

**Roberta Guerrina**

**Socio-economic challenges to work-life balance at times of Austerity**



**Biography**

Roberta is Reader in Politics and Head of Department at University of Surrey. She is a European policy analyst with a particular interest in European social policy, citizenship policy and gender equality. She has published in the area of women's human rights, work-life balance, identity politics and the idea of Europe. She is author of *Mothering the Union: Gender Politics in the EU* (Manchester University Press, 2005) and *Europe: History, Ideas and Ideologies* (Arnold, 2002).

**Abstract**

It is now well established that work life balance should not only be regarded as a fundamental employment right, but also as an important element for the achievement of other EU policies and is key to promote women's activation in the labour market. For this purpose, European institutions (namely the Commission and the European Parliament) set about implanting a set of policies and legislative measures between the late 1990s and 2008. The onset of the sovereign debt crisis in 2008 and the associated austerity measures have posed a serious challenge to realisation of the Lisbon Agenda to establish a comprehensive framework for the reconciliation of work and family life. Crisis has provided an opportunity for ideologically driven cuts aimed at retrenching the European social model. The debates at the national and European level seemingly ignored the gendered nature of this policy shift, thus reasserting the centrality of hegemonic gender norms across Europe. This article seeks to assess the extent of the impact of the recession and of the austerity measures that were introduced as a means to address the challenges of economic crisis on work life balance policies.