

Reconciling Work and Family Life in EU Law and Policy

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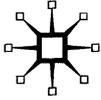
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Ai miei genitori, Emanuela e Giuseppe che nonostante non siano mai stati pagati per allevarmi, mi hanno insegnato che ogni cosa ha un valore prima ancora che un prezzo.

Pour Julia et Soeren, dans l'espoir qu'ils mèneront des vies plus équilibrées.

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Acknowledgements

The idea for this project was first discussed in 1999 while walking back from a conference in Oxford to catch our train home. Over the past ten years, we have continuously discussed and developed our ideas in numerous contexts including a Ph. D, several conference papers and journal articles. Although this book proceeds from our academic interests, it foremost arises out of our life experience. In the last decade, we have experienced the joy and the constant tensions that exist between trying to look after a young family whilst applying ourselves to demanding careers. We have encountered first hand difficulties in balancing our life courses: as workers, mothers, partners, and, of course, as women. Indeed, four children, employment in five different universities, across four countries, a stint in part-time and lots of flexible working arrangements have only made our work, paid and unpaid, more real.

Although life for women has certainly improved since our mothers' time, we are now facing new challenges while many of the old ones remain. On the one hand, our mothers might not have benefited from the many legal rights in the workplace (or access to frozen food!) that we are enjoying now. On the other hand, many women today do not have access to the ready-made informal support that, generally, previous generations were able to rely upon. If technology has improved the way we work, it has also rendered it more demanding and intrusive on the personal life of the individual. Moreover, our role as parents has changed: modern mothers take for granted their productive role and often manage their reproductive functions accordingly. Fathers increasingly appear to be more willing to be involved in their children's lives but still remain very remote from actively participating into most domestic tasks. The law has evolved in order to allow and encourage women to enter and participate in the public sphere of paid employment and the European Union (EU) has had a pivotal influence in this area. The law however, remains largely underdeveloped with regard to the role of men in the domestic sphere. The elusive quest for an effective reconciliation between our multiple life courses remains as challenging as ever, maybe just a little more frantic than ever. We hope that this book provides some keys to unlock the many issues surrounding reconciliation between work and family life in EU law.

It is probably not possible to recall and give credit to the very many people who have contributed to the production of this book. Indeed, writing a book is never an individual effort, and some special thanks go to the colleagues whose discussions, comments and criticism have helped to shape our arguments: Mark Bell, Pascale Lorber and Arabella Stewart. Thanks also to those who have read drafts: Louise Ackers, Grace James, Francis Kessler, Sue Millns and Clare McGlynn. Other colleagues have been generous with their time and resources; among these, the members of the European Network of Legal Experts, in particular Susanne Burri, Maria do Rosário Palma Ramalho and Sacha Prechal; the Association des Femmes de L'Europe Méridionale, specifically Sophia Koukoulis-Spiliotopoulos; the European Women's Lobby, in the persons of Cécile Greboval and Mary Collins; as well as Christine Boch and Tammy Hervey.

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