

# Equal Pay Day: Statement by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Commissioners Marianne Thyssen and Vera Jourová

Women in the European Union still earn on average 16.2% less than men. This year, the EU Equal Pay Day falls on 3 November. It marks the moment when women symbolically stop getting paid compared to their male colleagues, with 16% of the working year remaining.

Ahead of this day, First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, Commissioner Marianne Thyssen and Commissioner Věra Jourová said:

*“Women and men are equal. This is one of the EU’s founding values. But women still effectively work for two months unpaid each year, compared to their male colleagues. We cannot accept this situation any longer.*

*Women in Europe earn 16.2% less than men. This gender pay gap is not only unfair in principle, but also in practice. It puts women in precarious situations during their careers, and even more so after they retire, with a gender pension gap of 36.6%.*

*While there is no instant solution to fix this inequality, there are ways to bring about concrete change. The Commission has put a number of proposals on the table to address this issue in the workplace and at home. It is urgent that these are taken forward by the European Parliament and by Member States in the Council to achieve some concrete results, for instance by improving the rights of working parents and carers to take leave to support their families.*

*New data published today underlines the importance of urgently adopting the work-life balance legislation the European Commission has tabled. One in three Europeans was not able to take any family leave last year, and only four in ten men took (or intend to take) parental leave. This is not fair or sustainable.”*

## **Background**

The factors behind the pay gap are multiple: women more often work part-time, they are confronted with the corporate glass-ceiling, they work in lower paid sectors or often have to take the primary responsibility for care of their families. One way to address these factors is to improve the work-life balance of families, which could be achieved by adoption of a [proposal for a Directive](#) made by the Commission.

In the context of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), the Commission has taken action to allow working parents and carers to better advance their

careers, while being able to care of their families. The Commission's Work-Life Balance proposal includes the right for all fathers to take at least 10 days of professional leave around the birth of their child. Paid parental leave would also become a non-transferrable equal right for women and men – a strong incentive for men to use this possibility, rather than asking women to stall their careers for a long period while men return swiftly to work. Ultimately, it will increase the participation of women in the labour market. The negotiations with the European Parliament and Council are on-going, and an agreement is possible by the end of the year. The Commission urges all parties to strive for an ambitious compromise.

New Eurobarometer data published today underline the importance of urgently finalising this legislation. In addition, the Commission presented last year an Action Plan to Tackle the Gender Pay Gap, which targets the various factors contributing to this inequality.

### **Eurobarometer on Work-Life Balance**

Today, to mark the upcoming European Equal Pay Day, the European Commission is publishing a **Eurobarometer** reporting Europeans' views when it comes to work-life balance. See here for the [Eurobarometer results, infographic and country factsheets](#).

### **EU Action Plan on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap**

The Commission launched an [EU Action Plan on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap](#) for 2018-19. The plan prioritises eight key areas for action. Until now, €3.3 million of funding has been granted to projects combatting stereotypes, with regard to career guidance and career choices. In the coming weeks, we will launch a public consultation to see how EU equal pay laws are working in practice, and gather more ideas on how to better reach our goals. The Commission also proposes country-specific recommendations, as well as follows on the gender pay gap under the European Semester.

The Commission has started an [evaluation](#) of the [Directive on equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation](#). The evaluation will be based, among other input, on discussions with stakeholders, in particular the social partners, and Member States. An online public consultation will be launched in November.

### **For More Information**

[The gender pay gap in the EU](#), including:

- EU and national factsheets on the gender pay gap,
- A new study published today on the persistence of the gender pay gap and its underlying factors

[Work Life Balance Eurobarometer](#)

[Work Life Balance proposal](#)