



LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

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EWL Campaign "Who Cares?"

EWL Position Paper on Care Issues

Care policies and the provision of care services are intrinsically related to the achievement of equality between women and men. The lack of affordable, accessible and high quality care services in most European Union countries and the fact that care work is not equally shared between women and men have a direct negative impact on women's ability to participate in all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life.

One prerequisite to achieve equality between women and men is for women to be economically independent. Many women's personal goals include work and careers as well as being mothers, being in families and sustaining intimate relationships – but women have not had a major part in directly influencing the present political, social and economic systems which have shaped traditional gender roles and stereotypes, and which systematically obscure and undervalue the central importance of care in all of our lives. Women are particularly at risk of experiencing inequalities in employment directly because of their caring activities. Caring activities impact on women's participation in working life, career advancement, the ability to work full-time, together with their ability for life-course integration into the labour market. The European Women's Lobby is therefore launching a specific campaign on the provision of care services for children, older people and other dependents in Europe. Giving women better opportunities in professional life has to be seen as an asset an investment for society as a whole, especially in the context of current demographic changes and challenges in Europe.

Who cares?

Women have careers, jobs, professional responsibilities, and at the same time women continue to be in large part responsible for the care of their children, housework and care of dependents (whose numbers are increasing as the population ages). One way out of this "double life burden" for women lies firstly in changes in the gender division of work, leading to an equal sharing of caring tasks between women and men. Social and employment policies and the provision of services also have a very important part to play.

Estimates suggest that in 20 years time one in five people in the EU will be aged 60 years or older with a significant portion of these people being over 80 years. At the same time, in the European Union, women are having fewer children. There is a causal link between the lack of reconciliation of private and work life options and the decrease of the birth rate. EWL believes that the key issue linked to the demographic challenge is the organisation and financial support of care for children and other dependent people, including older people and disabled people. However, when addressing the issues in the care sector we must recognise two sets of needs and preferences – the needs of those dependent or older people themselves and the needs of those who provide their care. We

must acknowledge that the bulk of care for older and dependent people at home is provided by women but also a large majority of those cared for are women. It is essential that the rights of the individual are being respected in the broadest sense of the concept. Caring for others is central to the continuation of society, and caring for others, and being cared for, at different stages in our lives, is one of the central emotional experiences of our shared humanity.

The issue of care and reconciliation of work and private life has been on the European political agenda for some time. The importance of childcare provision is recognised in the Council Resolution on the balanced participation of women and men in private and working life¹ and in the Council Recommendation of 31 March 1992 on child care². The **European Council of Barcelona** affirmed in 2002 that “*Member States should remove disincentives for female labour force participation and strive, in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age*”, yet five years later, these targets have not yet been reached and disparities still exist between Member States and between regions within Member States.

In its **Green paper “Confronting demographic changes: a new solidarity between generations,”**³ the European Commission recognises that the issue of care constitutes a major challenge to respond to demographic changes. The 2006 **Report from the European Commission on equality between women and men** exposed the difficult situation women face in relation to the European Labour market and called for “*A renewed commitment (...) to deliver accessible, affordable and good quality care facilities for children and other dependents*”. In the refocused Lisbon Strategy Growth and Jobs agenda the **Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2005-2008)**, Guideline 18 states “Promote a life-cycle approach to work” and among other items, calls for the “*better reconciliation of work and private life and the provision of accessible and affordable childcare facilities and care for dependents*”. Furthermore, by endorsing the **European Pact for Gender Equality** at the European Spring Council 2006, the Member States have committed to measures which include: achievement of the objectives set at the European Council in Barcelona in March 2002 on the provision of childcare facilities; improvement of the provision of care facilities for other dependents; and the promotion of parental leave for both women and men.

The **Commission’s Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010)** highlights the importance of reconciliation of work and private life and calls for flexible working arrangements for both women and men, increasing care services and better reconciliation policies for both women and men. Furthermore, the Commission will present in 2006 a Communication on Demography addressing the issue of reconciliation of private and working life.

The provision of care services in the European Union

Policies that support the reconciliation of work and private life differ considerably, with every country having its own unique constellation of care services, leave facilities, flexible working-time arrangements and financial allowances.

