



Policy&Advocacy session on gender inequalities in care and pay in Europe

9th March 2021

Welcome by Annemie Drieskens, President of COFACE Families Europe

Our COFACE Families Europe event today on gender inequalities in care and pay comes in a 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 we won't 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 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 our partners of a wider European Alliance of NGOs we have been intensively advocating for the EU work-life balance directive. This Directive introduces minimum standards for paternity leave and paid parental and carers leave. The Directive paves also the way for future actions on access to services.



The Directive is now in transposition. This 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 we are happy today that we can learn from the recent insights of the European Institute of Gender Equality why care is key to tackle the roots of gender inequality. I am looking forward the presentation of Blandine Mollard.

We are also happy to welcome Mr Thomas Fischer from the German Ministry for family affairs to inform us about the Council conclusions under the German presidency of the EU and the 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 21 century families that we need to address.

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.

Here I like to refer to 5 R framework for care work of ILO : Following this we need to recognize, reduce, redistribute, reward, represent care.

Lots of work ahead. It is a shared responsibility and I am hopeful.

The European Commission and the European Parliament are committed to realise the EU Gender Equality Strategy.

I have trust in today's children and youth for whom equality is so much more self-evident than for the generations that preceded them and many men are ready for a different perspectives and understand that Women's rights do not come at the expense of men's rights.

They understand they have a role to play as a caring and present parent and we need to encourage them to take up responsibility.

We are delighted to have so many different stakeholders, researchers, policy makers, representatives of civil society organisations, gathered and we hope to learn from each of you and build strategic alliances to accelerate efforts to bring equality home.

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