. initiating dialogue with workers and employers, local and regional authorities and the private sector to consider the main emphases in measures aimed at making it easier to reconcile work and family life and preserve the employability of persons using these measures;

8.3.4. fostering the introduction of working conditions which are flexible and freely accepted by workers, while ensuring that workers who make use of them have equal access to promotions, bonuses, pensions, etc.;

8.3.5. providing adequate remuneration/compensation during maternity leave;

8.3.6. introducing, if they have not yet done so, paid paternity leave and encouraging men to take it;

8.3.7. alleviating the social costs generated by motherhood and by measures which are favourable to parenthood, to ensure that firms taking on future parents are not penalised;

8.3.8. introducing paid, socially-covered parental leave, which may be used flexibly by the father and mother, taking special care to ensure that men are actually able to use it;

8.3.9. introducing a system of pension entitlement which takes account of periods of non-employment spent looking after young children or dependant persons;

8.3.10. setting up accessible and flexible care and support structures for young children and elderly dependant persons, especially for single-parent families;

8.3.11. guaranteeing a place in day nurseries for children whose parents wish to place them there;

8.3.12. in order to attract professional staff, making jobs in the care sector attractive, thereby ensuring high-quality care for all children and dependant elderly persons;

8.3.13. encouraging private and public employers to take account of their employees' family obligations, to adopt measures making it easier to reconcile work and family life and to facilitate the establishment of "firm-based day nurseries", rewarding the most deserving with certificates or quality labels;

8.4. to sign and, if they have not already done so, to ratify the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163), and particularly Article 27 on the right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and treatment, and implement the Charter provisions.