

**"Parental Childcare and Employment Policy"**  
**Conference of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council**  
**Kongresové centrum Prague, February 5 - 6, 2009**

Your Eminence, fathers Cardinals, dear Mr. chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Czech Presidency for inviting me and organizing this excellent conference. This conference is a credit to the involvement of the Czech Presidency in the European Union, which fully respects the diversity of cultures.

From the start let me express my delight at the new dynamics in the discussions on the future of the common good. I am not afraid of these discussions. We, the new member states, also have our own discussions and abilities that we may invest in the continuance of the European integration process. We want our experiences to be taken seriously because they are a part of our heritage and we are proud of this. Each idea must be heard so that it can be developed wisely for a future where every woman and man can make the best of herself/himself. We are standing at the beginning of the European year that will focus on innovation and creativity. Let us be creative and inventive not only in the economic sphere, environment and research but also in creating social relations.

At the conclusion of these two days, rich in information and discussions, I would like to present several thoughts on non-discrimination between women and men and solidarity between generations - on new perspectives for women/mothers and men/fathers in the labour market.

The Committee on Women's Rights of the European Parliament, which I have had the honour to chair for almost five years, recently unanimously adopted my initiative report that deals with this important issue.

In truth, this is the first report of the European Parliament that does not regard citizens only in their simple civil role as tax payers or employees incorporated in the formal labour market.

The role of the solidarity between generations is exciting: it is about harmonizing the policy on equal opportunities for women and men and focuses on the growth of national wealth for the benefit of the common good along with the search for answers to questions raised by the demographic crisis.

The principle of solidarity between generations is one of the structural keys to the European social model; so that this principle is adhered to public authorities on various levels must take an active attitude and all social players must get involved in securing quality social services of general interest to families, young people and all those who cannot provide for themselves.

The concept of intergenerational solidarity is not limited only to ensuring the continuance of life but it relates also to responsibility in relation to elders and assistance to the

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reliant people, while contributing to the respect of human dignity and to the education of future generations.

There is no doubt that solidarity between generations is a social dimension of the Lisbon strategy.

This perspective, however, requires a new view of it.

Up to now, national policies and the European policy perceived the citizen according to labour market requirements. Answers to the demographic crisis, on the contrary, perceive a citizen also in their role of a parent / mother and father in relation to their responsibility to the family. Here, a major question arises that directs our thinking: what model of society do we want to promote? The educational role of parents in relation to the future generation and elders or in relation to assistance to the reliant and the role of women and men as providers in relation to seniors are inevitable for increasing the general good. This role should be recognized by sectional policies for women and men, who will decide freely, whether to make this task full-time or part-time.

Do we want to have families adapted to the market and enterprises, or market and enterprises adapted to families? This is not an irrelevant question at all. The European and national policies are determined by the tension between market logic and human nature logic.

By market economic logic, each citizen in the fertile age must be incorporated in the labour market. Human nature logic, which is the base of the policy and which is involved in the demographic crises however tells us that a new-born baby simply needs its mother and its father to be able to anchor the development of its human abilities.

Unfortunately, current statistics cannot contribute to this discussion. The systems of national state accounting take into account only the market value established in formal employment, which is subject to taxation. However, they hide the highly visible, non-market value established within parental responsibility.

In the resolution adopted by the European Parliament in Strasbourg of which the major part consists of my report emphasizes that a person devoting time and abilities to caring for children and educating them or to caring for elders should be socially recognized. This objective could be achieved by awarding individual rights to such a person, i.e. social security and pensions.

How can we support better reconciliation of family and professional life without giving the same weight to both sides of the same choice? The European Parliament, in its resolution, talks about the possibility of reconciling family and professional life only when, from the economic and social viewpoint, the respective persons can freely decide and if they are supported by political and economic decisions on the European and interstate level without implying any disadvantages, and where the inevitable infrastructure exists.

The role of society is thus to act so that women and men can **freely** choose between two logical options, each of which has its reasons for existing in the broader vision, such as the market vision.

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We, men and women, who are involved in political institutions, bear the responsibility of proposing these decisions and I hereby congratulate the Czech Presidency on performing its role.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Reconciliation between the family responsibility of mothers and fathers and the professional ambitions of employees has a very positive and immediate influence on the whole society.

Within the Committee on Women's Rights of the European Parliament, I have organized a public hearing on the role of women, family and society in reducing the crime rate of youth. During this public hearing, the German criminologist, Prof. Christina Pfeiffer, clearly stated that better reconciliation of family and professional life may have an instant and quick social influence.

Professor Pfeiffer proved that "parents most permanently contribute to reducing the crime rate, if answering attentively and sensitively responding to the assistance needs and relations of children during the early age." On the other hand, she warned that the seeds of youth crime are established during the age of three to four and low quality preschool facilities contribute the most.

In terms of the public budget I can say that preventing youth crime through active support of the family responsibility of parents - disregarding its social standing - would require a minimum amount compared to the enormous costs of saving international banks with tax payers' money.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I dare to say that non-discrimination between women and men, who based on their **free** choice want to get involved in solidarity between generations is possible if we acknowledge its actual value.

Thus I hereby propose reviewing the definition of employment in order to emphasize the benefits of reconciliation between family responsibility and professional ambitions. I agreed with the Czech Presidency when stating that family responsibility cannot be automatically treated as detrimental to the mother's future because she temporarily leaves the formal labour market.

If we acknowledge value creation within social responsibility, if we understand better the activities of women and men in the labour market and we compare those with each other, it will show the actual weaknesses of statistics and will provide groundwork for processing them better.

This is why the European Parliament hereby call Eurostat to elaborate on the criteria for collecting data on childcare and assistance to reliant persons, which are to be divided by gender. The Committee is therefore required to table actual initiatives for recognizing abilities acquired in carrying out family tasks, in care provided to reliant persons and in managing the

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household, so that these abilities are taken into account when re-entering the labour market. The report points out that evaluating abilities of a non-technical character ('soft skills') is essentially important in evaluating abilities in accordance with the best traditions of national experiences with systems to reconcile the supply of, and demand for, manpower;

Such an enterprise would also be justified from other reasons.

Users of statistics, who would thus be able to understand and better analyze the special position of women in paid employment, who work despite the limitations of their situation in comparison with men. This would provide many arguments for the equality of women and men in the labour market.

The contribution of women and men in creating social and economic values within parental care is, however, systematically undervalued and forged, which establishes a deformed view of the economics of the country and human resources. This creates a vicious circle of inequality between women and men, which is worsened even further by the political and social programs.

This distortion is reflected in old age, when women who interrupted their professional career to educate and raise their children are discriminated against in their pensions and social rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The logic of the European Union, which is related to "life cycles", is expressly directed to the specific evaluation of the active categories of women and men aged 15 to 49, who could fulfil their exceptional task in levelling the demographic crisis.

Contrary to the proposals of the European Commission, the decision to give life to children cannot be simply considered an individual objective to "fulfilling the wish to have children". It is, primarily, personal and social involvement that deserves to be recognized, identified and supported by national policies and the Union policy.

Let me pose two more questions for consideration: Is family policy inevitable for organizing a society? Is the current organization of society reasonable or does it need to be changed?

Finally, I would like to thank the Czech Presidency for organizing this forum for the mutual exchange of opinions and good practices and experiences.

An open dialog, held with respect, is always the best way to forward the common good.