

Advancing work–life balance with the EU Funds

Gender Mainstreaming

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Gender equality is one of the European Union's core values, enshrined in its treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It is crucial for the achievement of the EU's renewed policy objectives under the future EU Funds' common provisions regulation:

- a smarter Europe – innovative and smart economic transformations;
- a greener, low-carbon Europe;
- a more connected Europe – mobility and regional information and communication technology connectivity;
- a more social Europe – implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- a Europe closer to its citizens – the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas through local initiatives.

Yet inequalities persist across the EU. Women are under-represented in the labour market and in management positions, while men are under-represented in unpaid care work. Almost every woman in the EU engages in looking and house-work everyday in comparison with every third man. While there has been progress for women in the labour market, there has been almost no improvement regarding gender equality in the sphere of unpaid care responsibilities over the past 10 years (1).

The promotion of better work-life balance for women and men is at the heart of EU policies, including the new gender equality strategy (2020-2025). The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has looked at how the EU Funds are being used and what they can do to advance work-life balance.

What is work-life balance and why does it matter?

Work-life balance is about striking a balance between 'work' and 'life'. Here, 'work' means paid work and 'life' means everything else – including, but not limited to, unpaid work, domestic work (cleaning, cooking, washing, etc.), care work (taking care of children, older people, people who are ill, persons living with disabilities, as well as oneself), leisure time and social activities.

Who stays at home taking care of our children and older relatives?

Data from EIGE's Gender Equality Index reveal that far fewer women than men participate in paid work, far more women than men work part-time, and women perform most of the care and domestic work across the EU. It is worth noting that a high number of women migrants work in the EU's informal care sector, looking after children, older people, people who are ill and persons living with disabilities (2).

(*) The EU Funds are the EU's largest financing source. They are managed under the Commission's authority for the common provisions regulation for 2020-2025 and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF), the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the Instrument for Financial Support (IFS), the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Greater Regional Development, and the European Investment Fund (EIF) are financed by the EU Funds, available on EIGE website: <https://www.eige.europa.eu>.

(1) Pringle, J., & O'Donnell, C. (2019). *Gender Equality and Jobs: How to Create Jobs and Grow the Economy*. (pp. 103-104). EIGE.

(2) EIGE (2019). *Gender Equality Index 2019*. Luxembourg: European Institute for Gender Equality. Available at: <https://www.eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index>.

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