

# AmCham EU response to the public consultation on possible action addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers

\* \* \*

*AmCham EU speaks for American companies committed to Europe on trade, investment and competitiveness issues. It aims to ensure a growth-orientated business and investment climate in Europe. AmCham EU facilitates the resolution of transatlantic issues that impact business and plays a role in creating better understanding of EU and US positions on business matters. Aggregate US investment in Europe totalled €2 trillion in 2014 and directly supports more than 4.3 million jobs in Europe.*

\* \* \*

Monday 15 February 2016

## A. General Feedback

The background document outlines several challenges to work-life balance and women's participation in the labour market.

\* **Do you agree with the description of the challenges?**

- Yes
- No
- Partially
- Don't know

**Are there any other challenges that should be taken into account?**

- Yes
- Executive involvement: Business leaders and men should be actively involved in diversity and inclusion (D&I) activities.
  - No
  - Don't know

## Policy areas

The background document outlines several key policies that have a positive impact on work-life balance and women's participation in the labour market. These policy areas include:

- \* Childcare
- \* Long-term care services
- \* Family-related leave arrangements for both women and men
- \* Flexible working arrangements for both women and men
- \* Tax-benefit systems that make work pay for both partners

**\* Do you agree that the above list of policy areas is accurate and complete?**

- Yes
- No
- Partially
- Don't know

**Below is a list of possible policy measures.**

**In your view, which would be the most important measures to improve work-life balance and female labour market participation in your country?**

	Highest Priority (max. 3)	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Not important at all	Don't know
*Improving the possibilities and/or incentives for parents and other people with dependent family members to take-up caring responsibilities and work-life balance measures (such as leave and/or flexible working arrangements)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the possibilities and/or incentives for men, in particular, to take-up caring responsibilities and work-life balance measures (such as leave and/or flexible working arrangements)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Better facilitating parents' transitions back to work after taking maternity/parental leave (e.g., adapting workplaces to better allow for breastfeeding, informing them of employment promotion and training opportunities while they are on	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

leave)					
*Improving the availability of childcare (e.g., number of places)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the affordability of childcare	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Improving the quality of childcare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*Improving the availability of formal long-term care services, including home/community-based services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*Improving the affordability of formal long-term care services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*Improving the quality of formal long-term care services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*Improving the availability of disability-related home support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*Improving support measures for people with ill/disabled/frail relatives (e.g., financial support, support services)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Removing tax-benefit disincentives for parents/people with caring responsibilities to enter the labour market (e.g., tax disincentives for the lower earning partner to work, benefit traps)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## B. EU-Level Action

\* **In your view, is there a need for further EU-level action on measures to address work-life balance challenges?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

\* **In your view, is there a need to improve the EU-level legislative framework in order to address the challenges of work-life balance, for example in relation to maternity leave, parental leave, flexible working arrangements, careers' leave and/or paternity leave?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

*[NB] A separate consultation is being conducted with the social partners on issues in the current EU legal framework, such as in the area of leaves and flexible working arrangements. The outcome of this public consultation shall not influence the outcome of the consultation with the social partners.*

\* **In your view, is there a need for further EU-level policy guidance on measures to address work-life balance challenges?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

\* **In your view, is there a need for strengthened monitoring at EU-level on measures to address work-life balance challenges?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

\* **In your view, could the EU support further exchanges of good practice among Member States and stakeholders in this area?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

\* **Do you think the EU could develop meaningful benchmarks \* in the area of work-life balance policies that could be monitored, for example, through the European Semester process?**

*\* A benchmark can be defined as "a standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or*

assessed" (Pearsall, 1999: 125).

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**Currently, the EU financially supports Member States in their implementation of work-life balance policies through its funds, notably the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund.**

**Do you find the current funds and their regulations effective in supporting work-life balance?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**\* Do you think that the EU could provide clearer guidance to national/regional/local authorities on how existing EU funds could be used to financially support work-life balance?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**\* In your view, is there a need for further awareness raising activities on work-life balance policies?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**\* Who should be in the main target group for any awareness-raising activities? Please select 3 from the list below.**

*at most 3 choice(s)*

- National authorities
- Local / regional authorities
- NGOs
- Employers
- Employees
- General public
- Other

Don't know

**In your view, how effective would the possible new EU-level measures mentioned below be in addressing work-life balance challenges?**

	Very effective	Effective	Not very effective	Not effective at all	Don't know
*1. Improved EU-level legislation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*2. Strengthened EU-level policy guidance	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*3. Enhanced monitoring of work-life balance issues at EU-level and public reporting of the findings	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*4. More exchanges of good practice amongst Member States and stakeholders	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*5. EU-level benchmarks	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*6. Strengthened EU-level financial support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*7. Clearer guidance to national/regional/local authorities on how existing EU funds can be used	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*8. Further awareness-raising activities	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*9. Other measures:	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incentives for employers to take a holistic approach. Simply implementing programs for women / working parents is not enough and may even slow down their trajectory in the absence of proactive management.					

**Do you think the effectiveness of the above individual measures could be increased by combining them with others?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**If you have any additional comments and/or suggestions, feel free to use the open answer box below.**

*1500 character(s) maximum (1500 characters left)*

In Europe, the imperative for improved gender diversity – in overall workforce participation, as well as in leadership and specialist roles – is real and growing. While we have seen progress in achieving a greater representation of females in senior-level positions, this success may not be sustainable. A strict ‘compliance’ approach to diversity on its own will not be enough for businesses to reap the full benefits of greater female participation. To make progress, the public and private sector need to partner to promote a balanced representation of both genders throughout an organisation’s hierarchy, as well as encourage work-life balance. Most significantly, organisations need to engage their leaders, both men and women.

AmCham EU firmly believes in the importance of engaging diverse talent in an effort to further drive economic growth and innovation.