¹ 2000/C 218/02

² 92/241/EEC

³ COM (2005) 94 final

Within Europe, only a minority of countries have achieved (so far) a continuity of public responsibility for childcare, addressing children from birth to 10 years. While childcare services for preschoolers from 3 to 6 are often available, there is still a, sometimes, dramatic gap when it comes to services for the 0 to 3 years old children. In a number of countries, systems of reliable full day school-care, including care during school holidays, is missing. Without sufficient coverage for children younger and older than the usual coverage age of 3 to 6, there is a clear deficit of possibilities for parents to plan for their respective balance of work and private life tasks.

The data on care of dependents is scarce and there is a critical lack of provision for the care of older people especially those requiring constant aid, either at home or in institutions. A very similar situation is true for care for other dependents in terms of the lack of data and adequate care services. The responsibility of care is often left to the family and overall it is women who are responsible for this care.

The EWL care campaign “Who Cares?”

At the EWL Board of Administration meeting in May 2006, the European Women’s Lobby officially launched its “Who Cares?” campaign. This campaign focuses on the provision of affordable, accessible and high quality care services for all dependents, available to all women and men whatever their financial situation. During the EWL Care Campaign there will be an **e-petition** launched on the EWL website. The EWL General Assembly Seminar of October 2006 will also be dedicated to the issue of care where a Manifesto on Care will be adopted. This **Manifesto on Care** will then be used as the key EWL reference document up to the European Spring Council 2007.

Themes of the EWL Care Campaign:

- I. Who Cares? Gender Stereotypes and Care
- II. The Economics of Care: Provision of Affordable Care Services
- III. Quality Work and Quality Care Services: Care and the Labour Market
- IV. Who Cares? The Case of Domestic Migrant Care Workers
- V. European Union Policies and Care

Each section of this paper is comprised of: 1) a general analysis of a theme; and 2) EWL recommendations to address the issues raised. These recommendations reflect the priorities of the EWL membership and offer some important elements that can be built upon for future care policies.

I. Who Cares? Gender Stereotypes and Care

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to have a strong influence on the division of labour between women and men at home, in the workplace and in society at large, and tend to continue a vicious circle of obstacles to achieving gender equality. The 2006 European Commission Report on equality between women and men recognises this and states *“Decisive action should be taken to fight sexist stereotypes and to encourage men to take up their responsibilities in the domestic and family sphere”*.

In the past three decades, women’s employment rates have increased significantly and faster than men’s, but not equally in all sectors and occupations. **Women tend to be over represented in specific areas of activity related to traditional gender roles**

such as care, education, cleaning, retail etc., and to be underrepresented at higher levels of management.

Women have historically been **assigned the main responsibilities for care and domestic work** and still carry most of it today, while men have been working outside the home defined as the “breadwinners” for the family. This distinction has been underpinned by gender stereotypes, religious beliefs and traditions and by conservative education, but also by public policies. For example, statistics indicate that women stop working, at least for some time, after giving birth and they basically raise the children alone during the first year(s), since men tend to work even more when they have small children.

A culture where both **women and men** are **equally considered as carers and as actors in the paid economy** must be promoted. In order to achieve an equal sharing of care and domestic tasks, men’s responsibility for the care and rearing of their children must be reinforced through public policies and the fight against gender stereotypes on all fronts.

Education and gender stereotypes are obviously inter-linked, in particular, childcare facilities and early childhood education play a strong role in establishing societal norms. **The elimination of stereotypes about gender roles in the home, including domestic work should be encouraged in the media, education material, toys etc.** Research on the influence of gender stereotypes and how to counteract them should be promoted and publicised.

The media are also powerful producers of symbolic norms and values and play an important role in the socialisation of individuals. Common characteristics can be noticed in the way women and men are portrayed in the media, which reinforces gender stereotypes. **Media content doesn’t reflect the diversity of women and conveys certain socio-cultural, male centred values that constitute an obstacle for women and men to break with traditional gender roles.**

EWL Recommendations Concerning Gender Stereotypes and Care:

- 1) Implement **national and European youth policies** and programmes that especially **address the needs of girls and young women, that promote media literacy and a critical attitude towards representations of gender in the media (and their role in perpetuation gender inequality) and that increase sensitivity to and understanding of the inequalities and stereotypes** that constrain the opportunities and choices of both girls and boys.
- 2) **Promote gender equality in schools at all levels of education**, towards pupils, teachers and parents as well as in educational materials, pedagogical methodologies and formal and informal school cultures (for example, in terms of pupils’ access to resources and space within the school). As part of this, promote gender equality in career advice and orientation, encouraging pupils (as well as parents and teachers) to question the traditional stereotypical classification of some occupations, tasks and areas of knowledge as “masculine” and others (including caring) as “feminine”.
- 3) **Develop non-formal education, concrete training and life-long learning in relation to gender equality** through: citizenship education; media literacy

education and leadership training for women and girls. It is also necessary to financially support NGOs doing this kind of work.

