

**POLICY & ADVOCACY
SESSION**

**GENDER
INEQUALITIES
IN CARE AND PAY
IN THE EU**

**9TH MARCH 2021
9.15-11.15 CET**

KEY FINDINGS



Policy & Advocacy session on gender inequalities in care and pay

Key findings

April 2021

Overarching messages from the study session

- Employed women in the EU spend about 50% more on daily unpaid care (either taking care of children, doing housework or providing long term care) than employed men. (3.9 hours/day and 2.6 hours/day respectively)
- Gender inequalities in care have far-reaching effects. The expectation that women should work for free/provide unpaid care affects service provision leading to an under-prioritisation of investments in care services which are grossly insufficient to address the rising care needs of European societies.
- The societal value of care has been highlighted by the pandemic. A structural reevaluation of unpaid and paid care work is needed in both society and the economy (i.e. more investment in community-based care infrastructure, better regulation to support professional and family carers).
- Unpaid care is often considered the “missing link” in analyses of gender inequalities in pay. The gender pay gap and the gender care gap have to be analysed together (correlations and interdependencies). They are to a large extent mutually dependent and mutually reinforcing phenomena.
- Solutions need to be based on a two-pronged approach to address the inequalities in the labour market and in unpaid care: firstly, providing a clear framework to allow for equal sharing of paid and unpaid work on an equal basis between women and men; secondly, the provision of public accessible community-based public infrastructure and services allowing for the outsourcing of child and adult care.
- Particularly given the COVID-19 context and the visibility of women as the backbone of society in relation to care, now is the time to mainstream the [German Presidency Council conclusions on the gender pay gap](#), adopted in December 2020, in national action plans for the Recovery and Resilience Facility, namely to boost community-based public care infrastructure, to revise the Barcelona targets on ECEC towards more legally-binding measures and care across the life-cycle, and to support implementation of the European Child Guarantee.
- The [EU Work-Life Balance Directive](#) and similar transformative measures are needed to encourage take-up of caring roles by men. They need to be boosted further by a strong EU framework to provide family carers with social recognition and protection rights (social recognition, pension, respite, financial compensation, adequately paid leaves).
- We need to connect research, policy, and practice to build strategic alliances to accelerate efforts to bring equality home, join forces and close the gender gaps for good.

Background

For International Women's Day 2021, COFACE hosted a [Policy and Advocacy session on gender inequalities in care and pay](#) on 9th March. This came in a crucial moment of social developments within the EU. The Study Session immediately followed the International Women's Day (8th March), came after a year of the adoption of the European Commission's [Gender Equality Strategy](#) (GES), a few months after the EPSCO Council conclusions adopted under the German Presidency of the EU with guidelines aiming at closing the care gap and the European Parliament voted its [own report](#) on the GES, and **finally in the middle of the transposition of the EU Work-life balance directive adopted in 2019**.

Different reports have stated that during the pandemic of Covid-19 the gender care gap is on the increase, with women taking up a disproportionate share of additional household and caring tasks, despite the fact that many men have been teleworking as well. The study session therefore gathered different stakeholders (researchers, policy makers, civil society organisations, industry) to analyse how to tackle different gender gaps (care and pay), exchange good practices and challenges, and how to build bridges within the different stakeholders involved.

Our family of Emperor penguins accompanied us throughout this Study Session. The Emperor Penguin is a perfect example that nature provides us of gender equality and co-responsibility. The Emperor Penguin tackles too the stereotypical vision of "traditional" and old-fashioned distributions of roles, where women are caregivers and men are the breadwinners, just as COFACE Families Europe has always been promoting.

Programme

Moderator Elizabeth Gosme, Director of COFACE Families Europe

09.15-9.30 **Welcome**

Annemie Drieskens, President of COFACE Families Europe

9.30-10.00 **Gender inequalities in care and its consequences on the labour market: state of play** ([full presentation](#))

Blandine Mollard, Researcher, European Institute for Gender Equality.

