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### ***Balancing family life and work – Raise Awareness Meeting***

European Parliament - 15.05.2013

I want to congratulate the promoters of this meeting - Balancing family life and work -, a raise awareness meeting,  
- as a preparation for the celebration of 20th anniversary of the European Year of the Family, which will take place next year, in 2014  
- and dedicated to such an important issue as it is the family life and work

Firstly, let me focus on the celebration of family, the family as the crib for personal development and for social life: the healthier the family is the better the persons and the society became.

And many families, today, are sick, are suffering and need special care:

- we value family so much that we started to name "family" a wide variety of human realities. The definition of "family" became so flexible and so broad that we risk to completely loosing the definition of "family", after rejecting all criteria to this definition

- many families are no longer a guarantee of being loved and feeling safe

The second topic I want to underline in my introductory remarks is the importance of promoting family life and work.

We all know that birth rates are (in general) decreasing in the European Union. There are many factors that can justify it, and there are a lot of solutions proposals that, so far, did not give a positive solution to the demographic problem in Europe.

I consider that one of the factors responsible for today's low birth rates is the need and the will for the couple to work (to work is not only a way to earn a wage but also a way of personal fulfilment) and the difficulties they face to conciliate family and work.

Therefore I consider this is a field of urgent development for future policies, namely that can take into consideration:

- the new digital technologies, and the possibility to work at home (some hours a day, or some days a week, or in particular occasions for justified reasons, etc.)
- incentives for day care establishment in big enterprises
- flexible schedules
- flexible tasks

When there's a will, there's a way. We have the will, let's find a way

*M. Patrão Neves, MEP*