- 4) **Decisive policy action** at Member State and European level needs to be taken to **fight sexist stereotypes and to encourage men to take up their caring and domestic responsibilities**. As part of this, ensure that reconciliation of work and private life policies do not solely focus on the need for women to balance their work and private life commitments, but also pay particular attention to men taking up their caring and domestic task responsibilities.

II. The Economics of Care: Provision of Affordable Care Services

1. The costs of care provision today

In the prevailing view of the economy, care and welfare work, domestic and community work, which are still performed predominantly by women, are discounted as non-productive. Care work is remunerated poorly or not at all, even though it secures the foundations of society and creates human and social capital. Value is given in the economy only to remunerated employment that is geared toward the traditional male career model (full-time and non-stop employment). The diverse care-related activities of women must be made visible, recognised for their importance to society.

2. The provision of affordable, accessible and high quality care services

Affordable good quality care structures for children, older people and other dependents must be central elements of an EU social model and should be provided in the public sector and be affordable to all those who need them.

Childcare: There is only limited analysis on the public money spent on childcare services and on the most optimal distribution of childcare costs between government, employers and individual parents. In addition, part of the cost is invisible as care is often carried out by immigrant or retired women, mainly in the context of undeclared work in the home. Evidence suggests that in most Member States childcare services are not freely accessible for children ages 0 to 3 years. In many Member States parents often pay an income-related fee, which on average, amounts to 25-35% of childcare costs. Pre-school facilities on the other hand, are in most countries widely accessible and free of cost because they are integrated in the educational system.⁴

Care for older and dependent people: A significant proportion of care for older and dependent people is carried out unpaid by family and peer support. Innovative measures are needed to help family and peer support such as intermediate flexible support adapted to the person's needs, training to both carers and older persons to prevent dependency; respite care, intermediate structures to care for older people coming out of hospital, and emergency support for the dependent. Of course family members do want to help but they should not be overburdened. Choice should be given to both families and the older persons to decide who will care for them. But as the demand for care, both inside and

⁴ Reconciliation of work and private life: A comparative review of thirty European countries. EU Expert Group on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment. European Communities, 2005, page 80.

outside the family is going to increase, it is necessary to develop policies that support both formal and informal carers. **By pooling and coordinating services, and adapting the environment to ensure support of a social network including support of local communities around the older or dependent person, it is possible to develop good quality and affordable care.**

3. Care: a public service

Government policies that provide care services for children and dependents are an important factor in women's and men's capacity to manage the different demands between workplace and care giving activities. Without subsidised care services, care providers, particularly women, either struggle to meet costs from their own financial means, or withdraw from the labour market for indefinite periods of time to care for their children and dependents privately.

The full commitment of EU Member States in the organisation and financial support of care for dependent people is therefore very important. For this reason, European governments must recognise their responsibility and take an active part in organising and financing the increased care needs in society.

Member State and EU subsidisation of childcare and other care services contribute to ensure equal access for all, regardless of household income, to quality care. Subsidisation of care also supports the development of regulated high quality and accessible childcare, eldercare and care for dependents sectors. The provision of care facilities will also help to facilitate a reduction in women's poverty, child poverty, and elder poverty through enabling employment and work/life balance.

Member States must commit sufficient money and resources to providing care services and to make possible the full realisation of reconciliation of work and private life policies. Strong political will must be fully supported by the introduction of legislation, programmes and resources including budgets for the effective implementation of such measures.