10.00-10.20 **German Presidency Council Conclusions on tackling the gender pay gap: Valuation and Distribution of Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work** ([full presentation](#))

Thomas Fischer, Head of the Labour Market Unit in the Gender Equality Directorate of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany

10.20-11.00 **Exchange with key stakeholders**

Taking the two keynote presentations as a starting point, we will focus on the following key questions for discussion (with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in mind):

- *What are the main reasons for the predominant sharing patterns and the links between the gender care gap and the gender pay gap?*
- *Why is a more equal sharing of care responsibilities important, and what are key recommendations for closing the gender care gap?*
- *How to make real a greater involvement of men in divisions of work and care at home?*
- *How to use the research to build policies and campaigns?*

11.00-11.15 **Conclusions and next steps**

Pascual Martinez, COFACE Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer

Welcome and context

by Annemie Drieskens,
COFACE President

The formal welcome provided background and context on the aims of the COFACE study session on gender inequalities in care and pay held on 9th March 2021, at crucial moment of social developments in Europe. While significant advances have been made for women and men over the past century in the field of education and economic independence, an accumulation of factors still hinders women's employment opportunities and the quality of their jobs. International women's day provides a privileged moment to explore the barriers and see which measures can and should be taken to seize the opportunity offered by the changing world of work. Women have gained an important place in the labour market but reconciling the worlds of work and care is one of the key challenges they face daily. Home is a respite from paid labour and a place for leisure but that is far from its role in most women's lives. Across the world women spend on average 4.1 hours per day doing unpaid care and domestic work while men spend only 1 hour and 7 minutes per day. Globally women do three times the amount of unpaid work men do and this trend has been fairly stable. At the current rate, Annemie Drieskens indicated that will not reach gender equality in care until 2229, over more than 207 years from now! Also gender equality in pay and pension will remain a dream.

At COFACE we are convinced that the solution starts at home and we need to focus more on sharing of family care responsibilities as a cornerstone. Equality between women and men can only become a reality through comprehensive policies that guarantee sufficient financial resources, available, accessible and quality services and adequate time arrangements to all families. Those policies will give families real options to reconcile their family and their

professional life. Therefore, COFACE Families Europe together with partners of a wider European Alliance of NGOs intensively advocated for the adoption of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive. This Directive introduces minimum standards for paternity leave and paid parental and carers leave, and is currently in transposition phase. The Directive paves also the way for future actions on access to services. This transposition phase should be the momentum to reinforce national policies with measures to better share the care and tackle the stereotypical vision of women as caregivers and men as breadwinners. Unfortunately, different reports have shown that due to the pandemic of Covid-19 women are losing out economically worldwide and the gender care gap is on the increase.

Women are today taking up a disproportionate share of additional household and caring tasks, despite the fact that many men are teleworking as well. The difference, according to the United Nations, is so striking that it puts pressure on gender equality. The pandemic may cause us to go back 25 years. The International Women's Day is a day of numbers and statistics. Statistics are useful and important and COFACE was delighted to welcome Blandine Mollard from the European Institute of Gender Equality to learn more about why care is key to tackle the roots of gender inequality. An evidence base is essential to build policies to close the gender care gap. COFACE was also happy to welcome too Thomas Fischer from the German Ministry for family affairs to bring the EU policy context and namely to inform participants about the Council conclusions under the German presidency of the EU, which includes guidelines to promote a gender equal distribution of unpaid care work.

Statistics and legislation are very important but next to the list of figures and rights there is a long list of questions and needs of 21st century families that need to be addressed. Annemie Drieskens stated that for a better future of work for all we need to bring about

change in the way we share chores and care, we need to redesign caregiving and better share the care. The European Commission and the European Parliament are committed to realise the EU Gender Equality Strategy. Today's children and youth, for whom equality is so much more self-evident than for the generations that preceded them, can be entrusted with gender equality values. Many men are ready for a different perspectives and understand that ultimately gender equality will benefit all. They understand they have a role to play as a caring and present parents and we need to encourage them to take up that responsibility.

Annemie Drieskens referred to the 5-R framework for care work of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). We need to recognize, reduce, redistribute, reward, and represent care. Achieving this is a shared responsibility, which is why the study session aimed to connect different worlds (research, policy, practice) and build strategic alliances to accelerate efforts to bring equality home.

Let's join forces and close the gender gaps for good.

