

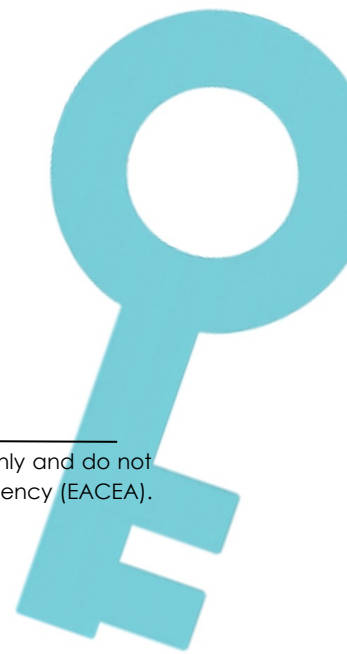


Unlock Equality

UnlockEquality: Level up your workplace

4.Pregnancy, Parenthood & Work–Life Balance

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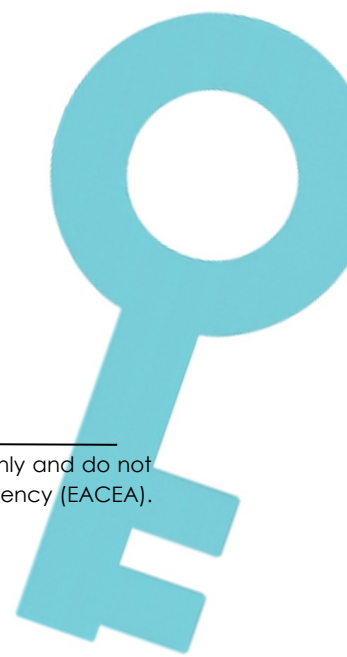




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UnlockEquality – Full Section 4 Checklist

Pregnancy, Parenthood & Work-Life Balance

4.1. Treatment During Pregnancy

Short Description

This checkpoint assesses whether pregnant workers are protected from dismissal, unfair treatment and loss of opportunities, and whether their duties are adjusted safely and fairly. Pregnant employees should be able to continue their work without health and safety risks, and without fear that their contract will be terminated or that new policies will target them.

Practical Example

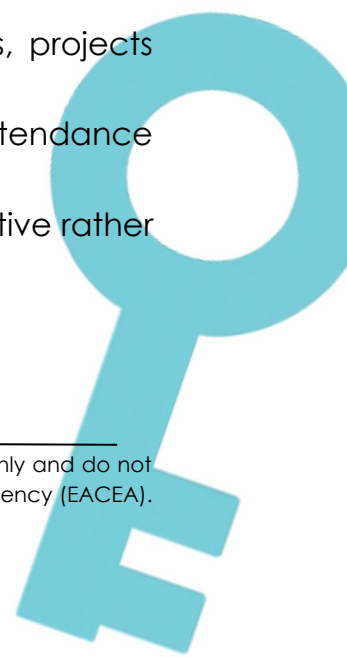
A pregnant worker has her tasks adjusted after a risk assessment (e.g. reduced lifting, no night shifts), keeps access to training and promotion processes, and is explicitly reassured that her contract and career prospects are secure.

What to Observe:

- Policies that explicitly prohibit dismissal or non-renewal of contracts due to pregnancy.
- Evidence of individual risk assessments and documented adjustments to duties (e.g. task changes, adapted schedules) for pregnant workers.
- No pattern of fixed-term contracts ending or probationary periods failing shortly after pregnancy disclosure.
- Pregnant workers remaining eligible for training, promotions, projects and bonuses on the same basis as others.
- No sudden changes in performance criteria, bonus rules or attendance policies that disproportionately affect pregnant staff.
- Communication from managers that is respectful and supportive rather than suggesting pregnancy is a “problem”.

EU Law / EU Reference:

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- Council Directive 92/85/EEC (Pregnant Workers Directive) – requires risk assessment and appropriate adjustments for pregnant workers, and prohibits dismissal from the beginning of pregnancy to the end of maternity leave, except in exceptional cases not linked to their condition.

