

# International Women's Day 2021

## ● The Federation's proposals ●

UN Women announces that the theme for International Women's Day (IWD 2021) to be held on 8 March 2021 will be: "**Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world**".

On this occasion, the FFPE proposes to contribute to this egalitarian future by advancing the egalitarian use of parental leave in our Institutions.



**As in previous years on the occasion of International Women's Day, rather than making pious wishes, the Federation proposes concrete actions.**

**Last year the Federation highlighted the struggle to eradicate violence against women. This struggle is still topical because the problem has increased with Covid and lockdown.**

**This year, the Federation would like to highlight a concrete action at the level of the Commission that would help advance equal opportunities: Parental leave.**

Certain inequalities between women and men become more pronounced after the birth of a child and during its education.

It is therefore essential to help fathers to become even more involved, and also to send a clear message to the Commission: bringing up children concerns both parents!

Both parents are needed to support children's development from the earliest age.

Both the mother and the father must be able to spend time with their children without paying the price in terms of career opportunities.

**As it stands, parental leave is still too often taken by only one of the two parents, usually the woman. A real improvement in the conditions and incentives for access to parental leave would contribute to a real advance towards true equality between women and men.**

The Federation therefore calls for a review and improvement of the current system of incentives to take parental leave and for a more flexible approach to the possibilities of using leave days.

**In concrete terms, the Federation advocates:**

- The possibility for men also to raise the question of an infringement of gender equality when they encounter difficulties in taking parental leave;
- The possibility of returning to the same job after parental leave;

- The systematic replacement of a colleague on parental leave;
- Fair treatment in terms of promotion for those who take parental leave and who should not be penalised. No more comments in the annual appraisal of the kind: "I cannot give her/him a promotion because she/he has been absent for part of the year on parental leave";
- Taking parental leave should not reduce annual leave entitlements;
- Promote coaching and sharing of experience between concerned parents through a platform (to be developed by DG HR / Well-Being Directorate) dedicated to this purpose and offer workshops on topics such as stress management, meditation, work-life balance, time management, caring for oneself, etc.
- Guarantee that there will always be a place in the crèche or school at the end of the period of parental leave ;
- More flexibility of the hierarchy in the face of the new work/family situation: teleworking, flexible hours within the day (e.g. being able to take an hour to go to a medical appointment).

The number of days allowed for this type of leave is particularly limited. The number set by the Staff Regulations does not encourage young people to take parental leave. Indeed, the loss of purchasing power is too high at a time when additional needs arise with the birth of a child.

It is therefore essential to provide, for example, for a refundable advance on salary to maintain an acceptable standard of living during parental leave.

This will facilitate effective access to parental leave for single parent families.

**If you encounter difficulties in obtaining and taking parental leave, please do not hesitate to inform the Federation so that it can assist you in your application.**

[Some figures and statistics:](#)

- The percentage of staff taking parental leave within the first year of their child's birth differs significantly between men (32%) and women (74%);
  - On average, women take 3.7 months of leave in the first three years, compared to 1.9 months for men;
  - From 2012 to 2019, there has been an almost continuous increase in the percentage of eligible staff who take parental leave – from 44% to 56%;
  - After the first year, the percentage of eligible men taking parental leave collapses to 9%, before steadily climbing each year up to 21% for the child's tenth and eleventh years;
  - Lithuanian and Greek men are the least likely to take parental leave; Swedish and Luxembourgish are the most likely;
  - For men and women, by far the most popular months to start parental leave are July and August.
- [Staff Matters Portal: Parental Leave](#)
  - [Staff Matters Portal: HR Metrics](#)
  - [Staff Matters Portal: HR Reporting Services](#)