Gender inequalities in care and its consequences on the labour market: state of play by Blandine Mollard, European Institute for Gender Equality

Blandine Mollard shared some key EIGE findings on care and especially the articulation between paid and unpaid work. This topic is considered absolutely crucial to understanding any progress, or lack of progress, on gender equality. The disproportionate burden of care taken on by women in everyday activities is considered to have ramifications on every aspect of gender equality, from women's career advancement to political representation to men taking up care professions. The objective of the [EIGE](#)

[research](#) presented at the COFACE study session was to investigate the links between unpaid care and gender inequalities on the labour market, especially the gender pay gap. It was conducted in the context of EIGE's mandate to monitor progress in achieving the objectives [Beijing Platform for Action](#), namely area F, "Women and the economy". **Unpaid care is often considered the "missing link" in analyses of gender inequalities in pay.** She described the extent to which unpaid care is still expected of women and the consequences of this expectation on women's work and on society at large. Then she moved on to describe how it affects the paid care sectors and approaches to bring out a fairer distribution of care, especially in the context of COVID-19.

First a clarification of what is included in the concept of "care" in the EIGE study. The concept of care includes the three main forms of care for society to function: childcare, long-term care and housework. Blandine Mollard shared some trends based on the latest available data (which is mostly still based on families in a traditional heteronormative sense).

Inequalities in unpaid care originate in the household. Only a third of families share unpaid care equally; employed women in the EU spend 90 minutes more per day than men on unpaid care. Family circumstances and job characteristics matter. There are vast differences among women regarding time spent on care: women with unstable and precarious work, spend twice more time on unpaid care than women in stable employment. This is probably because precarious employment may lead to reduced accessibility to services. The **employment patterns within the couple** play a relevant role as well because they provide a setting of relative economic resources, and consequential bargaining power (Bianchi et al. 2000; Bitterman et al. 2003; Poortman and Van der Lippe, 2009), and time availability, meaning that who works less in paid work has more free time for carrying out

while no significant association appears with women's income. **The use of childcare services shows a positive association with both men's and women's income, with higher returns for women.** Women with children under 12 using childcare services at least 14 hours a week are estimated to earn +4.8 % more on an hourly basis, compared to women that do not outsource childcare. The estimated gain for men is +2.6 %. So lifting the responsibility of early childhood education and care off women's shoulders benefits gender equality in the labour market.

The expectation that women should work for free or provide unpaid care affects service provision, and namely the under-prioritisation of investments in care services, which are grossly insufficient to address the rising care needs of European societies (this was the case before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the care sector). **External care services are essential and so are efforts toward equal sharing.** Policy initiatives at both EU and Member State level generally address care inequalities in two ways. The first consists of initiatives to promote more equal sharing of unpaid care tasks within the household (e.g. non-transferable parental leave). The second – known as 'externalisation' – supports the partial or total transfer of unpaid care activities from the household to other people and/or paid services. This externalisation is particularly important in the context of the rising care needs expected in the EU in the coming decades, especially related to long-term care. Some findings: 14% of EU households report unmet needs for childcare services, for half of them, affordability is the reason. 6.3 million people work in the long-term care sector in the EU but it is a sector that relies substantially on informal care: 41 million people provide frequent informal long-term care (62 % of whom are women). Lockdown measures have aggravated the strain on families who rely on professional care services.



Care sector is highly feminised and highly undervalued

Low pay and difficult working conditions:

- Cut back in public spending;
- Low wages;
- Limited training and career advancement;
- Part-time work;
- Temporary contracts;
- Atypical work hours;
- Occupational health issues.

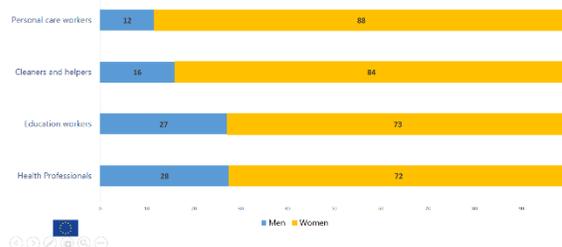
Heightened vulnerability in times of pandemic:

- Care and healthcare workers disproportionately affected by the virus;
- Essential role of care and low societal value given to it;
- Residential care residents paid a very high toll;
- Greater investments and salary increases announced.

Care work is devalued in both the household and the labour market. Skills related to these jobs tend to be under-valued and less formalised (EACEA, 2019); there are low investments in the care sector, care jobs are poorly remunerated and have few career prospects. These are direct consequences of the longstanding perception that care had no economic value, and was not considered 'work'. The externalisation approach needs to be complemented by a structural revaluation of care work, in both society and the economy (i.e. more investment in community-based care infrastructure, better regulation to support care workers). In the absence of a transformative policy-making approach, outsourcing the burden of unpaid care might ease inequalities between women and men within the same household, but it reproduces new inequalities between those households who are able to externalise care tasks and those who are not.