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/legislation/directives/10#:~:text=The%20Directive%20grants%20maternity%20leave,period%20of%20leave%20from%20work.>

- Directive 2006/54/EC (Equal Treatment Directive) – ensures equal treatment between men and women in access to employment, working conditions and dismissal; pregnancy-related less favourable treatment is considered discrimination.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj/eng>

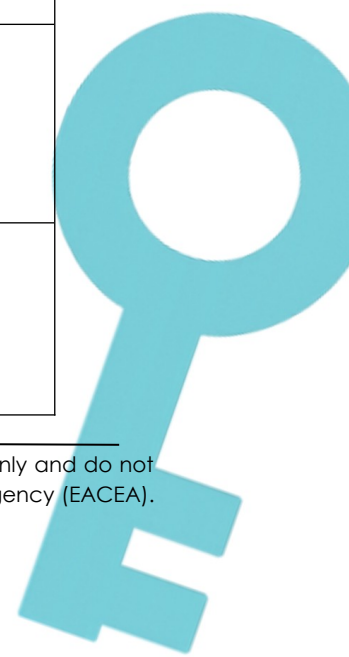
- Directive 2000/78/EC (Framework for Equal Treatment in Employment) – establishes a general framework against discrimination in employment and occupation, including protection against dismissal and unfavourable treatment linked to protected characteristics.

https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/rights-work/tackling-discrimination-work/legislation-employment-equality-directive-200078ec_en#:~:text=With%20the%20Employment%20Equality%20Directive,age%2C%20disability%20and%20sexual%20orientation.

Checklist Assessment Table

Item (Checkpoint Title)	Yes	No	Needs Work	Notes
No contract termination linked to pregnancy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Duties adjusted safely and fairly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Access to opportunities (training, promotion, pay) maintained	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
No sudden change of policies targeting pregnant staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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4.2. Maternity & Parental Rights

Short Description

This checkpoint examines whether all employees are clearly informed about maternity, paternity and parental leave rights, and whether taking leave is normalised and free from stigma for all genders and all forms of parenthood (including adoption).

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Practical Example

The organisation provides a simple guide to maternity and parental leave during onboarding; fathers and second parents are encouraged to take their full entitlement; adoptive parents receive the same leave and benefits as biological parents.

What to Observe

- Clear, accessible written information (intranet, handbook, FAQs) outlining all leave entitlements, pay, duration and procedures.
- HR and line managers proactively explaining rights when an employee announces pregnancy, birth or adoption.
- Data showing uptake of parental leave by all genders, not only mothers.
- No informal comments that shame or discourage workers (e.g. “real leaders don't disappear for months”).
- Employees who take full leave not penalised in performance reviews, pay progression or promotion opportunities.
- Adoptive parents and other legal parents receiving equal leave, benefits and reintegration support as birth parents.

EU Law / EU Reference:

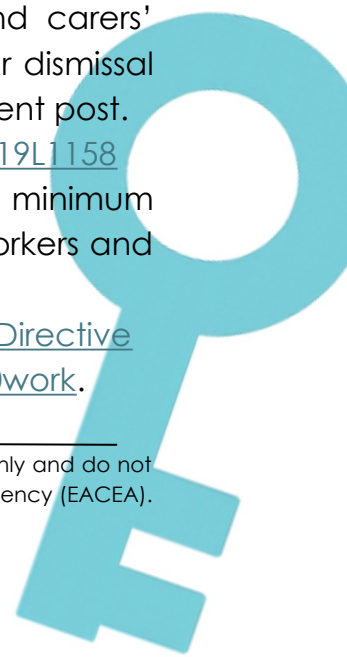
- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 (Work–Life Balance Directive) – establishes minimum standards for paternity leave, parental leave and carers' leave, including protection from less favourable treatment or dismissal for taking leave and the right to return to the same or equivalent post.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L1158>

- Directive 92/85/EEC (Pregnant Workers Directive) – sets minimum standards for maternity leave and protection of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth.

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/legislation/directives/10#:~:text=The%20Directive%20grants%20maternity%20leave,period%20of%20leave%20from%20work.>

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- Directive 2006/54/EC – reinforces equal treatment regarding access to employment and working conditions, including protection against discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj/eng>

Checklis Assessment Table

Item (Checkpoint Title)	Yes	No	Needs Work	Notes
Employees informed of all maternity/parental entitlements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Parental leave normalised and encouraged for all genders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
No stigma or career penalty for taking full leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equal treatment and leave rights for adoptive parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4.3. Maternity & Parental Rights

Short Description

This checkpoint focuses on how employees are supported when returning from maternity or parental leave, including structured reintegration, access to training, and protection from de-skilling assumptions or automatic downgrades.

Practical Example

Before return, HR and the line manager agree a reintegration plan (updated tasks, phased return, training if needed). The employee returns to the same or equivalent position, with no reduction in grade or pay.

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What to Observe

- Standardised return-to-work meetings and documented reintegration plans (timeline, handover, objectives).
- Offers of training or refresher courses where systems or regulations changed during leave.
- No blanket assumption that returning parents are “less committed” or “out of date”.
- Clear evidence that role, level and pay on return are the same or equivalent, not automatically downgraded.
- Performance evaluation cycles adjusted so that periods of statutory leave do not distort ratings or bonus eligibility.

