

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10901556

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISONS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN THE EU

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Abstract: *The objective of this paper is to analyze the evolution of legislation on work-life balance in the European Union (EU), from its first initiative adoption in 2019 to its mandatory implementation by the member states in 2022 (or later). Our research begins with an overview of the initial steps taken towards the implementation of such policies since 2017, revealing the concepts and significance of work-life balance in contemporary society, and briefly discussing the historical context of relevant laws and acts that paved the way for the most recent one, the Directive EU 2019/1158 (also known as the work-life balance directive). In this context, we outline the key provisions of the work-life balance Directive and highlight primary studies that have monitored its implementation across EU member states (such as those made by Coface, Deloitte, European Commission, etc.). The paper updates our previous work on this topic regarding the progress of the Directive's implementation in those EU member states where such information was available.*

Keywords: *work-life balance concepts, work-life balance legislation, European Union, human rights*

JEL Classification: *I30, I31, J08, J22, J28*

1. Introduction

In a rapidly changing society, balancing careers, family duties, and personal life presents increasingly significant challenges for employees. In such context there was a need for adopting family-friendly measures and flexible work arrangements in EU in order to facilitate this balancing act. Achieving a work-life balance should include more than just household tasks and family care, but should manage some other life priorities like personal development and/or extracurricular activities either. The proposal for such a directive originated in

2017 (COM/2017/0253) and encompassed several key aspects. These included the introduction of paternity leave, providing a minimum of 10 working days around the time of a child's birth. Additionally, the proposal introduced carers' leave, granting workers who offer personal care or support to a relative or cohabitant 5 days of leave per year. Another significant element was the extension of the existing right to request flexible working arrangements—such as reduced working hours, adaptable schedules, and changes in the place of work—to encompass all working parents of children up to at least 8 years old, as well as all caregivers (Eurostat, 2020). This initiative incorporated also, according to Eurostat (2020), a series of non-legislative measures destined to assist Member States in achieving these objectives. Such measures were referring to: ensuring protection against discrimination and dismissal for parents (including pregnant women and individuals returning from a leave) and caregivers; promote balanced utilization of family-related leaves and flexible working arrangements, with a particular emphasis on achieving gender equity. The benefits of adopting such proposal at the EU level would be an improved equilibrium between professional and private lives for both parents and caregivers. Furthermore, the anticipated increase in women's workforce participation, along with earning more and advancing in their careers, would have brought positive effects on the economy, social inclusion, and the health and happiness of these individuals and their families (Eurostat, 2020). The Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Caregivers (Directive EU 2019/1158) was finally adopted in the EU after two years, in June/2019 and all the EU member states were required to implement it into their own legislation by August 2022. In 2027 Member States have to communicate to the Commission the stage of the Directive implementation necessary for drawing up a report.

2. Literature review. Concepts and importance of work-life balance in modern society

Work-life balance refers to achieving a state where work and personal life coexist harmoniously. It means that usually job duties and responsibilities can be done without personal life neglecting which includes health, family, friends, hobbies, and cultural interests. Work-life balance doesn't necessarily mean giving equal attention to every aspect of life, but rather having the freedom to allocate the time and energy between work and personal life according to each individual preference. There isn't a single, universally agreed-upon definition or way to measure work-life balance in the existing literature. *Kalliath & Brough (2008)* examined six different conceptualizations about work-life balance, including: managing multiple roles, equity across these roles, satisfaction, fulfilling important roles, understanding the relationship between conflicts and

facilitation, and having a sense of control over these roles. They also introduced a new definition: “*Work–life balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life priorities*”. Work-Life Balance (WLB) as was defined by Kirchmeyer (2000) represent the achievement of fulfilling experiences in the different aspects of life that require various resources like: energy, time and commitment and these resources are spread across all the domains (Khateeb, 2021). Throughout the evolution of the discipline of work-life balance, various theories have been proposed to elucidate this phenomenon (Khateeb, 2021). *Spillover Theory - Pleck (1995)* introduced the concept of spillover, wherein the effects of one’s work role spillover into their family role, and vice versa.