Women and men working in caring professions, EU 28, 2018, %



With this state of play (unpaid care expected of women), this particular aspect of gender roles and gender norms is very slow to change. This has consequences on women's career and also on how care is organized as a sector.



Address the unequal distribution of unpaid care:
Two-pronged approach needed

Equal sharing patterns at the family level

- Ensure full transposition of the Work-Life Balance Directive.
- Develop a **European strategy on social care and social protection** to guide the implementation of the *European Pillar of Social Rights* and complement the WLB Directive.

Accessible quality external services

- Increase availability, affordability and quality of care services for housework, children, older people and people with disabilities.
- Improve, regulate and monitor working conditions in the care sector.

To address the unequal distribution of unpaid care, EIGE recommends a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, work to promote more equal sharing patterns at the family level. The EU Work-Life Balance Directive should have some transformative potential. There needs to be a European strategy on social care and social protection in the framework of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), to complete the Work-Life Balance Directive. On the other hand, it is important to provide affordable, accessible quality external care services. At the moment there are too many unmet care needs, and in the absence of such services women tend to provide this work for free, with detrimental consequences. Hence increasing the availability, affordability and quality of such services is essential, together with better regulation of the care sector – this sector still relies heavily on women with migrant background and in precarious work situations.

In combination with this overarching approach, policy actions are needed also to make progress in addressing the horizontal and vertical segregation of women. This is essential also for progress on the gender pay gap. The legislative framework on pay transparency needs to be strengthened as a way to drive greater equality in pay. Prioritising investment in community-based care and social infrastructure, as well as further research and studies on the paid care sector (especially the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic) to promote an economic and social recovery that prevents negative impacts on women.

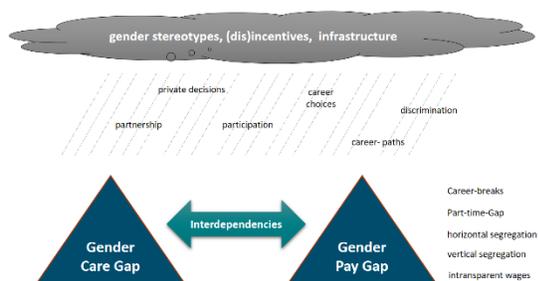
German Presidency Council Conclusions on tackling the gender pay gap by Thomas Fischer, Gender Equality Directorate, German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.



Frauen können alles.

„Tackling the Gender Pay Gap:
Valuation and Distribution of Paid Work and
Unpaid Care Work“

Thomas Fischer presented the Council Conclusions adopted in December 2020 under the German Presidency of the EU. This was the result of many discussions and compromise, leading to unanimous adoption. Compromise sometimes means weak language, but these are strong recommendations with strong gender equality language. Last year was the 25th anniversary of the Beijing platform of action, so the adoption was important and symbolic. This came with the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, deepening existing inequalities and making care (private and professional) a topic of public debate. Given the subsequent pandemic waves and lockdowns, the open question at the time of the discussions on the conclusions was still: how does the pandemic affect the distribution of unpaid care work in partnerships and families? Data in Germany suggests that there has been no great re-traditionalisation of care distribution, but in families with more traditional roles, there was a traditionalizing effect of the pandemic on gender roles, and other Member States indicated similar trends in their country as well.



The causes of the gender pay gap are manifold and intertwined. The deeper underlying causes include – inter alia – stereotypical role models, structural barriers, (dis-)incentives and different career opportunities available to women and men. One root cause of the gender pay gap has so far not received as much attention as others: the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, including childcare, adult care and household chores, between women and men. The more **unpaid care work** women provide, the less time they are able to spend on **paid work**; the more paid work men pursue, the less time they are able to spend on unpaid care work. **Paid work is the prerequisite for economic independence of every person.** Women and men should enjoy equal opportunities to pursue economic independence in accordance with their personal wishes and needs, including to provide for themselves in old age. The **gender pay gap** and the **gender care gap** therefore have to be **analysed together** (correlations and interdependencies). They are to a large extent **mutually dependent** and **mutually reinforcing** phenomena.

