

A TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

Creating Innovative Working Arrangements

THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
FOR A BETTER WORK LIFE RECONCILIATION

Marika Fsadni
Editor



With the support of the European Union:

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Editor: Marika Fsadni

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1. Introduction

Work-Life Reconciliation is the field that looks at the two most important aspects of people's lives – their families and their work. The effective reconciliation of these important domains is constantly gaining increased attention in political and business spheres

The balance of family life, private life and work is considered by Eurofound, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions to be one of the four main pillars forming the basis for quality of work and employment, together with career and employment status, health and well-being at work, and career development (see sec. 3.3)

Juggling the demands of work and personal life is an ongoing challenge for employees, on the one hand, who request flexibility to balance their lives and do their job well at the same time. However, striking the perfect balance can sometimes become arduous. On the other hand, companies value their work-force as a vital business asset and, in the context of increased international competition, employers demand a more flexible and adaptable workforce. Employers who believe that there exists a strong link between a supportive, flexible work environment and increased productivity, innovation, quality and retention, strive to support the employee through all phases of his life and career, in the adoption of work-life initiatives that can translate in the achievement of business goals.

1.1 Purpose of the Project

The Project, bearing the title: **Creating Innovative Working Arrangements through the Support of PES for a better Work-Life Reconciliation** is co-funded by the European Commission under PROGRESS as part of the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). Commencing in January 2008, the Project was directed to Public Employment Service (PES) Organisations with an aim to develop innovative services for employers in relation to Work-Life Balance (WLB) Measures.

Five European countries, namely, Cyprus, Iceland, Malta, Slovenia, and Sweden, have participated by way of a) research with employers on the challenges they faced in implementing WLB Measures and b) recommendations to PES Organisations as to how they can best assist employers in the implementation of these measures.

Marika Fsadni, Managing Associate of M. FSADNI & Associates, was engaged as Editor of this Transnational Report. The role of Ms Fsadni in this project was five-fold, namely to [a] conduct an introductory review on latest literature written on the subject of WLB measures, [b] compile and edit the country reports submitted by the four participating partners, [c] conduct a qualitative and quantitative research study among private sector employers operating in Malta to assess their perspectives on WLB measures in Malta and report the research findings, [d] compile the highlights of the salient research findings on WLB measures emanating from the reports submitted by the participating partners and produce a transnational perspective to the subject matter and [e] produce recommendations on what the role of the PES should be in the introduction and implementation of WLB measures by private sector employers.

1.2 Plan of Report

Chapter 2 of the Joint Trans-National Report presents the more common work-life balance interpretations which provide a basis for identifying the common threads of the term Work-life Balance. This is followed by a Literature Review on Work-Life Reconciliation in Chapter 3, describing the position taken by the European Union on Work-Life Balance; the importance of making a Case for adopting such practices with the Labour Market exigencies in perspective; the required

flexibility for quality of work and employment; the range of measures that can be adopted at organisational level; their ensuing benefits towards a balanced life; the constraints faced in the implementation of Work-Life Measures; and how to face challenges and overcome stumbling blocks.

Chapter 4 introduces the Applied Perspective of Work-Life Reconciliation, and the five Case Studies, researched and submitted by the respective participating Partner Countries, namely Cyprus, Iceland, Malta, Slovenia, and Sweden, are presented in Chapter 5 to Chapter 9. The Applied Perspective of these Case Studies further develops in a Transnational Perspective with the presentation of Major Research Findings in Work-Life Balance in Chapter 10. This Chapter includes the views and perceptions of the different countries on Work-Life Balance Measures, the requests and demands posed by employees, the stumbling blocks faced by Private Sector employers and their demands for the adoption of Work-Life Balance Practices. Finally in Chapter 11, the Report proceeds to submit recommendations to the Public Employment Service Organisation in its role of enhancing Work-Life Balance in the Private Sector.

1.3 Authors and Acknowledgements

Credit is due to the Authors of participating Partner Countries for conducting research on innovative working arrangements for a better Work-Life Reconciliation, findings of which were duly compiled and presented in the respective Country Reports, the Authors being:

- Ms Irene Costi and Mr Socrates Christodoulides for the Cyprus Country Report
- Mr Jóhann Ásmundsson for the Iceland Country Report
- Ms Marika Fsadni for the Malta Country Report
- Ms Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela and Ms Nevenka Černigoj Sadar for the Slovenia Country Report
- Ms Erna Hellberg for the Sweden Country Report.