Conflict Theory - Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) formulated the conflict theory, which posits that work and personal life are inherently conflicting in terms of demands on an individual’s time and effort, leading to competition for their attention. *Compensation Theory - Staines (1980)* described the compensation theory, where individuals seek to compensate for deficiencies in one aspect of life (e.g., work or family) by investing more resources in the other aspect. *Enrichment Theory - Powell & Greenhaus (2006)* developed the enrichment theory, which examines processes that connect work to family and family to work. Enrichment occurs when experiences in one role enhance the quality of life in another, or when psychological resources from one role spill over into another. *Facilitation Theory-Frone (2003)* introduced facilitation theory, which explores how engagement in one role can lead to acquiring skills, experiences, and opportunities that make participation in another role easier. *Boundary Theory- Nippert-Eng’s sociological work (1996)*, delves into how individuals assign meaning to their work and home lives, and how they navigate the transition between the two.

Work/Life Border Theory-Clark (2000) proposed the work/life border theory, suggesting that individuals actively manage and negotiate the boundaries between their work and non-work domains to achieve a balance. This theory acknowledges that while “work domain” and “non-work domain” are distinct, they do influence each other. These theories provide valuable perspectives for understanding the complex interplay between work and personal life (Khateeb, 2021). According to other authors (but also according to reality we live), work and family life often blend, and it is not always possible to draw clear boundaries between the two. Family responsibilities may spill to work hours, as much as the work demands might extend to personal time. As a result, trying to maintain a rigid balance between the two spheres might lead to frustration and disappointment. This is why, finding a way to combine the two aspects of life according to personal values and priorities can lead to a more realistic and advantageous approach.

Both work and family are important elements of everybody's life, and can exist together, improving overall well-being and happiness.

3. European Union - Historical development of work-life related policies in the EU

The EU's commitment to work-life balance extends far beyond the adoption of the *Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Careers in 2019*, as it has consistently sought to improve working conditions and prioritize the welfare of its citizens throughout its history (Andrei, 2023). Since the 1970's and 1980's, were adopted the first European directives regarding the protection of workers' health and safety, which had a direct impact on the working environment and hours worked. In 1978, the Council of the European Union passed a resolution on the first Action Programme on Safety and Health at Work in the EU. The Council emphasized the need to monitor workers' health and also considered psychosocial factors, suggesting that adapting work to workers would promote their physical and mental well-being (Castillo, 2016). The Council Directive with improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (89/391/EEC), came into force in 1989 and was fully implemented across all EU member states by 1992.

In the 1990's, was adopted a directive concerning maternity leave, parental leave, and the rights of workers with children, in an attempt to support families and to promote a work-life balance (92/85/EEC). The research paper entitled: "*Maternity and paternity leave in the EU*" published by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS,2022) defines the terms that such directives and/or legislations often used (i) maternity leave which is a leave granted to mothers during the period before and after childbirth; (ii) paternity leave, which is given to fathers or recognized second parents, similar to maternity leave and (iii) parental leave is available to either parent after the maternity or paternity leave period. According to their research paper, maternity rights were set out in the 1992 through Pregnant Workers Directive (92/85/EEC) which comprises measures for improvements in the safety and health at work for pregnant workers and/or for workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding. Dir. 92/85/EEC has been changed in current consolidated version on June 2019. In present the final form of this EU legislation sets the minimum period for maternity leave at 14 weeks, with 2 weeks compulsory leave before and/or after confinement and an adequate allowance subject to national legislation (EPRS, 2022). In the 2000's, the EU have also implemented some directives with a focus on gender equality, working conditions and in achievements of a balance between the professional and personal lives of employees. Among them we mention: Dir.2003/88/EC; Dir.2006/54/EC; Dir. 2010/41/EU and Dir.2010/18/EU (Andrei, 2023).

Directive 2010/18/EU of the Council on 8th March 2010, actually implemented a revised framework agreement on parental leave, concluded one year earlier (18th June 2009) The purpose of parental leave was to facilitate the professional and family responsibilities and promote treatment equality between men and women. According to this directive, parental leave was granted for a minimum of four months on non- transferred base Directive 2010/18/EU was repealed with the introduction of Directive EU 2019/1158, mentioned in the current paper's introduction.

