

FAMILY POLICIES Intergroup
***Reinforcing Family as a Basic Component of Society and Reconciling Work
and Family***

Background and Challenges

The recent paradigm shift that we can discern in society- and family-related policies can undoubtedly be assigned to a series of economic, social and cultural changes calling for reforms in social care and services, with policies aimed at supporting families taking a new direction.

Political intentions which can be witnessed in all Member States should now be translated into government strategies, placing family policies within well-structured and coherent frames in order to ensure a healthy social structure, create family welfare, and guarantee children rights.

Goals and Priority Areas

The *main goals* of the Family Policies Intergroup are:

- To reinforce *family as a basic component of society*, source of social integration, solidarity, education and culture,
- To promote *family-friendly policies* at European, national and regional level, and
- To work on the different aspects of work and family life reconciliation

The guiding principle behind all our policies is "*the best interests of the child*" applied to the promotion of the social, legal and economic protection of families.

Therefore, the *priority areas* of the Family Policies Intergroup *working program* are as follows:

- Supporting and encouraging parenthood, providing financial incentives for child birth and raising a child, and giving a voice to the special interests of smaller family businesses and family farmers in Europe and around the world;
- Strengthening the role of families on the European labor market, creating a new working culture and giving Europe a global leading position with regard to work-family balance;
- Reconciling parenthood and career advancement, promoting family-friendly policies and working conditions, mainstreaming and integrating work and family reconciliation issues into the European Parliament policy-making;

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- Addressing demographic issues by improving economic support for families, in particular for more vulnerable families (families with handicapped children, lone parent families, large families, immigrant families, etc.);
- Promoting youth employment, ensuring life-long learning opportunities and increasing job flexicurity;
- Promoting gender equality and paying attention to special needs of women from disadvantaged minority groups;
- Fostering maternal and child health, as well as strengthening the quality of maternal and child care (for instance, by supporting the position of midwives, paediatricians and paediatric nursing care);
- Resuming and following up actions/talks on a new draft of the EU directive on maternity leave;
- Ensuring accessible and high quality social environment (day-care) for raising and educating children, as well as fair working conditions for teachers and pre-school teachers;
- Focusing on cyber security for youth and children, fighting against cyberbullying, strengthening the media competence of children, parents and teachers faced to the new technologies;
- Promoting active citizenship and social responsibility in order to bring all persons close to the European project by fostering participation and dialogue;
- Fostering solidarity among nations for a harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities, social protection, equality between men and women;
- Mainstreaming the objective of fighting poverty and social exclusion into relevant strands of policy, at both national and community level, as well as tackling discrimination and developing priority actions in favour of specific target groups (for example, children, the elderly and disabled);

We are all aware of the fact that social policies in each and every Member State are rooted in already existing institutional systems, value systems and traditions. Therefore, adaptability -

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i.e. social, economic, legal and cultural context - and social dialogue are the most fundamental conditions underlying the success of our family policies.

In order to assure the smooth functioning of the Intergroup during the 2014-2019 parliamentary term, without being blocked by any ideological issues or personal rivalries, we need to agree upon common principles underlying all discussions and actions.

We therefore invite all stakeholders to meet and discuss family matters with a view to cooperating with all EU institutions, national parliaments and NGOs, but also working and conducting joint actions with other EP intergroups or interest groups.

Together, we shall also work on assessing how families contribute to the Millenium Development Goals, as well as how the guidance and the support provided by the EU help the Member States achieve the Europe 2020 goals regarding children, youth and families.

We believe that a non-legislative European Family Strategy could constitute a sound common fundament for a family-friendly European Union. Moreover, we would like to support the creation of a European Family Policy Database, which would intensify the cooperation between all regions and Member States in the development of their family policies.

Finally, after celebrating the 20th anniversary of the International Year of Family, we shall ask for a European Year for Work and Family Reconciliation.

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