The Council Conclusions include 51 paragraphs, of which 26 include invitations and recommendations, addressed to Member States, to the European Commission and to the social partners, always respecting national circumstances, the competences of national governments and the autonomy of the social partners. **The Conclusions are based on a two-pronged approach to address the inequalities in the labour market and in unpaid care.** Firstly, by providing a clear framework to

allow for equal sharing of paid and unpaid work on an equal basis between women and men. This includes the minimum standards in the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, introducing equal sharing of parental leaves, introduce financial incentives, flexible working arrangements and more. The Council Conclusions also include recommendations to research further the impact of gender stereotypes in early childhood.

Content of the Council Conclusions (2) - First Approach -

Develop or establish a framework for the sharing of paid work and unpaid care work between women and men, including for example:	Financial incentives that foster the sharing of unpaid care work on an equal basis, including non-transferable compensation during parental leave after birth or adoption of a child;
	Opportunities for workers to temporarily reduce or adapt their working hours , with a view to reconciling work, family and private life;
	Flexible and reasonable working arrangements for workers, including solutions implemented through the use of new technologies;
	Reduction of financial disincentives (for example, in tax and benefits systems) that directly or indirectly encourage and perpetuate the unequal sharing of unpaid care work and paid work between women and men.

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Secondly, the provision of community-based public care infrastructure allowing for the outsourcing of child and adult care. This is relevant for all families, but especially important for single-parent families. This is relevant for direct care work (care for children and adults) and indirect care work (household, domestic work), examining access through tax reductions or e-vouchers. This second approach comes with pre-requisites: fair and decent working conditions in care professions, access to social security for workers, strengthening social dialogue between social partners, tackling undeclared work, enhancing the status of care work in general. This includes the adoption of the [ILO Declaration 189](#) for decent work and domestic workers. Given the high proportion of women in care professions, better and fair conditions can also help further close the gender pay gap.

Content of the Council Conclusions (3) - Second Approach -



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Exchange of views with key stakeholders and key discussion points

Taking the two keynote presentations as a starting point, the discussion with participants focused four key questions, with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in mind. This section highlights some of the key points made during the discussion.

What are the main reasons for the predominant sharing patterns and the links between the gender care gap and the gender pay gap?

-Women are still lower earners on the labour market and are therefore often the first to stop work to care for children or adults. This has negative impacts on the income of women and their pension in the long-term. This not sustainable in gender equal societies.

-Stereotypical visions of traditional distribution of roles in the family hinder equal sharing of care. Inadequate leave take-up by and transferability of family leaves mean they are still mostly taken by women. Studies show that while the number of fathers taking advantage of paternity leave is increasing, the benefits are still not fully exploited.

-The societal value of care has been highlighted during the pandemic, and it is essential to recognize unpaid work to ensure families get the supports they need. But in the policy and research discourse around women's care and employment, **paid work is still the holy grail**. What about the other side of the coin: how to value care activities not only for women but also for men as well.

-Early childhood education and care policies, for instance, is a policy area which is high on the EU agenda with the Barcelona targets pushing Member States to boost supply of such services. However, when analyzing such policies more closely, they **lack a**

transformative dimension and are designed with an economic goal in mind, to support employment rather than to invest in children and to trigger a rethink of gender negotiations and care sharing. Hence paid work is still considered the panacea in policy options.

-It is important to take into account **structural factors like the economic system and the role of employers** to support gender equality. Every workplace always has potential improvements to make. A Finnish project called "[Equality and Fathers](#)" has really shown it is possible to strengthen parenthood and equality in the workplace, encouraging more fathers to take up their family leaves and working with companies on improving workplace culture for more family-friendliness. With the impact of COVID-19, the objectives of the project met with challenges but the culture towards fathers still evolved positively despite the pandemic situation. Practical projects in different companies are possible and can really help encourage take-up of leaves by men and close the gender care gap.

-Mentality change is difficult to achieve, and legal rights are an essential first step. If employers do not create conditions to accommodate requests for flexible work, urgent absences for force majeure, temporary part-time or other, mothers and fathers will be afraid to ask for leaves and support.

-In terms of boosting care investments, the focus is still mostly on early childhood education and care. But **care needs to be considered from birth to old age**, with EU targets needed for care across the lifecycle, and of a binding nature since the EU Barcelona targets set 20 years ago have still not been met (especially for very small children).