Finally, the last and newest one, the Directive EU 2019/1158 represents a continuation of the EU's efforts in maintaining and expanding the rights of workers (and their families) regarding work-life balance. The three main rights provided by the Directive according to COFACE Families Europe (2022) were: paternity leave, parental leave and carers' leave. In more detailed picture the directive improvements were: (i) 10 working days of paternity leave for fathers or equivalent second parents (art. 4) remunerated at least at the level of sick pay (art. 8, rec.30) compared to previous law (2010/18/EU) which had not legal provisions for paternity leave, (ii) at least four months of parental leave per parent, of which 2 (two) months that cannot be transferred between parents (art.5), compared to previous law from 2010, which had just 1(one) month non-transferable between parents, remunerated at adequate level by Member States (art. 8, rec. 31); (iii) at least five working days of leave per year, with additional flexibility on how to allocate them (art. 6) for caregivers with no mentions about remuneration at EU level, (rec.32), compared to previous law (2010/18/EU) which had not legal provisions for caregivers leave; (iv) the right to request flexible working arrangements (flexible work schedules, reduced working hours). Article 9 states that Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that workers with children up to at least eight years, and carers, have the right to request flexible working arrangements for caring purposes (COFACE Families Europe, 2022).

4. Implementation of work-life directive in EU member countries

After its adoption in 2019, the Directive's text was published in the Official Journal of the EU in all languages. Member States were granted a period until August 2, 2022, (a span of three years) to integrate the necessary laws, regulations, and administrative measures to align with the directive into their national legislations. However, on September 21, 2022, the Commission took action against 19 Member States for not communicating their transposition measures. Further analysis of countries' replies revealed that 11 of these countries had not fully implemented the Directive. As a result, the Commission was started an infringement procedure to 11 Member States: *Belgium, Czechia,*

Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Austria, and Slovenia. At that time, these countries were granted an additional two months to address the issues or face potential referral to the European Union's Court of Justice (Andrei, 2023). Several studies aimed at tracking the implementation stage of EU Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance in EU member states. We will mention the most extensive studies carried out in this direction and we will detail the most recent ones. A first study we mention is one of COFACE Families Europe report about assessment of the EU Work-Life Balance 2019 Directive transposition, named: *"EU Work-life Balance Directive transposition in action: A mixed picture"* (COFACE, 2022). This report presents clear and detailed the findings in matter of Directive implementation for 10 of the EU member states: Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Spain (a comparative analysis of the Directive EU 2019/1158 transposition). We also mention a more recent study conducted by Deloitte in 2023 (Deloitte, 2023). This study focuses on the implementation of two EC directives (EU Directive 2019/1158) and EU Directive 2019/1152) across 10 EU member countries: *Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia*. Four of these countries are also mentioned in the COFACE study (Croatia, Hungary Lithuania and Poland) providing us with a more current development. Based on Deloitte April 2023 study, it is confirmed that 9 out of the 10 EU countries analyzed (excluding the Czech Republic) have successfully implemented the provisions of EU Directive 2019/1158 concerning Work-Life Balance. Actually, we present the actual stage of Directive implementation (August 2023) following these results and/or most recent data here below in the table 1:

Table 1. Work-Life Balance Directive implementation-August 2023

| | Country | EU Directive 2019/1158 implementation stage, 2023 | Source |
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| 1 | Bulgaria | The Bulgarian National Assembly has passed a new law that modifies and adds to the Bulgarian Labour Code. This law was officially published in State Gazette No. 62/05 August 2022 and became effective on August 1, 2022. Changes and additions were also made to the "Ordinance on Working Time, Rest, and Leave," published in State Gazette No. 78/30 September 2022, with the same effective date of August 1, 2022. | Deloitte, 2023. Implementation of the EU Directives on Work-Life Balance and on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across Central Europe (Legal report). |

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| 2 | Croatia | In Croatia, Directive 2019/1158 was incorporated into law through changes to the Maternal and Parental Benefits Act (Official Gazette no. 85/2022) on 1 August, 2022, and the new Maternal and Parental Benefits Act (Official Gazette No. 152/2022) on January 1, 2023. Other significant changes were made through amendments to the Labour Act, effective from January 1, 2023. | Deloitte, 2023. Implementation of the EU Directives on Work-Life Balance and on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across Central Europe (Legal report). |
| 3 | Czech Republic | The Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance and Directive 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions will change Act No. 262/2006 Coll., Labour Code in 2023 (DLA Piper, 2023). The amendment received the Czech government's approval on April 5, 2023 and is projected to be enforced with a deadline of 1 January, 2024, at the latest (Deloitte, 2023). | DLA Piper, 2023. Expected changes in the Czech Labour Law and Social Security Law Deloitte, 2023. Implementation of the EU Directives on Work-Life Balance and on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across Central Europe (Legal report). |
| 4 | Hungary | The amendment to the Hungarian Labour Code (Act I of 2012 on the Labour Code), which incorporates the Directive, has been approved by the Hungarian Parliament. This amendment became effective on January 1, 2023. | Deloitte, 2023. Implementation of the EU Directives on Work-Life Balance and on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across Central Europe (Legal report). |
| 5 | Latvia | Parliament passed amendments to labor law in Latvia on 16 June, 2022. These changes include the incorporation of EU directives like EU 2019/1152 on working conditions, EU 2019/1158 on work-life balance, and certain elements of Directive 2014/67/EU on posted workers, following a formal notice from the European Commission. These amendments became effective on Aug. 1, 2022. | European Commission, 2022. Flash Reports on Labour Law. July 2022. Summary and country reports. |
| 6 | Lithuania | On 28 June 2022, the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas) with Law No. XIV-1189, adopted an amendment to the Labour Code to promulgate nearly 30 provisions of the Code (Registry of Legal Acts, 2022, No. 15178) related to the transposition of various EU directives (Directive 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions, EU Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance, | European Commission, 2022. Flash Reports on Labour Law July 2022. Summary and country reports |

