



PRIORITY SECTOR
Innovation, Research,
Education and
Competitiveness

Programme area n°4 Work-life Balance

OBJECTIVE

Work-life balance improved

AREAS OF SUPPORT

- > National strategies, systems and policies to promote work-life balance and gender equality
- > Gender equality in the labour market
- > Women's economic empowerment
- > Gender equality institutions and organisations
- > Child-care policy, aiming at affordable, good quality and accessible child-care
- > Policy/systems for family leave entitlements
- > Social dialogue

SUGGESTED MEASURES

- > Research and data collection
- > Establishment of affordable, good quality and accessible child-care facilities
- > Measures to decrease gender inequality in unpaid work
- > Introducing flexible working arrangements for women and men
- > Measures to increase the take-up of care leave among men
- > Awareness-raising, capacity building and education to promote a better balance between work and family life
- > Capacity building for institutions and organisations working in the field of work-life balance and gender equality
- > Cooperation between the social partners and cooperation across sectors
- > Exchanges and dissemination of successful national policies and best practices on work-life balance
- > Measures to decrease the gender pay gap
- > Gender mainstreaming in education and vocational training

RELEVANCE OF SUPPORT

Work-life reconciliation policies are increasingly recognised as key responses to the economic and demographic challenges facing Europe. Parenthood remains one of the main factors for the current gender employment gap. Persistently low fertility rates combined with the increasing life expectancy of Europe's citizens represent major challenges for productivity across the region. Promoting sustainable and quality employment for all is therefore vital to increasing cohesion throughout Europe.

Organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) provide ample evidence that female participation in the labour market leads to increased productivity and thus higher GDP. Increasing women's labour force participation also in innovation and research is a priority for the EEA and Norway Grants' support in this field and will be paramount to improving economic productivity across Europe and to counter the challenge of Europe's shrinking working-age population. Specific attention needs to be given to the relatively low labour market participation of older women, single parents, women with a disability, migrant women and women from ethnic minorities.

Strengthening women's economic independence through increasing their labour market participation has been a key factor in the donor countries' efforts to achieve gender equality. Cooperation between donor and beneficiary countries to share successful policies and practices is central to support in this field.

Equality between women and men is an EU fundamental value, enshrined in its treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EU Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 also underlines how improving work-life balance is central to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs, not least to meet the Europe 2020 target rate of 75% employment.

PROGRAMME AREA SPECIFICS

> A maximum level of funding available for infrastructure (hard measures) shall be identified in the memorandum of understanding or exceptionally in the programme's concept note

BILATERAL INTEREST

Ensuring a good and desirable work-life balance has been an area of focus in the donor countries for several decades. Bilateral cooperation offers the opportunity for exchange and transfer of knowledge between donor and beneficiary countries. This includes the experience that donor countries have in structured dialogue and cooperation between the social partners.