

Online Roundtable: Future of Equality Legislation in Europe

On 14 October (14:00-16:00), Equinet hosts an online roundtable, organised together with MEP Alice Bah Kuhnke, on the future of equality legislation in Europe.

The primary objective is for Members of the European Parliament, the European Commission and equality body representatives to discuss the EU legal framework for equality and its implementation, as well as advancing the adoption of the Horizontal Directive. The event is open to the public and will be [live streamed on our Facebook event](#).

The online format of this event means that it's shorter than we would have wished and we cannot include all voices on the day. In order not to leave the very important voices of Civil Society Organisations out of the conversation however, we have asked them to tell us why strong equality legislation is important to them...



We need strong EU equality legislation because...

COFACE Families Europe has been intensively promoting and advocating for specific EU measures on Gender Equality for years. Tackling Gender inequalities must be one of the cornerstones of EU policies, based on core European values of social inclusion and non-discrimination, especially when, and as former EIGE's Director Virginia Langbakk underlined, "*advances in gender equality are still moving at a snail's pace, but are heading in the right direction.*" ¹

This can only become a reality through comprehensive policies and legislation. Choices do not come out of nowhere. Legislation is important to change, to bring and to reinforce social rights. Targeted actions and legislation to address the several gender gaps are therefore needed.

COFACE Families Europe is aware of the several roots of Gender Inequalities. At the European level, and before the outburst of the Covid-19 crisis, almost 9 out of 10 mothers in the EU

¹ EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2019, p.3

provided daily care for their children, compared to some 6 out of 10 fathers. In number of hours the gap is even wider as working women spend around 22 hours per week in unpaid work and men only 9 hours. On the other hand, with a gender pay gap at 16%, it is cheaper for a family to renounce a woman's income instead of the man's. This inequality has a €370 billion yearly cost for the EU and jeopardises women's professional careers.

Moreover, the COVID-19 global pandemic will have long-term consequences for our societies and the global economy. Women's burden of care increased following the closure of childcare facilities, schools, care services for elderly and disabled people. In addition, many women work in jobs on the front-line in the health and social care sector, education, and retail, which are often low paid and insecure. Different reports have stated that during the pandemic this gender care gap is highly likely to increase, with women taking up a disproportionate share of additional household and caring tasks, despite the fact that many men have been teleworking as well.²

It is imperative to **implement a gender-sensitive legislation in the responses to the pandemic and in the recovery phase** – to make these measures more effective and ensure that no one is left behind.

On top of that, legislation providing **adequate paid paternity, parental and care leaves for both women and men** are key to securing women's access to and progress in the labour market. Evidence and reports show that fathers' uptake increases when the entitlement **is conceived as mandatory individual right and non-transferable to the other parent**.

Therefore, COFACE Families Europe's vision regarding Gender Equality is to:

- Allow families to choose how to reconcile work and family life;
- Allow more men to care and more women to work and decreasing the gender care gap;
- Fight against cultural stereotypes and violence against women;
- Tackling predefined stereotypes in children;
- Secure economic independence.

² EIGE (2020), Op.cit.; JRC (2020), How will the COVID-19 crisis affect existing gender divides in Europe? https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120525/covid_gender_effects_f.pdf; OECD (2020), Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis, <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/>