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| | | and EU Directive 2020/1057 on road transport of mobile workers). | |
| 7 | Poland | The amendment to the Labor Code in Poland which supports parents and employees was published in the Journal of Laws on April 4, 2023, and became effective on April 26, 2023. | Deloitte, 2023. Implementation of the EU Directives on Work-Life Balance and on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across Central Europe (Legal report). |
| 8 | Romania | Emergency Ordinance No. 117/2022, which amends and completes the Law on Paternity Leave No. 210/1999, became effective on August 29, 2022. Law No. 283/2022, amending and completing Law No. 53/2003 on the Labor Code, along with Government Emergency Ordinance No. 57/2019 concerning Administrative Code matters such as carers leave, force majeure leave, and flexible working arrangements, came into effect on October 22, 2022. | Deloitte, 2023. Implementation of the EU Directives on Work-Life Balance and on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across Central Europe (Legal report). |
| 9 | Slovakia | The Slovak Labour Code now incorporates the Directive through an Amendment of the Labour Code approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 4 October, 2022, and subsequently signed by the President on 21 October, 2022. The updated Labour Code became effective on 1 November 2022. | Deloitte, 2023. Implementation of the EU Directives on Work-Life Balance and on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across Central Europe (Legal report). |
| 10 | Slovenia | The Act Amending Parental Protection and Family Benefits Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No 97/01) has been adopted to implement in Slovenia the provisions of EU Directive 2019/1152. The Act was adopted on 24 November 2022, and applied from 1 April 2023. | Deloitte, 2023. Implementation of the EU Directives on Work-Life Balance and on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across Central Europe (Legal report). |
| 11 | Belgium | Through regulations dated 7 October, 2022, Belgium has successfully incorporated the European directive on transparent and predictable working conditions (Directive (EU) 2019/1152), while also partly integrating the European directive on work-life balance (Directive (EU) 2019/1158). The transposition of Directive (EU) No. 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers into Belgian law brings some changes to the types of family- | Crowell, October 2022; New Belgian Labor and Employment Laws on Work-Life Balance and Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions. |

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| | | -friendly leave and introduces new possibilities for workers to more flexibly combine their work with caring activities. | |
| 12 | Finland | The implementation of the Directive in Finland involved modifying various labor and parental laws (Lexology, 2023). This includes amendments to the Employment Contracts Act 55/2001 regarding family leaves, effective from 1 August 2022, and a partial revision of the Non-Discrimination Act 21/2004, which came into effect in June 2023 (Karänen & Vinnari, 2023). | Lexology, 2023. The Work-life Balance Directive: Update on implementation. Karänen & Vinnari, 2023. Finland: Employment Law Update: Wrapping Up 2022 And Taking a Sneak Peek At 2023. |
| 13 | France | France has incorporated the provisions of the EU Directive on work-life balance for parents and caregivers (2019/1158) by means of Law 2023/171 (Koenig, 2023). | Marine Koenig, 2023. New French Law Incorporates EU Directives on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions and on Work-Life Balance. Legifrance, 2023. Law 2023/171 of March 9, 2023 adapting various statutory provisions to EU Law. |
| 14 | Germany | On 1 December, 2022, the German Parliament approved the adoption of the proposed law (Document 20/3447 dated September 19, 2022) to align with EU Directive 2019/1158. The core aspects of the EU Directive are already comprehensively addressed within existing German legislation. As a result, the implementation of the directive within Germany doesn't introduce substantial alterations. The proposed law introduces modifications to the <i>Federal Parental Allowance and Parental Leave Act</i> , the <i>Caregiver Leave Act</i> , the <i>Family Care Leave Act</i> , and the <i>General Equal Treatment Act</i> . These changes particularly aim to safeguard employees seeking parental or caregiving leave within small enterprises. The introduction of paternity leave in 2024 remains uncertain. | Simmons & Simmons, 2022. German Parliament decides against paternity leave for now. |
| 15 | Italy | The Italian legislation has integrated the EU Directive 2019/1158 concerning work-life balance for parents and caregivers through the enactment of Legislative Decree No. 105 on June 30, 2022. This decree officially took effect on August 13, 2022. | L&E Global, 2023. Italy: 2023, Looking ahead. |