4. Employers' and trades unions involvement in the provision of care services

Caring for all dependents is a responsibility for society as a whole, hence all actors, including employers have a role to play in this area. Governments must take responsibility in ensuring public provision of affordable, high quality and accessible care service, and the potentials of the private sector should be developed as appropriate. Companies/employers can contribute to the reconciliation of work and private life in two different ways; through the development of facilities which ease the burden of caring tasks or by giving employees the flexibility to adjust their work in line with their caring responsibilities. Based on these approaches, **five types of work-private life arrangements** can be distinguished: **flexible work arrangements** (part-time work, flexitime arrangements, job sharing, working at home); **leave from work for private reasons** (extra statutory maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave, leave for family reasons incl. care for older people, career break scheme); **childcare arrangements** (workplace nursery, contracted childcare places, childminding, childcare resource and referral, financial assistance, holiday play schemes/summer camps); and the **provision of training and information** (work-private life management training, employees counselling/assistance, work-private life co-ordinator, research on employees needs,

financial contributions) and **tax reduction for enterprises which provide for quality care arrangements and services**. In practice, however, the role of the employer in most European countries is rather limited with regard to the provision of care services and leave arrangements. The few exceptions refer to large companies and companies in the public domain.

Social partners and enterprises across the EU have found numerous ways of supporting workers' efforts to find a good work-life balance. The tools used have varied greatly from enterprise to enterprise and from individual to individual. These policies are often reviewed and adapted to respond effectively to changing workers and companies needs. For example, jointly approaching public authorities to develop instruments that help increase the availability of accessible and affordable child care facilities of good quality and seeking innovative ways of providing essential private household or caring services. Examples of practical tools to do so include: Attracting on site services such as travel office, shops, bank and insurance offices etc; Sponsoring child care centres or providing an allowance covering part of the nursery costs to parents; or by Creating funds by collective agreements or other means to "mutualise" the costs of maternity or parental leave allowances helps to ensure that women no longer represent a more costly source of labour than men. ⁵

EWL Recommendations concerning the Economics of Care: Provision of Affordable Care Services:

- 1) **Renewal of commitment** by Member States to **achieve the Barcelona childcare targets**.
- 2) **Guarantee appropriate and sustainable public funding for quality care services** that includes:
 - Providing dependent care as part of public social protection systems.
 - **Costs** - the costs for access or to benefit – where the persons concerned are required to contribute financially – must be **affordable for all women and men** and, where appropriate, the Member States must provide appropriate financial aid to the most disadvantaged people.
 - **Provision of public subsidised childcare facilities**.
- 3) Develop **innovative measures to help family carers and peer support** as much as possible; such as training to both carers and older persons to prevent dependency.
- 4) **Employers and Trade Unions should be engaged in negotiations** both with regard to the length of the provisions (maternity, paternity, parental leave) and to the level of payment and the flexibility in how the leave can be taken.
- 5) Future European policy **developments in the area of Social Services must recognise the specificity of social services, especially care services** and the vital role they play for society and gender equality.
- 6) **To ensure a high level of commitment, Member States should report to the European Spring Council on progress towards the full realisation of reconciliation of work and private life policies every two years.**

⁵ Framework of Actions on Gender Equality of the European social partners: UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC, 01.03.05

III. Quality Work and Quality Care Services: Care and the Labour Market

Care issues have a clear link with the position of women on the labour market in two different ways: firstly the manner in which care work is carried in society and in the private sphere impacts heavily on women's labour market engagement, secondly the care sector in employment is primarily a women's sector.

Quality Work:

Care issues and the engagement of women in paid employment

The increased percentage of women in employment has been one of the dominant and persistent trends in the European labour market over recent decades. The “sandwich generation” (i.e. those who have to care both for their grand-children and for their elderly parents) have particular difficulty in reconciling work and these increasing caring duties. Many women respond to the competing demands of employment and child rearing and elder/dependent care by engaging in intermittent employment or reduced-hour and precarious work. Although these employment choices may help women accommodate multiple-role demands in the short term, they also reduce their employment and career opportunities, wages and social/pensions benefits in both the short and the long-term.

The Care Employment Sector

Care work with older people, care work with children and care work with adults with disabilities form three very distinct care professions, which are mostly occupied by women. The care worker is usually low paid with constrained career prospects vertically and horizontally. The work is often very demanding both mentally and physically and the material conditions are often poor. Moreover, the care sector faces particular barriers because ‘caring’ is often seen as something that ‘comes naturally’ – particularly to women – paid care work is assumed to be of low value with low skill levels required: hence poor training, pay and other conditions. It is difficult to attract men to work in the care sector, which contributes further to the segregation and low valuing by society of the sector.