As Editor of this Transnational Report, Ms Fsadni would like to thank the European Commission and the Employment and Training Corporation for granting her this opportunity to work on such an interesting subject, that is, the adoption of WLB measures, an area she strongly believes in as she already adopts such measures in her own Firm.

Moreover, Ms Fsadni would like to sincerely thank her associate consultant, Dr Michael A Buhagiar, who assumed the role of Copy Editor of this publication and also her marketing team, Ms Marisa Ellul and Ms Anna Meli, for their invaluable contribution towards the production of this publication.

2. The Concept of Work-Life Reconciliation

In the past years, there has been increasing interest in work-family balance, an interest partly driven by concerns that unbalanced work-family relationships can result in reduced health and performance outcomes for individuals, families and organisations

Although the term Work-Life Balance is widely employed, a formal definition of this term remains elusive and instead, relative literature is filled with a collection of definitions and measures, the following being some of the more common work-life balance interpretations which provide a basis for identifying the common threads of meaning.

The view that Work-Life Balance is drawn from an individual's multiple life roles derives from the early recognition that non-work (family or personal) demands may carry over into the working day and adversely influence individual health and performance at work. This concept, originated by Greenhaus & Beutell (1985), led to the development of a broad definition of work-family balance as a **multiple role conflict**: 'Work-family balance reflects an individual's orientation across different life roles, an inter-role phenomenon'. The multiple roles of Work-Life Balance were further defined as 'the extent to which an individual is engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role' (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003, p. 513). Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw (2003) propose three components of work family-balance being time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance. The importance of **individual satisfaction with multiple roles** was accentuated by Kirchmeyer (2000) who defined work-life balance as a means of 'achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains' (p. 80).

Work-Life Balance has been described as **the harmonious relationship between an individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles and one's life role priorities at a given point in time**, such priorities changing according to new situations that develop, from day to day, in an individual's life (Greenhaus & Allen, in press; cited in Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

This emergence of compatibility between multiple roles as a defining factor of Work-Life Balance is further strengthened by Frone's focus on the psychological constructs that compose same. Frone (2003) has defined Work-Life Balance as **an absence of conflict and a presence of facilitation**: 'low levels of inter-role conflict and high levels of inter-role facilitation' (p. 145). Work-Life Balance has also been interpreted as **the extent of self-determination an individual perceives to have over one's most important roles**, the degree of autonomy one can avail himself of to correspond with life's demands on the home front (Fleetwood, 2007).

In conclusion, it transpires from Kalliath & Brough (2008) that Work-Life Balance is the integration of the following two core meanings: Work-Life Balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities. Effective balance also leads to positive growth and development within the work and/or non-work domains. Thus individual work/life priorities can voluntarily change to enable development in non-work activities (e.g., private study, new baby, extended travel) and/or growth at work (e.g., working harder to gain formal work recognition, or promotion).

3. Work-Life Reconciliation In Perspective: A Literature Review

3.1 Work-Life Balance and the European Union

The success of reconciliation of work and private life affects the achievement of key policy objectives set by the European Union. The Lisbon Strategy, an action and development plan for the European Union established in 2000, covered reconciliation. The Lisbon Strategy articulated a new strategic goal for the EU: 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. By modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion, the Lisbon Strategy sought to deal with the low productivity and stagnation of economic growth in the EU.

The Commission in its Social Policy Agenda 2000-2005 confirmed the Lisbon Strategy and identified social dialogue as: 'the most effective way of modernising contractual relations, adapting work organisation and developing adequate balance between flexibility and security'. This Agenda was further enhanced by a new social policy agenda for the period 2005-2010, main objective of which being 'a social Europe in the global economy: jobs and opportunities for all' (Eurofound, 2009).

The latter Agenda develops a two-pronged strategy: firstly, emphasizing its role in strengthening citizens' confidence and enabling them to gain confidence in their own ability to effectively manage change; secondly, presenting two priority areas concerning the strategic objectives of the new Agenda being: employment, under the prosperity objective and equal opportunities and inclusion, under the solidarity objective. Towards the latter end, the Commission proposed several actions to resolve such problems as the gender pay gap, women's access to and participation in the labour market, training, career advancement, reconciliation of family and

working life, and equal opportunities for the disabled amongst others (Europa, 2009).

3.2 Case for Adopting Work-Life Balance

'The male breadwinner-model is an ideal-type description of the gender division of labour that emerged alongside the process of industrialization in many countries. Caring work and market work were gender coded, and only the latter was regarded as 'work' ' (Crompton, 1999, 2006; cited in Littig, 2008, p. 5).

