

Recommendation 2216 (2021)¹

Best interests of the child and policies to ensure a work-life balance

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to [Resolution 2410 \(2021\)](#) “Best interests of the child and policies to ensure a work–life balance”. The best interests of the child must be regarded as one of the ultimate goals of the Council of Europe so that every child can be provided with a good start in life. We know that “it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men” (Frederick Douglass).
2. Striking a better balance between work and private life without impairing the child’s best interests is a challenge for authorities. It is also a social, economic, political and demographic need. This new ambition requires the co-operation of national authorities, local and regional authorities, parents and professionals. It means that we must strike at the root of child poverty and exclusion and meet parents’ needs while making available the necessary resources for children’s harmonious development.
3. The United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 17 of the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35) require States Parties to provide the necessary protection for children’s development, particularly the most vulnerable children, such as girls, migrants and children from ethnic minorities or born to poor, single-parent or sexual minority families.
4. The Assembly is convinced that the Council of Europe can help to set up inclusive early childhood family policies that respond to the needs expressed by parents while protecting the best interests of the child. It supports the current work to prepare a new strategy for the rights of the child for 2022 to 2027 and invites the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) to incorporate early childhood policies and policies for the first 1 000 days of life into its activities.
5. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 5.1. incorporate issues linked to the policy for the first 1 000 days of life into the next strategy for the rights of the child and groundbreaking work on the roots of poverty;
 - 5.2. help the member States to prepare national strategies on early childhood, promote good practices and ensure exchanges of information between the authorities running these national strategies.
6. Bearing in mind its role working alongside the member States, the Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to advocate the opening of negotiations as soon as possible for the European Union to accede to the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163), the aim being to enhance the consistency of European standards with regard to socio-economic rights.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 26 November 2021 (see [Doc. 15405](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Françoise Hetto Gaasch).*