With the EU's current policy focus on the creation of more and better quality jobs, the care sector is an important area where this could be achieved. There is a move to increase the **professionalisation of the care workforce**, via better training and clearer accreditation, and the provision of a more extensive skills base, including education and counselling. A new environment for training and qualifications in the care sector is emerging – focused on service users, codes of practice and conduct, registration, national minimum standards, best practice and performance measures. The care sector falls within the ambit of four or five EU policy domains, so coordination of policy and activity is therefore necessary.

Household services:

Household services are those services provided by public or private organisations or the third sector that substituted unwaged work traditionally carried out in the home with paid work from a household services worker. **Household services cover five fields: childcare, eldercare, domestic cleaning, home maintenance and catering.** There has been an increase in the number of services and jobs in the household services sector. Childcare is a sub-sector in which employment growth is most evident but in several

countries there is also a significant increase in eldercare and domestic cleaning. Many household services jobs are undeclared work. Part-time working is very common in household services: given the low hourly wages, workers tend to view this form of work as a limitation rather than a choice. Household services workers are predominantly women, often migrant women and promoting men's entry into the household services sector does not receive adequate attention in employment policies⁶.

European policy makers are increasingly interested in the development of household services on account of its job creation potential. However, there is also a concern that unless appropriate action is taken through policy and workplace measures, the majority of jobs created will be low-skilled, poorly-paid and low-status. In addition, given that workers in household services are predominantly women, there is a serious question as to what extent these services are a factor in balancing the division of household and care giving responsibilities between the sexes. How can the balance be shifting if it is still women who continue to be responsible for caring and domestic tasks?

Quality Care:

Care for older and dependent people: Substantial services must be provided to meet continually growing needs, especially services to support people with special needs in their homes should they so wish. This will necessitate not only the availability of enough qualified personnel, but also the development of cooperation, coordination and synergies between such services, as well as, where appropriate, between different sectors of care

The successful and respectful care of dependent women and men calls for a wide-ranging process of participation. The participation of the dependent persons concerned, or of their representatives where they are not capable of representing themselves, in decision-making regarding not only measures concerning them personally, but also their conditions of life and existence.

The majority of people in residential/nursing home care are older women. Older women are not homogeneous and their different needs must be taken into account. The idea of individuality is often lost in residential care. It is therefore essential to ensure older people's rights to self-determination, autonomy and informed choice in a safe, secure and attractive environment, independent of their financial circumstances.

Care for children: Childcare services that provide quality developmental supports for children will enhance their social, emotional and cognitive development. There are a diversity of services in the childcare sector such as: the existence of child minders, parent-child initiatives, informal family care, public/private nurseries (crèches) etc. However, there is a sharp division between collective professional services on the one hand and informal family care on the other hand. There is need for more services open for being used to varying intensity and according to different time patterns; more services that can be used casually from time to time; more services that are available at unconventional hours and childcare services must integrate well with the school system.

Childcare facilities should also be developed in order to meet the needs of families who have children who cannot go to 'external' childcare structures due to health related

⁶ Employment in Household Services, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Report reference number: EF/01.02/EN, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

problems for example. Furthermore, disabled parents, women and men, should have the right to personal assistance to the extent that both parents are able to share childcare responsibilities equally.

***EWL Recommendations concerning Quality Work and Quality Care Services:
Care and the Labour Market:***

- 1) Employment and social protection policies should include:**
 - **Childcare and eldercare facilities** as well as facilities for disabled children and adults;
 - **Campaigns and policies giving incentives to fathers to use their parental leave** rights should be put in place in countries where substantial legal provisions exist already.
 - **Work and Employment policies targeting informal carers:** special provisions to enable women and men workers to face emergency situations such as flexible working hours and care leave, policies to compensate for impact of caring duties on professional career, etc;
 - **Support and training (particularly from a gender perspective) for informal carers,** including respite care facilities;
 - **Innovative and flexible care services for all dependent people** that are adapted to the needs of today's workers and citizens and to the diversity and changing needs both of the cared for person and their carers.