Why is a more equal sharing of care responsibilities important, and what are key recommendations for closing the gender care gap?

- **Given the COVID-19 context and the visibility of women as the backbone of society in relation to care**, care is finally on the EU political agenda. It needs to be addressed from different perspectives: gender equality, but also from a social protection perspective (recognition and rights for family carers), a migration perspective (to tackle the European care chains between Western and Eastern Europe with many migrant women from Bulgaria, Romania and other countries who provide care work in more wealthy EU countries), from an employment perspective (ensure value of the care profession through fair and decent work conditions for professional care workers).

-There are multiple entry points to **mainstream gender equality in EU recovery efforts**, such as gender budgeting, making public community-based care infrastructure a priority in the Recovery and Resilience Facility national plans, developing strong EU care-related indicators, adoption of the [EU Pay Transparency Directive](#), with the EU Gender Equality Strategy objectives as the vision to achieve. -The Germany Presidency Council Conclusions, even if non-binding, must be used to ensure gender equality measures are central to getting out of the current crisis. There is a risk that paternity leave and flexible work arrangements become secondary priorities, but the opposite is true: it is essential to preserve the gains and social rights for greater equality. **Without a proper and strong care system, it will be impossible to move forward effectively.**

- A high proportion of part-time work is used by women in many EU countries. Experience of part-time work has different consequences for the careers of women and men. Few men go to part-time to deal with care, and when they do, they transition more easily back to work. For women the transition back to full-

time is quite difficult. **In some countries part-time is very common for young mothers, with women's economic independence affected for the rest of their lives, namely in relation to the gender pension gap down the line.** On the other hand, in some EU countries access to part-time work is more limited e.g. in Central and Eastern European countries, where women tend to work full-time and are found in many managerial positions. These countries tend to have lower ratios of women with small children active on the labour market. In such cases, part-time quality jobs could help parents keep a foot on the labour market.

-The male breadwinner model creates societal expectations that women will provide the care. This has negative impacts on the prioritization of public community-based care infrastructure investments. An equal earner-equal carer model in employment policy would ensure gender equality is built into the policy systems from the outset.

-The whole issue of **part-time work** is often linked to women's employment, but is also and especially linked to the definition of workers and the wider debates on working time (reduction) in the economy and the funding of social protection systems (e.g. can Universal Basic Income help close the gender care gap?).

How to make real a greater involvement of men in divisions of work and care at home?

-Giving value to care is not only achieved by increasing pay and working conditions in care sectors, but also by **increasing the opportunities for men to be involved in care**, because without that, measures cannot have the transformative policy aspect needed for greater gender equality.

-Strong paternity leaves are needed around the birth of a child, and this needs to be built into policy and legal systems in accordance with the EU Work-Life Balance

Directive, including in countries which have a daddy quota as part of broader family leave arrangements. The aim of paternity leave is to engage fathers/partners around the birth and its aftermath and create bonds with the child as early as possible. The standards of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive (10 days of paternity leave) are really minimum standards since many countries provide fathers/partners with much longer paternity leave (e.g. 16 weeks in Spain).

-Communication on Work-Life Balance policies needs to carefully consider not only mothers but also fathers as a clear target group. The overall impact of lockdowns was huge on families with children, with situations where the childcare effectively doubled due to school closures, and this is still the case today with subsequent COVID-19 waves affecting different EU countries. The impact on both mothers and fathers was huge whereby more men spent time caring and in domestic work.

-A study in France on the impact of COVID-19 shows that fathers can be quite easily mobilized to care - attitudes and values regarding care have shifted and can be translated into practical actions when required in a pragmatic way. **It is important to safeguard the 'gain' of men's involvement in care as the pandemic recedes.**

-A research project called MIGAPE examined countries which managed to reduce the gender pension gap through systems offering pension credits for or informal carers or parents who took time off for children. If such provisions were not there, the gender pension gap would be much higher. **The recognition and rights of informal carers will not necessarily lead to take-up of care leaves by men, but this can definitely mitigate the consequences of the gender care gap.**

-The gender care gap and gender pay gap are intrinsically linked, but does this mean

that men should lose income due to care and women's income should increase due to equality in the labour market? Rather it is important to approach this from an **equal earner-equal carer model, increasing overall family income where caring responsibilities are shared and how not to reduce family income due to the need for care.** To achieve this, a combination of equal sharing of care in the family and access to quality services is the approach most likely to support both earning and caring capacity for both parents.

