



Joint Workshop on Family as a Hub for Social Policies

9 - 11 October 2019
Rome

Agenda

Bettoja Hotel Massimo d'Azeglio
Bettoja Hotel Mediterraneo



The Department for Family Policies of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the European Social Cohesion Platform of the Council of Europe (hereinafter-PECS) will hold a joint Workshop entitled “Family as a hub for social policies” and the PECS annual meeting on 9-11 October 2019, in Rome, Italy.

The joint Workshop will be focused on the main social topics having an impact on both women and men, especially on working mothers and fathers and their children. It will last one and a half day and be divided into 4 working sessions respectively on:

- 1) work-life balance and company welfare;
- 2) Family measures to promote the increase in the birth-rate in Europe;
- 3) support services for children witnessing violence and children orphaned by domestic crimes;
- 4) Eradication of child poverty.

The main results of the workshop will be collected in an outcome document (Conclusions of the workshop).

Within the framework of this joint Workshop and upon the invitation of the Italian Government, the PECS will convey its annual meeting on 10-11 October 2019, in Rome.

Proposed topics for discussion (Joint Workshop)

1) Work-life balance and company welfare

The current global context presents an increasing number of challenges coming from the profound changes in demographics, household structures and employment patterns. Such changes present new opportunities and challenges for working women and men, mothers and fathers. With increasing numbers of women entering the labour market, traditional divisions of work and care responsibilities in the household are shifting. People remain in employment longer and this raises the question of how to balance work and life across an extended life course. Technological advancements can provide much-needed flexibility when juggling work and other responsibilities, as well as new tools for both women and men to enter and remain in the labour market through new flexible working arrangements that contribute to enhancing work-life balance in their lives. A better work-life balance is also an indicator of overall well-being and quality of life in that it enables people to live healthier and happier lives. It is therefore of utmost importance that public Administrations and especially private companies promote an organization of work based on the promotion of flexible working arrangements, also with the aim of increasingly involving fathers in the family life and providing both male and female workers with the opportunity to take care of dependant family members, as well as to inspire the necessary cultural change towards an occupational culture based on reconciliation between work and family life and on the inclusion of both women and men in all areas of society. Among the main forms of welfare provided by companies to their employees, flexible schedule (including seasonal schedule or short week), smart working, telecommuting, part time, and hour banks, as well as flexibility in the place of work and company's nursery schools, “time-saving” services (laundry, repairs and domestic cleaning services), and contributions or incentives for their various needs, both for themselves and their dependent family members are particularly worth mentioning.

In this regard, it is particularly important that Governments closely collaborate with the private sector with a view to enhancing work-life balance and consequently improving the wellbeing of both women and men in our countries.

2) Family measures to promote the increase in the birth-rate in Europe

The demographic composition of households in Europe is changing, albeit slowly. The two main trends are a decrease in the proportion of couples and an increase in single adults, as well as a decrease in households with children. According to Eurostat's European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), the proportion of households consisting of couples with children decreased between 2009 and 2017 from 21% to 20%, while couples without children increased by 0.5 percentage points to 25%. Furthermore, populations across Europe are ageing: the share of population aged 65 years or over increased by 2.4 percentage points over the period 2007–2017 as a result of low birth rates and higher life expectancy. On the one hand, low birth rates may reduce the share of households with children and therefore the share of households with caring responsibilities for children, but, on the other hand, the growing share of elderly people may increase the demand for care. There are some policies, especially family policies, that Governments have in place or could introduce to revert this trend and help raising birth rates in our countries, including by supporting maternity and paternity. These include, for example, family allowances, public childcare facilities, parental leaves, and tax exemptions for dependent children.

3) Support services for children witnessing violence and children orphaned by domestic crimes

Violence against women is a form of discrimination and a violation of fundamental human rights. Fighting all forms of violence against women has long been a priority for many Governments all over the world. Within this context, the proportion of children witnessing domestic violence and children orphaned by domestic crimes is becoming alarming. Domestic violence research indicates that even when children are not direct targets of violence in the home, they can be harmed by witnessing its occurrence. Most children who witness domestic violence or children orphaned by domestic crimes manifest some symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Furthermore, witnessing violence affects children's abilities to learn. They may have difficulty focusing and concentrating in school. It also affects children's behaviour, sometimes making it difficult to establish good peer relationships. If not properly assisted, these children may be more aggressive and fight more often.

Furthermore, children growing up with violence are at greater risk to become violent themselves. It is therefore fundamental that Governments take all the necessary steps (including the adoption of specific legislation and the provision of appropriate services) to ensure that these children receive the necessary psychological, economic and care support and dedicated services for their recovery and full integration in all spheres of life. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) sets out legally binding standards to offer protection and support services to assistance to children witnesses domestic and other forms of violence covered by the convention (Article 26). Furthermore, it places a legal obligation on state parties to ensure that visitation or custody rights granted after separation do not jeopardise the rights and safety of domestic violence victims and their children (Article 31). To ensure adequate protection of children, the convention makes it possible to include in criminal law sanctions the withdrawal of parental rights - if the best interests of the child cannot be guaranteed in any other way (Article 45).