- 2) Household services:**
 - In the context of employment creation policies, **create good quality jobs in household services** for both women and men.
 - **Improve working conditions in household services** including support services for workers.
 - **Promote an improved and standardised classification of household services jobs through social dialogue in collective conventions and agreements, particularly at the European level.**
 - Harmonise educational and vocational training curricula and qualification standards and **establish and formalise possible career paths in the household services sector.**

- 3) Enhance the quality of care services:**
 - Enhance the **professionalism** of personnel responsible for childcare, older people and dependent care.
 - **Member States must release funding for such personnel, for training courses and resources, accreditation and skill assessment,** notably by encouraging the social dialogue in the sectors concerned, and equally taking account of the quality of the care provided.
 - **Older or disabled people must be involved in personnel training** and be able to control the treatments received.
 - **People in residential care facilities must have a right to choice and self-determination in all matters concerning their lives.**
 - **Successful long-term elderly care** is not solely the business of health "professionals". **Other actors must be consulted and involved,** including:
 - The dependent person;
 - The family;

- The social partners, especially for defining the policies to be implemented and the resources to be made available;
- Pensioners' and older people's associations, local communities and the NGOs;
- Public authorities, in particular local authorities, which have a major responsibility in the matter, because they have a role not only to promote, but also to control the quality of the responses provided, as well as the financial and/or technical assistance to be provided in each specific case.

IV. Who Cares? The Case of Domestic Migrant Care Workers

In certain countries, in order to overcome the problem of a lack of child-minding and/or care facilities, another type of female labour is used, namely domestic workers, mainly women, often immigrants sometimes undocumented and often under-paid. The demand for domestic workers is growing in the EU as a result of changes in the economy and society. In many situations, it has become necessary for households to employ women who are migrant workers so as to allow the parents who employ them to be active in the workplace and in society.

While some countries have taken steps to facilitate the migration of women domestic workers, immigration laws which are generally very limited can lead to the illegal entry of women, which in turn leads to illegal residency and undeclared work. Finding herself in a particularly precarious situation, the undocumented domestic worker is vulnerable to all kinds of abuse: long working days, being paid less than the minimum wage, no leave or holidays, and losing her job if she becomes ill or pregnant. Physical, psychological and/or sexual abuse is also commonplace.⁷

EWL Recommendations concerning The Case of Domestic Migrant Care Workers:

- 1) Migration policies should be developed, which take into consideration the **existence of emerging needs, in particular in the domestic sector, care of children and older or dependent people** and providing care in the home.
- 2) Migrant workers should be granted a **residency and work permit and training** to enable them to work. This permit should allow them to change employer or to move into a different sector of employment.
- 3) **Domestic work should be subject to regulation** which guarantees that the worker can benefit from the full range of social rights and social protection.
- 4) All migrant workers, regardless of status, should be entitled to **basic human rights**, as guaranteed by the international Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, and on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, including: the right to health care, to organise, to fair labour conditions, to education and training, to shelter, to family life, to moral and physical integrity, to equality before the law.

⁷ Maria Miguel Sierra's contribution in the Report of the workshop Empowering Migrant Women Living in the EU, organised by Solidar and the European Women's Lobby at the Social Platform Conference 'Building Social Policy on Fundamental Rights', Brussels, 12 October 2005

- 5) **Strategies which aim to facilitate and enable migrant care workers to gain regular employment** should be developed, in particular in terms of recognition of diplomas, adequate vocational training allowing them to access to more qualified jobs, provision of positive measures in order to promote the practice of hiring immigrant women, courses, including language learning, knowledge of existing human, civic and social rights in the host society, where relevant, as key tools for social integration.
- 6) Initiatives started by migrant women and the **networking** of organisations of migrant women care workers should be supported.

V. European Union Policies and Care

In practice, policies to reconcile work and private life are often directed towards women, thus perpetuating the caring role for women. Policies to promote the role of men in care and family responsibilities and encouraging men to take parental leave are needed. Childcare is a policy priority in Member States, however the approach varies in focus and ambition.