-In the case of single parent families, the challenge of reconciling work and care is generally even greater, and all the challenges mentioned are magnified (and even further during COVID-19 related lockdowns). There are more difficulties in accessing childcare due to costs, and the resulting financial vulnerabilities leads to a host of issues which affect their ability to access services. Public community-based care infrastructure is all the more essential in that respect.

How to use the research to build policies and campaigns?

-Companies must be an essential target group of any campaign to address gender equality – the employers' perspective is important and they have a responsibility as well. Legislation is important, but is sometimes not enough. It needs to be accompanied by a shift in societal and workplace culture. Fathers and their needs are often left out in workplaces, and employers tend to focus on maternal and child health and well-being only.

-In relation to the pandemic and its impact on families, **there needs to be greater emphasis on the fathers and not only on the mothers.** Communication on parenthood is key as indicated by different participants, and it is important to adopt a gender equal language on this, in order to avoid reinforcing stereotypes. Keeping

fathers out of the picture is not in line with the reality of families of today.

-The notion of care has become essential during the pandemic being more valued in society, with families providing safety nets during care service closures. **However, the momentum is not being translated into policy decisions.** There have been some announcements of care sector increases but this is still limited and for the trade unions is considered insufficient. More needs to be done to use the current momentum to promote measures to close the gender care gap.

-Campaigns are needed to strengthen policy and legal frameworks. The EU Work-Life Balance Directive transposition must help kick-off transformative national public policy discussions on the importance of access to leaves and flexible work arrangements for women and men. Families need strong policies in order to have real choices on how they share the care and engage with the labour market. But the Directive does not cover care services and the standards are weak for carers' leave.

-Greater recognition of family carers and their social rights is needed (including the gender dimension of care), with a strong EU framework for social protection under the European Pillar of Social Rights, to safeguard health insurance, pension rights, unemployment rights, respite services and more.

-While there is general consensus across EU countries on the importance of having strong work-life balance policies for women and men (each using different mixes of access to resources, services and time arrangements), **there is less consensus on the need to tackle gender stereotypes.**

Conclusions and next steps by Pascual Martinez, COFACE senior policy and advocacy officer

Pascual Martinez thanked the keynote speakers and all participants, key stakeholders from different backgrounds (NGOs, policy-makers, industry, researchers), for the fruitful exchanges of views. The session clearly highlighted some of the key challenges of gender inequalities in care and pay in the EU, and COFACE is keen to address these through different partnerships. Closing the gender care gap has always been a key priority for COFACE's network and a precondition to close the gender pay gap and gender pension gap. This will, this **MUST**, lead to more gender equality in family care, like the dear emperor penguins do naturally, and hence also gender equality in the labour market.

Equality between women and men, and sharing of family care responsibilities (the so-called "co-responsibility") is a cornerstone of the reconciliation of family and professional life, allowing families to choose how to reconcile work and family life, allowing more men to care and more women to work, decreasing the gender care gap, and securing economic independence therefore. Rome was not built in a day. Changes take time and patience and do not come out of nowhere. It is important to fight against stereotypes, such as tackling the stereotypical vision of "traditional" and old-fashioned distributions of roles, where women are caregivers and men are the breadwinners, or why a father would want to stay at home with their child for an extended period.

Legislation (either by hard and soft Law) is important to change, to bring and to reinforce social rights. Targeted actions and legislation to address the several gender gaps are therefore needed. Moreover, we need more evidence, more data on how things are evolving. The presentations during the study session show that things are certainly evolving but we are still far from a true gender equality within the family. Moreover, different reports have stated that during the pandemic the gender care gap is on the increase, with women taking up a disproportionate share of additional household and caring tasks, despite the fact that many men have been teleworking as well. However, this could be seen as well as the opportunity for fathers to take more responsibility in household and care tasks, rebalance the disparity and trigger a positive change. One of the main reasons of organising this Study Session was to build bridges between stakeholders from different backgrounds. Gender care and pay gaps affect all of us, and finding synergies, and how to work and exchange good practices between all of us are key to advance towards more egalitarian societies and families.