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| 16 | Spain | The implementation of EU Directives 2019/1152 and 2019/1158 in Spain took place via the issuance of Royal Decree-law 5/2023 on June 28, 2023. This decree, which revises several existing labor and employment laws, was officially published in the Official State Journal of Spain on June 29, 2023, thus becoming effective. | Global Compliance Desk – Spain, 2023. Spain: Introduces New Measures for Work-life Balance in accordance with EU Directives |
| 17 | Austria | Austria already has for longer time a legislation in place that provides conditions equivalent to, or more generous than, those in the EU Directive 2019/1158 (Amendment to Paternity Leave Act was approved by Austrian Parliament, since 2 July 2019) (Lexology, 2022). Due to its highly supportive policies, Austria provides more extensive parental leave options, as compared to many other countries, here including EU member countries. Parents can access numerous government benefits in order to achieve work-life-balance in Austria as: cash benefits for each child, child tax credits, and child-raising allowances (Expatica), 2023) | Lexology, 2022. The Work-life Balance Directive: Update on implementation. Bhaumik, G., (Expatica), 2023. Work-life balance in Austria |
| 18 | Cyprus | After being published in the Official Gazette on December 16, 2022, the Law No.216(I)/2022 concerning Leave (Paternity, Parental, Carer, Force Majeure) and Flexible Working Arrangements for Work-Life Balance has officially taken effect in Cyprus. | Elias Neocleous & Co LLC, 2023. Cyprus Introduces New Work-life Balance Legislation Providing Additional Rights for Working Parents and Caregivers. |
| 19 | Denmark | The Danish Parliament approved the changes to the parental leave act on March 3, 2022. Specific regulations are in place for self-employed parents. Furthermore, starting from January 1, 2024, updated regulations for single parents will be implemented. These changes allow a portion of the leave to be transferred to close family members like grandparents or siblings. Additionally, as of 1 January, 2024, improvements will be seen in parental leave options for LGBT+ families. Legal parents will have the ability to transfer specific weeks of the leave to the child's "social parents." | NJORD, 2022. New rules on parental leave in Denmark. |

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| 20 | Estonia | <p>The Estonian law incorporated the Directive from 1 August, 2022, by modifying the Employment Contracts Act (Lexology, 2023).</p> <p>This implementation also brought about changes in the Public Service Act, the Act governing Working Conditions of Posted Employees in Estonia, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Fondia, 2022)</p> | <p>Lexology, 2023. The Work-life Balance Directive: Update on implementation.</p> <p>Fondia, 2022. Several amendments to the Estonian Employment Contracts.</p> |
| 21 | Greece | <p>In Greece, the implementation of Directive (EU)2019/1158 took place through the enactment of Law 4808/2021, which was published in Government Gazette A' 101 on June 19, 2021. This law introduces significant reforms to individual employment relationships, in alignment with ILO Conventions 190 and 187.</p> | <p>Industrial Relations and Labour Law, 2021.</p> <p>Greece: Greek Law 4808/2021 - Major reforms in employment legislation (newsletter)</p> |
| 22 | Ireland | <p>In Ireland, the <i>Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act (Act 8 of 2023)</i> is currently being introduced, and specific aspects of this new law will take effect from July 2023 onwards.</p> | <p>Ruth Doris, 2023. What is the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act?</p> |
| 23 | Luxembourg | <p>Two legislative proposals, known as Bill 8016 and Bill 8017, were officially introduced on 2 June 2022, by Luxembourg's Minister of Labour and the Minister of Family Affairs. Bill 8016 introduces two new types of leave, aimed at improving the balance between work and personal life for employees. Meanwhile, Bill 8017 extends leave entitlement to the second equivalent parent in a same-sex couple following the birth of a child. This expansion widens eligibility, which previously only applied to the father in heterosexual couples.</p> | <p>Hamma, M., 2023 (Delano). Three new types of leave introduced,</p> |
| 24 | Malta | <p>By means of Legal Notice 201 of 2022, the Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations have been established in Malta, effectively implementing the EU Directive 2019/1158 on Work-Life Balance for parents and carers and entered into force on August 2, 2022.</p> | <p>GTG, 2022. Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers</p> |