Care policies and services for older people, dependents and children, including maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions, are absolutely fundamental elements to achieve gender equality. **Women and men should have the choice to engage in paid work, and to have children and a family, without being deprived from their freedom of making the full use of their right to employment and equal opportunities. This must be supported by adequate legislation and social policies.**

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the EU has recognised on several occasions the importance of the reconciliation of private and working life for women and men. In the Commission's **Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010)** there is a strong message regarding the reconciliation of work and private life, in particular the Roadmap calls for achievement of the Barcelona targets on childcare and development of other care facilities that meet the care needs of older people and of people with disabilities; reconciliation policies must be equally available to women and to men; quality of care services should be improved and the qualifications of staff, mainly women, developed and better valued; and that men should be encouraged to take up family responsibilities, in particular through incentives to take parental and paternity leaves and to share leave entitlements with women. Furthermore, with the endorsement of the European Gender Equality Pact at the European Spring Council in March 2006, all Member States have committed to strengthening the gender equality aspect of the Lisbon process, and in particular they have committed to particular measures to promote a better work-life balance for all.

Social Services and European Policy: In a European context the issue of state subsidies and public funding for care services is increasingly becoming pertinent as social services of general interest have received much attention from policy makers, NGOs and the media recently due to the debate over the Commission proposal for a directive on services in the internal market. In its amended proposal for a directive on services in the internal market the Commission excluded "*social services relating to social housing, childcare and support to families in need*" from the scope of the Directive. In response to this, the

Commission released the Communication Implementing the Community Lisbon programme: Social services of general interest in the European Union ⁸ on April 26, 2006.

This is an ongoing process where the next steps are for the Commission to continue its consultation with Member States, service providers and users of services. The main issue is to take better account of the diversity of social services and to consider how the specific characteristics of social services of general interest can be used by both the Commission and Member States and to clear up legal questions concerning the application of the Community rules to the development of social services. However, the health services sector, was not covered by the Communication on social services. EWL believes that some social and health services are closely related and these should be debated in future consultations.

EWL recommendations for European policies and care:

Implementation of current EU policies and legislation concerning gender equality and reconciliation of work and private life:

- 1) Fully implement current EU and Member State policies on gender equality in employment and in particular European Gender Equality Directives and **fully implement the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs** (2005-2008), Guideline 18 to “Promote a life-cycle approach to work”.
- 2) Fully implement all measures in the Commission’s **Roadmap for equality between women and men** and in particular, those measures concerning work/life balance.
- 3) Fully implement the **European Gender Equality Pact**, and in particular measures to promote a better work-life balance for all.
- 4) Full use of **Structural Funds** resources to fund provision of care services and support for families of dependent persons.

Provision on childcare:

- 1) Ensure the achievement of the **Barcelona childcare targets**.
- 2) Update and revise the Council Recommendation of 31 March 1992 on child care (92/241/EEC). Implement measures suggested in this Recommendation.

Maternity/paternity and parental leave:

- 1) **Revise Directive 96/34 on parental leave** in order to establish a lengthier leave (at least 6 months long per parent) and entitle the parent on parental leave to an allowance that is comparable to their full salary. Make the parental leave period non-transferable between parents and leave must be shared equally between parents. The revised directive should also be extended to include other forms of family leave, and ensure the ability to obtain social security rights during these periods.
- 2) Entitle women on **maternity leave** to an income equivalent to full salary in all Member States, and guarantee that the periods of maternity leave are included for the purposes of calculating pensions and insurance.⁹

⁸ (COM (2006) 177 final)

⁹ See the opinion of the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities. Attached to the Employment and Social Affairs Committee’s Report A5-0155/2000.

- 3) Adopt a directive on paternity leave. **Paternity leave** should be at least **one month** long, **fully paid** and taken immediately or shortly after the birth or adoption of a child.
- 4) Give **self-employed** parents and parents with temporary working contracts the same right to paid maternity, paternity and parental leave as parents with employment contract defined by the law.¹⁰
- 5) Entitle **single parents** (85 % of one parent families are headed by women) either a longer parental leave, or give them the right to transfer parts of the parental leave to somebody else who has a close connection to the child.

Elder care and care for dependents:

- 1) **The new streamlined Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on Health and Long Term Care** needs to be implemented fully. Under OMC, standards should be developed to enhance status, salaries, qualifications and working conditions in the eldercare and care for dependents sector. Standards and status for carers would help also to address the risk of gender segregation in the care sector.
- 2) **Develop EU legislation with specific measures on elder care in view of the progressive ageing of the EU societies.**

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¹⁰ See note 4-5, see also the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs; Report A5-0155/2000.