Three steps forward towards an equal sharing of unpaid care

PUBLISHED SEP 5, 2022
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Today, one-in-three people1 across the EU are unpaid informal carers for family members or friends in need due to health problems and/or disability.

And that's just one of the key findings from EIGE's annual Gender Equality Index report, which this year focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic and care – published this October 2022.

"This is the kind of stark statistic to stop you in your tracks. That is why we are talking about this now, sooner rather than later. Caring for those we love is fulfilling, but it soon turns into a burden when it is not fairly shared or when good and affordable care systems do not exist", says EIGE'S Director, Carlien Scheele.

The report takes a deep dive into three types of care – childcare, long-term care and housework – and assesses the pandemic's impact on what are already pressured areas in life.

But we are turning a corner now.

"The European Commission's new care strategy will announce EU-level action to strengthen long-term care and early childhood education. Member States need to address the significant gender gaps in unpaid care and provide robust care systems to avoid inequality gaps from widening further," emphasises Carlien.

With a rich pool of more than 40,000 participants, some of the key results from the survey show that:

While women are carrying out the bulk of simultaneous care responsibilities, more men are stepping up. But EIGE concludes we've not yet seen a meaningful or fairer redistribution of unpaid care duties within EU households.

And that needs to change. The report states that…

So it's time to take #3StepsForward towards a fairer sharing of unpaid care responsibilities:

"By building an economy that works for all, we will have a positive legacy that outlasts any crisis," says Carlien.

"We will continue to come up with proposals for how policymakers can protect and promote gender equality."

EIGE is the EU's knowledge centre providing high quality research, reports and advice to help Member States take #3StepsForward to gender equality.

Full details of EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2022 - The COVID-19 pandemic and care report will be available on 24 October 2022

Press release distributed by Wire Association on behalf of Europa, on Sep 5, 2022. For more information subscribe and follow us.

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