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| 25 | Netherlands | In the Netherlands, the Directive has been put into effect through the enactment of the <i>Paid Parental Leave Act</i> , which became operative on August 2nd, 2022. | Toss, 2022. New Paid Parental Leave Act as of August 2, 2022. |
| 26 | Portugal | On 3 April 2023, Law No. 13/2023 was published in the Official Gazette, introducing changes to Portugal's Labor Code, Law No. 105/2009 (Labor Code Regulation), Decree-Law No. 66/2011, and the Social Security Contributions Code. | Garrigues, 2023. Decent Work Agenda in Portugal: Main changes to labor legislation come into force on May 1, 2023 |
| 27 | Sweden | Sweden's <i>Parental Leave Act</i> and the <i>Act on the Right to Absence for Urgent Family Reasons</i> came into effect on August 2nd, 2022, while the regulations outlined in the <i>Care for Related Persons Act</i> had become effective starting from October 1st, 2022. | Clementson I., (Azets), 2022. Work-life balance for parents and carers |

Source: extracted from various sources from each country (last column)

5. Conclusions

In the European Union, the work-life balance improved significantly as a result of the Work-Life Balance Directive's adoption (EU/2019/1158). The directive derives from the need for employees (especially parents and carers) to improve the balance between their professional and personal responsibilities. Its evolution derived from a good understanding of the fact that workers are not only productive contributors to the economy, but also have private lives, caring for children or other members of their families (Andrei, 2023). Analysis of the historical context of work-life balance policies demonstrated that these were not isolated efforts, but rather part of a large and complex one made by all EU countries in order to prioritize the development of its citizen's lives. The Work-Life Balance Directive (EU/2019/1158) mainly focuses on paternity leave, parental leave, and carers' leave, aiming to comprehensively promote a more supportive work environment. The inclusion of a 10 (ten) day paternity leave for fathers or equivalent second parents (Article 4), complemented by a remuneration framework set at a minimum sick pay level (Article 8, recommendation 30), marks a noteworthy departure from the absence of paternity leave provisions in the previous law (2010/18/EU). Furthermore, the Directive ensures that each parent is entitled to at least 4 (four) months of parental leave, with 2 (two) months being exclusively non-transferable between parents (Article 5). As compared to the previous law of 2010 (2010/18/EU), through this extension of parental leave, (EU/2019/1158) now it is legally recognized the importance of family time providing a foundation for a healthier work-life

balance. The requirement for remuneration at a suitable level, determined by Member States (Article 8, recommendation 31), adds a critical dimension to ensuring the feasibility of such leaves. Additionally, the Directive introduces a minimum of five working days of leave per year for caregivers, coupled with enhanced flexibility in leave allocation (Article 6). Although specific remuneration details are absent at the EU level (Recommendation 32), this provision marks a significant leap from the previous law (2010/18/EU), which lacked legal provisions for caregiver leave. The Directive also refers to the right to request flexible working arrangements, such as more flexible working hours and/or a reduced working schedule underlining how the nature of work is constantly changing. Article 9 emphasizes that Member States should have the duty to establish measures to give workers with children up to eight years of age, as well as carers, the ability to seek flexible working arrangements (COFACE Families Europe, 2022). There is a mixed picture of progress and challenges regarding the implementation of work-life directive by member states. Austria already has the corresponding legislation in place that provides conditions equivalent to, or more generous than the provisions of the EU Directive 2019/1158, while on the opposite some other countries have faced obstacles and complexities in incorporating them into their national law. In our paper, we see the studies carried out by entities such as COFACE, Deloitte, European Commission and some legal agencies or laws sites from each EU country which we hope to shed light on the real impact of the Directive's implementation. Positive outcomes came from countries that have effectively adopted the Directive regarding the overpass of gender inequality, improved well-being, and a more engaged and productive workforce. But this directive's journey keeps far from complete. Its impact depends on continued efforts of member states to refine and adapt it to workers' evolving needs.

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