4) Eradication of child poverty

Almost 25 million children under 18 are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU. Poverty deprives children of educational opportunities, childcare, access to health care, adequate food and housing, family support and even protection from violence.¹ Most of these children live in families/households experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Certain groups of children are at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that affects children and their rights in different ways. It deprives them from equal opportunities, proper recreational and cultural activities affecting physical, intellectual and social development of children. Most often children living in poverty are not heard and their rights are disrespected and violated. Article 17 of the European Social Charter provides for the right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection. Moreover, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the Social Rights Pillar stipulate the right of the children to protection of their well-being.

Objectives of the event

The event will be mainly aimed at:

1. Promoting a constructive and comprehensive dialogue among different stakeholders (policy-makers and international organizations, companies, experts working in the field) on the four main topics briefly illustrated above;
2. Promoting the exchange of good practices among Governments, international organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders and exploring innovative initiatives for the improvement of the scenario in all four proposed fields;
3. Elaborating on innovative solutions for improving the wellbeing of European women and men within the context of the abovementioned topics.

Agenda

9 October 2019 Hotel Bettoja Massimo D'Azeglio

9.00 - 9.30 **Registration and Welcome coffee**

9.30 - 10.45 **Opening remarks**

Ms. Elena Bonetti, *Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family – Italy*

Ms. Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, *Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe*

Ms. Zaruhi Batoyan, *Minister of Labour and Social Affairs - Armenia*

Mr. Linas Kukuraišis, *Minister of Social Security and Labour – Lithuania*

Mr. Michael Falzon, *Minister for the Family, Children's Rights, and Social Solidarity Malta*

10.45 - 11.45 **Session 1 - Work-life Balance and Company Welfare**

Keynote speech:

Mr. Harald Fugger *Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection - Austria*

2 Reactions

Ms. Annalisa Reale, *Lawyer and Expert on company welfare – Italy*

Ms. Barbara Gerstenberger, *Head of Unit, Working Life - Eurofound*

11.45 - 12.00 **Coffee break**

12.00 - 13.15 **2 Reactions**

Ms. Vytautas Peciukonis, *Research Officer, European Institute for Gender Equality - EIGE*

Mr. David Lafuente Durán, *Senior Advisor, Cabinet of the Secretary of State for Equality - Spain*

Q&A session

Moderator of the Session:

Mr. Michele Palma, *PECS member, Director General of the Department for Family Policies – Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers*

13.15 - 15.00 **Lunch**



15.00 - 16.00 **Session 2 - Family Measures to Promote the Increase in the Birth Rate in Europe**

Keynote speech:

Ms. Monika Queisser, *Head of the Social Policy Division and Senior Counsellor, Directorate for Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs - OECD*

2 Reactions

Mr. Gian Carlo Blangiardo, *President of the National Statistics Institute - Italy*

Mr. Peter Siemund, *Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth - Germany*

16.00 - 16.15 **Coffee break**

16.15 - 17.30 **2 Reactions**

Ms. Jessica Löfvenholm and Ms. Pia Fagerström, *Ministry of Health and Social Affairs - Sweden*

Dr. Almudena Moreno Mínguez, *Department of Sociology and Social Work, Universidad de Valladolid - Spain*

Q&A session

Moderator of the Session:

Mr. Arman Sargsyan, *PECS member, Director of National Institute of Labour and Social Research, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs - Armenia*



10 October 2019 Hotel Bettoja Massimo D'Azeglio

9.00 - 9.15 **Welcome coffee**

9.15 - 11.00 **Session 3 - Support Services for Children Witnessing Violence and Children Orphaned by Domestic Crimes**

Keynote speech:

Ms. Flora Bolter, *Expert in children's rights, violence against children - member of the Association française de science politique*

3 Reactions

Dr. Clarissa Sammut Scerri, *Head of Department for Family Studies, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta*

Ms. Elisa Ercoli, *President of the "Differenza Donna ONLUS" Association - Italy*

Ms. Simona Lanzoni, *Vice-President of GREVIO*

Q&A session

Moderator of the Session:

Mr. Joseph Gerada, *Vice-Chair of the PECS, Advisor at the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity-Malta*

11.00 - 11.15 **Coffee break**

11.15 - 13.00 **Session 4 - Eradication of Child Poverty**

Keynote speech:

Ms. Agata D'Addato, *Senior Policy Coordinator – Policy, Practice and Research EuroChild*

3 Reactions

Mr. Grigorios Tsioukas, *Seconded National Expert Research & Data Unit, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights - FRA*

Mr. Alexis Rinckenbach, *Head of Office for European and International Affairs, Ministry of Solidarity and Health – France*

Mr. Bruce Adamson, *Children's and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, and member of the ENOC network*



Q&A session

Moderator of the session and conclusions:

Ms. Rita Skrebiskiene, *Chair of the PECS, Director of International Relations
Department, Ministry of Social Security and Labour - Lithuania*

13.00 - 15.00 **Lunch**

**Afternoon session will be hosted at the
HOTEL BETTOJA MEDITERRANEO**

15.00 - 18.00 **PECS Plenary meeting**

11 October 2019 Hotel Bettoja Mediterraneo

9.00 -13.00 **PECS Plenary meeting**