Resources

European Commission

Webinar series on gender-sensitive responses to the COVID-19 crisis (2020):

https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/webinar-series-gender-sensitive-responses-covid-19-crisis_en

European Commission + UNICEF
European Commission and UNICEF launch pilot programme in 7 Member States to break the cycle of child poverty and social exclusion (2020)

<https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/european-commission-and-unicef-launch-pilot-programme-7-member-states-break-cycle>

2019 Report on equality between women and men in the EU:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/annual_report_ge_2019_en_0.pdf

Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2019 Edition (available in 14 languages):

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/key-data-early-childhood-education-and-care-europe-%E2%80%93-2019-edition_en

Eurobarometer (2018), Work-Life Balance:

https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2185_470_ENG

Eurostat (2020) Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#:~:text=types%20of%20households-.Key%20findings,aged%2065%20years%20and%20over

Joint Research Centre (2020) How will the COVID-19 crisis affect existing gender divides in Europe?

https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120525/covid_gender_effects_f.pdf

European research agencies

European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE)

Gender inequalities in care and consequences for the labour market (2021):

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-inequalities-care-and-consequences-labour-market>

Preliminary EIGE findings on how COVID and telework have affected unpaid care (2020):

<https://eige.europa.eu/topics/health/covid-19-and-gender-equality>

Gender equality and long-term care at home (2020):

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-and-long-term-care-home>

People in vulnerable situations (2020):

<https://eige.europa.eu/covid-19-and-gender-equality/people-vulnerable-situations>

Gender Equality Index 2019: focus on Work-life balance (2019):

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-work-life-balance>

Eurofound

Living, working and COVID-19 (2020):

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2020/living-working-and-covid-19?utm_campaign=covid-19&utm_content=ef20059&utm_source=social-europe&utm_medium=banner

Progress in paternity and parental leave for fathers – Are baby steps enough? (2018):

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/blog/progress-in-paternity-and-parental-leave-for-fathers-are-baby-steps-enough>

Striking a balance: reconciling work and life in the EU (2018):

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef18065en.pdf

A modern agenda for Work-Life Balance (2018):

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/presentation/a-modern-agenda-for-work-life-balance>

International organisations

OECD

Is Childcare Affordable? (2020)

<http://www.oecd.org/els/family/OECD-Is-Childcare-Affordable.pdf>

Dare to Share: Germany's Experience Promoting Equal Partnership in Families. (2017)

<https://www.oecd.org/publications/dare-to-share-germany-s-experience-promoting-equal-partnership-in-families-9789264259157-en.htm>

International Labour Organization (ILO)

A quantum leap for gender equality: For a better future of work for all (2019) (available as well in French, Italian and Spanish)

http://www.ilo.int/rome/pubblicazioni/WCMS_674595/lang--en/index.htm

International Network on Leave Policies & Research

Country reports (updated in April 2020):

<https://www.leavenetwork.org/annual-review-reports/country-reports/>

Civil society organisations

COFACE Families Europe

The changing face of work and family life under COVID-19 (2020)

http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/WLBCOVID_Brief.pdf

Assessment of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive: new social rights, consolidation of existing social rights, and some missed opportunities (2019)

http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/COFACE_WLBAs_sessment-.pdf

Work-life balance Part 2: An ambitious new EU deal for childcare (2018)

http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/COFACE-paper_Childcare.pdf

Who cares? Study on the challenges and needs of family carers in Europe (2017)

http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/COFACE-Families-Europe_Study-Family-Carers.pdf

Families on the edge: Building a comprehensive European Work-Life Balance reality (2017)

http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/COFACE-paper_Families-on-the-edge_v4.pdf

European Women's Lobby

Purple Pact for a feminist economy model in which care is the backbone (2020):

<https://womenlobby.org/Purple-Pact-It-s-Time-for-a-Feminist-approach-to-the-Economy>

Think Tanks

RAND

Incentivising parents with young children to return to the labour market after parental leave (2020) – summary.

<https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/incentivising-return-to-work-after-parental-leave.html>

For the whole article:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658190/IPOL_STU\(2020\)658190_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658190/IPOL_STU(2020)658190_EN.pdf)

FEPS

Towards a Child Union (2020):

<https://www.feps-europe.eu/resources/publications/743-towards-a-child-union.html>

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