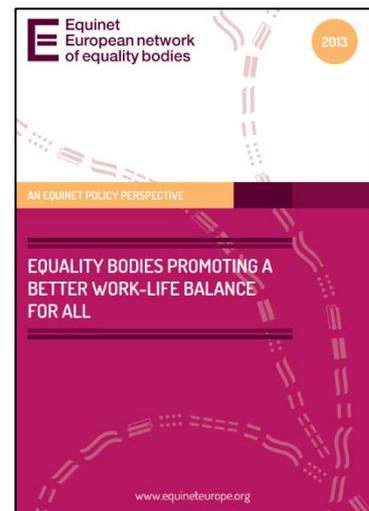


Equality bodies promoting a better work-life balance for all: Key Equinet messages

BACKGROUND INFORMATION Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies, brings together **45 equality bodies** from 33 European countries¹. Equality bodies are public institutions set up across Europe to promote equality and tackle discrimination on grounds of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, disability or other grounds. They play a fundamental role in the non-discrimination architecture of the EU. As a **first point of contact for victims of discrimination**, equality bodies have an extensive understanding of how discrimination affects people in Europe. They also work towards the **better implementation of EU legislation** by monitoring and taking an active part in the implementation of the EU Directives.

EQUALITY BODIES, WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND PREGNANCY AND PARENTHOOD RELATED DISCRIMINATION

- The EU Gender Recast Directive² and the Gender Goods and Services Directive³ underpin the role of equality bodies on reconciliation of work and family life and work-life balance by giving them a **mandate on gender equality and equal treatment between women and men**.
- These issues are of concern to many equality bodies and have been a **focus for important initiatives** by a number of them.
- **Discrimination and related legal casework** emerged as a common and significant focus for action on reconciliation of work and family life and work-life balance by equality bodies.
- They report **high levels of pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination**, including discrimination in connection with taking up leave arrangements, denial of rights in access to statutory leave arrangements and in the access to flexible working arrangements in accordance with the specific provisions in equal treatment legislation in the different Member States.



WAYS FORWARD TO STRENGTHEN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTING WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND TACKLING DISCRIMINATION

These recommendations are drawn from the Equinet perspective **“Equality bodies promoting a better work-life balance for all”** (2013) and Equinet’s contribution to the **European Commission’s**

¹ 28 EU Member States + Albania, FYRO Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway and Serbia

² Directive 2006/54/EC

³ Directive 2004/113/EC

public consultation on possible action addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers (2016).

- Introducing and implementing **legal duties on employers** to consider or make accommodation for reconciliation of work and family life and work-life balance.
- Developing and enhancing policies and programmes to **support reconciliation of work and family life and work-life balance**. Statutory leave provisions, flexibility in the workplace, as well as care services could be a focus for this.
- Challenging **gender stereotypes** and making the unequal sharing of paid work, care and household work visible, and creating and influencing new choices for both women and men.
- Promoting **the role and contribution of men** in ensuring a better work-life balance for all.
- **Standards in relation to care services are needed**. The shift to informal care and the increased responsibilities falling on women as a result of austerity policies needs to be reversed. The rights of domestic workers need further protection and vindication. **Equality in the sphere of caring work and the role of men in caring responsibilities** needs to be promoted.

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF EQUALITY BODIES IN PROMOTING WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND PREGNANCY AND PARENTHOOD RELATED DISCRIMINATION

CHALLENGES

Cuts in financial and human resources can undermine the accessibility, independence and sustainability of equality bodies' actions. In addition, current EU Directives do not specify standards to ensure that equality bodies are granted adequate powers and resources. As a consequence, the levels of protection they provide are very diverse across Member States.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Equality bodies would benefit from an **explicit mandate on family ground status**, to enable them to address gender stereotypes, work-life balance, pregnancy and gender-based discrimination more effectively.
- In order to successfully fulfil that mandate, **EU level guidance and standards are needed** to ensure independence and adequate resources and powers.

For more information



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