

# THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S WORK-LIFE BALANCE PROPOSAL: THE REAL IMPACT



	CURRENT EU LAW	EC PROPOSAL	REAL IMPACT OF THE EC PROPOSAL
<b>Maternity leave</b> <small>(directive 92/85/EEC unchanged)</small>	14 weeks uninterrupted with a minimum of 2 mandatory weeks, paid at least at the level of sick pay.	<p>No change in maternity leave.</p> <p>Legislation treated as unlinked with the new directive proposal, although it impacts on the same aspects.</p>	Maternity leave is treated as a maternal health issue, and as if it were not related to care work, while, in practice, current national regulations use it as a form of child care.
<b>Paternity leave</b>	No minimum standards for paternity leave at EU-level.	<p>All working fathers will be able to take at least 10 working days of paternity leave around the time of birth of the child.</p> <p>Paternity leave will be compensated at least at the level of sick pay.</p>	<p>Unequal maternity and paternity leaves will reinforce the message that women take care of babies while men work.</p> <p>There is ample evidence that leaves paid below 80% of the salary are not taken up by most men. Compensating paternity leave "at the level of sick pay" sends the message that care work is a kind of anomaly.</p>
<b>Parental leave</b>	<p>At least 4 months per parent, out of which one month is non-transferable between parents.</p> <p>Parents can take leave until their child is 8 years old.</p> <p>No minimum standards on compensation.</p>	<p>At least 4 months per parent that cannot be transferred between parents. Parents can take leave in flexible forms (full-time, part-time, in a piecemeal way).</p> <p>Parents can take leave until their child is 12 years old.</p> <p>Parental leave will be compensated at least at the level of sick pay.</p>	<p>In practice, mothers will take the 4-month parental leave right after the maternity leave or an 8-month leave on a part-time basis (which presumably will be compatible with reduced working hours). It will become a de-facto extension of maternity leave during the first year of the child's life. It will make the gender gap in care work and the overall gender pay gap wider and more difficult to reverse.</p> <p>In practice, most fathers will take up parental leave in a piecemeal way. Men will never become the principal carer for any substantial period of time during the child's first year.</p> <p>There is ample evidence that leaves paid below 80% of the salary are not taken up by most men.</p>
<b>Carers' leave</b>	<p>No minimum standards for carers at EU-level (except "force majeure" allowing to take short time off for imperative and unexpected family reasons.)</p> <p>No minimum standards on the length nor compensation.</p>	<p>All workers will have the right to 5 days of carers' leave per year to take care of seriously ill or dependent relatives.</p> <p>Carers' leave will be compensated at least at the level of sick pay.</p>	<p>Contrary to expectations, this provision would act as a pressure towards women to take care of seriously ill or dependent relatives on a full-time basis.</p> <p>Due to social norms, women will automatically take 5 days to take care of relatives irrespective of the level of payment, while men most likely will not take them on an automatic basis, but will be compelled to take them as special and short leaves for terminal or time-limited serious illnesses if the need arises.</p>
<b>Flexible working arrangements</b>	<p>Right to request reduced and flexible working hours upon return from parental leave.</p> <p>Right to request part-time work for all workers.</p>	<p>All working parents of children up to 12 and carers with dependent relatives will have the right to request the following flexible working arrangements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduced working hours</li> <li>2. Flexible working hours</li> <li>3. Flexibility on the place of work</li> </ol>	<p>The current tide towards labor market segregation, gender division of work and discrimination will be reinforced.</p> <p>After a long period as solo carer, women will most likely continue working part time.</p> <p>In any event, women will monopolize part time and flexible work arrangements together with less salary, less promotion opportunities and less quality jobs.</p>