



# Comparative Legal Approach to Work-Life Reconciliation: Raising pigs and children in the European Union and New Zealand

Wednesday 28 October 2015 11:00am - 12:30pm

## Speaker

Associate Prof Annick Masselot  
University of Canterbury, New  
Zealand

## Location

ANU Centre for European Studies  
1 Liversidge Street,  
Building 67C, ANU, Canberra

## Registration required

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Rising female employment rates, fluid family formation and falling fertility rates are amongst factors contributing to family-work conflicts. In the quest for work and family reconciliation, many contemporary societies continue to face a plethora of challenges and what Crompton (2006) referred to as 'the tensions between the demands of capitalist employment and the requirement for care' are yet to be resolved.

Work-family reconciliation is a fully-fledged principle of the EU legal framework. Productive and reproductive rights are considered to be on an equal level (C-270/97 *Deutsche Post v Sievers*). By contrast, New Zealand's approach to work-life balance is somewhat unique because it is claimed to neither be about women, nor about families (Department of Labour 2009), but a tool for attracting and retaining highly skilled workers.

Despite the difference in approaches, the results in the EU and in New Zealand are similar: Pregnant women and new parents (especially mothers) continue to experience high levels of discrimination and difficulties at work.

There are large gaps between the letter of the law and its practice. Systemic discriminations based on prejudice and the exclusion of reproduction from costs/benefits in traditional accounting can explain some practices. Women continue to be perceived as the main carers and therefore not primarily as workers with full employment rights. As a result of the tension between law and practice, parents, in particular women, remain entrenched in traditional domestic roles, low pay employment and low status job.

Annick Masselot is an Associate Professor in law at the University of Canterbury. Her research interest lies in social and employment law, gender equality and equal treatment, reconciliation between work and family life, pregnancy and maternity rights in the context of the European Union and comparative law. She is the author of *Reconciling Work and Family Life in EU Law and Policy*, (2010) London: Palgrave Macmillan (with E. Caracciolo di Torella). She is also the main author of the Thematic Policy Report to the European Commission, (2012) "Fighting Discrimination on the Grounds of Pregnancy, Maternity and Parenthood - The application of EU and national law in practice in 33 European countries", Publication of the European Commission.

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