EU Law / EU Reference

- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 (Work–Life Balance Directive) – establishes minimum standards for paternity leave, parental leave and carers' leave, including protection from less favourable treatment or dismissal for taking leave and the right to return to the same or equivalent post.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L1158>

- Directive 92/85/EEC (Pregnant Workers Directive) – sets minimum standards for maternity leave and protection of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth.

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- Directive 2006/54/EC – reinforces equal treatment regarding access to employment and working conditions, including protection against discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj/eng>

Checklist Assessment Table

Item (Checkpoint Title)	Yes	No	Needs Work	Notes
Structured reintegration plan in place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Updated training provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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where needed				
No assumed deterioration of skills or commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
No automatic downgrade of responsibilities or grade	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4.4. Flexible Working & Work-Life Balance

Short Description

This checkpoint assesses whether employees have a real, non-penalising right to request flexible working (hours, location, schedules), and whether uptake is balanced between women and men, with clear respect for boundaries outside working hours.

Practical Example

Both mothers and fathers in the organisation regularly use flexible working arrangements (e.g. telework, adjusted start/end times) without negative impact on appraisals, promotion prospects or project allocation.

What to Observe

- Written policy granting a right to request flexible working arrangements, with transparent procedures and timelines for employer responses.
- Data showing similar use of flexibility by women and men, not only by mothers or part-time workers.
- No evidence that flexible workers are systematically excluded from key projects, promotions or leadership roles.
- Performance management that focuses on outputs and quality, not on constant availability.
- Respect for non-working hours: limited expectation of evening/weekend emails or calls, and clear rules on contactability.

EU Law / EU Reference

- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 – introduces a right for parents and carers to request flexible working arrangements (including remote working, flexible schedules and reduced hours) and requires Member States to

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protect them against less favourable treatment for making such requests.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L1158>

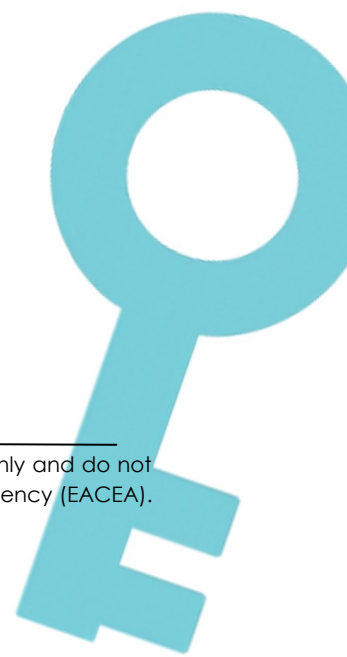
- Directive 2000/78/EC – reinforces the framework for equal treatment in employment, which can be undermined if flexibility is only accessible or socially accepted for certain groups.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32000L0078>

Checklist Assessment Table

Item (Checkpoint Title)	Yes	No	Needs Work	Notes
Right to request flexible hours/formats in policy and practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equal uptake of flexible working among women and men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
No penalties in evaluation, pay or promotion for using flexibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Respect for boundaries outside working hours (contact policies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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4.5. Performance Evaluation

Short Description

This checkpoint reviews whether pregnancy or parental status unfairly affect access to international assignments or mobility decisions, and whether family responsibilities are considered in a non-discriminatory way.

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Practical Example

A pregnant manager continues her international assignment with adjusted travel (shorter trips, medical clearance, option of remote participation). Parents are considered for overseas roles, with family needs discussed and accommodated where possible, not used as a reason to exclude them.

What to Observe

- No pattern of recalling pregnant employees early from international posts without objective health or safety justification.
- Criteria for selection to international roles clearly documented and applied equally regardless of parental status.
- Parents (including single parents and adoptive parents) appearing regularly among candidates and assignees, not being filtered out informally.
- Mobility decisions where family obligations are discussed as factors to accommodate, not as obstacles leading automatically to exclusion.
- Possibility of tailored arrangements (e.g. shorter postings, remote leadership, family travel support) offered on an equal basis.

EU Law / EU Reference

- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 – introduces a right for parents and carers to request flexible working arrangements (including remote working, flexible schedules and reduced hours) and requires Member States to protect them against less favourable treatment for making such requests.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L1158>

- Directive 2000/78/EC – reinforces the framework for equal treatment in employment, which can be undermined if flexibility is only accessible or socially accepted for certain groups.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32000L0078>

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 Checklist Assessment Table

Item (Checkpoint Title)	Yes	No	Needs Work	Notes
No pregnancy-based recall from international assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fair opportunities for assignments abroad for parents and non-parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Parental obligations considered without discrimination in mobility decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

