

Work-life balance as a leverage for women's empowerment and promoting gender equality

High Level Conference of the Italian Presidency
of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Organised by the Italian Minister
of Equal Opportunities and Family
and the Council of Europe

Concept Note

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Within the framework of the Council of Europe, issues related to the [promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment](#) have been addressed through the adoption, implementation and compilation of various instruments of a normative and programmatic nature. Women's empowerment means women and girls need to contribute their ideas and strategies; empowerment requires a true balance to be struck when women and girls take on roles and commitments in public and professional life and in the personal sphere, without this obliging them to choose one to the exclusion of the other.

■ In the domain of work - subject to major upheavals due to the pandemic - this implies a complex set of legal and policy reform commitments towards a harmonisation with private life as an incentive for empowerment itself, including adequate educational, care and social services, and effective steps to bridge the gender pay gap and to ensure less precarious jobs for women.

■ At the cultural level, the [fight against stereotypes](#), together with effective regulations providing for parental leave, can facilitate a balanced distribution of care work between men and women and thus encourage the conciliation between private and professional life for all.

■ The [Council of Europe's Strategy on Gender Equality 2018-2023](#) calls for active participation of women and girls in decisions concerning work-life balance as a pre-requisite of economic independence and to overcome of gender gaps in the public and business sectors. Among other texts, Committee of Ministers [Recommendation R\(96\)51 on the reconciliation of work and family life](#), of 19 June 1996, can be read with this idea in mind.

■ Attention should also be paid, in this context, to the shaping of part-time or teleworking solutions offered to employees within public administration and private enterprise: highly flexible forms of employment, supported by the necessary social and economic protection measures, can provide workers with the appropriate, balanced means to manage their professional career path.

■ This high-level conference aims at fostering a broad debate on some central aspects of achieving work-life balance, of preventing gender-based discrimination and overcoming social and cultural obstacles, in support of professional choices and satisfactory career paths through flexible and dynamic solutions compatible with the activities carried out in the personal, private and family spheres.

■ **Target audience:** Politicians, Public Servants, Ambassadors, Diplomats, Academia, Civil Society, Youth, Journalists.