The increasing participation of women in the labour market, aided by political commitments to improve gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the field of employment, has led to the erosion of the traditional bread-winner/female carer model, quoted above, in favour of dual-earner models as well as the augmented integration of women in employment, made possible through the introduction of work-life balance practices.

The dramatic drop in birth rates in most European countries over the past twenty years, has become one of the major concerns for European policy makers. The link between Work-Life Balance and the interest of states in birth-rates, especially with regard to the future labour supply, has been directly addressed by the OECD:

'If parents cannot achieve their desired work/family life balance, economic development is curtailed through reduced labour supply by parents. Meanwhile, a reduction in birth rates has obvious implications for future labour supply and the financial sustainability of social protection systems. As parenting is also crucial to child development, and thus the shape of future societies, policy makers have many reasons to help parents find a better work/family balance.' (Littig, 2008, p. 6)

The ageing of the European population - the increased lifespan, on average 8-9 years more than in 1960, the shortage of specialists and executives experienced by Companies in the recruitment markets, and workers' requirements of better working time arrangements to minimize the element of stress and reduce long and intense working hours, to make balancing work and family responsibilities easier, are trends which trigger the need for more flexibility for employees, both male and female, especially during the 'rush-hour of life', when one strives to further one's career, invest in lifelong learning and take care of children or other dependants. In its 'Integrated guidelines for growth and jobs', the European Commission highlights the importance of developing synergies to bring together flexible contractual and working time arrangements, active labour market policies, life-long learning, modern social security systems and social dialogue (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2008).

3.3 Flexibility for Quality of Work and Employment

Work-Life Balance is considered by Eurofound, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions to be one of the four main pillars which form the basis for quality of work and employment, together with career and employment status, health and well-being at work and career development (Eurofound, 2002; cited in the *Second European Quality of Life Survey, Sept 2007/Febr 2008*).

According to Eurostat Labour Force Survey data extracted from the *Second European Quality of Life Survey, Sept 2007/Febr 2008*:

- The employment rate in the EU27 is 66% for people aged 15-64 years, 73% for men and 59% for women.
- About 17% of workers in the EU27 are in a part-time job, a marked difference emerging in statistics between employed genders, namely men on part-time standing at 7% of the male workforce whilst women on part-time escalating to 30% of the female workforce.
- It results that on average men work longer hours than women, the hours for men totalling 41.7 and 34.3 for women.

Caring responsibilities, namely caring for and educating children as well as cooking, housework and taking care of elderly or disabled relatives is the kind of unpaid work that is most likely performed by women. In terms of hours spent on the different duties, it results that women spend a higher number of hours in caring responsibilities to men. In the EU27, on average:

- 50% of women and 42% of men report spending time on caring for children;
- 89% of women and 46% of men do cooking and housework every day or several times a week;
- 11% of women and 6% of men take care of elderly or disabled relatives at least several times a week.
- It is furthermore reported in the *Second European Quality of Life Survey Sept 2007/Febr 2008* that employed men who participate in voluntary and charitable activities do this on average six hours a week and employed women five hours a week.

Almost half of the workers in the EU27 consider that they are too tired from work to do household jobs, and proportions of workers state that they had difficulties in fulfilling their family responsibilities because of the amount of time they spend on the job, whilst also experiencing lack of concentration at work because of family problems (*Second European Quality of Life Survey, Sept 2007/Febr 2008*).

Various surveys show that the organisation of work and design of working time policies towards the implementation of Work-Life Balance measures is considered to be the responsibility of the establishment. Keeping the European scenario of quality of work and employment in mind, it results that flexible working times and working time accounts are positive instruments for enhancing work-life balance of employees.

3.4 Aspects of Work-Life Balance

The Review of Work-Life Balance Policies and Practices across the Original EU-15 Member States (National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies 2007), puts forward a wide range of measures that can be adopted at organisational level to promote Work-Life Balance. These measures fall into two prime categories according to how these practices impact on employees, namely:

- practices that can **help workers to better manage and balance work and private life demands** through the utilisation of flexible working arrangements and the provision of **supportive arrangements** by way of information and training.
- practices that **ease caring responsibilities** from workers and which include **additional family related leave**, beyond statutory minimums, and employer support with regard to childcare arrangements.

DIAGRAM I illustrates the particular type of work-life balance practices that fall into these categories.

	Flexible Working Arrangements	Supportive Arrangements
Help balance work and Personal life demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Part-time work ✓ Flexi-time arrangements ✓ Job-sharing ✓ Tele-working/working from home ✓ Term-time work ✓ Saving hours and staggered hours ✓ Compressed working hours ✓ Shift working ✓ Shift swapping ✓ Self-roistering ✓ Annual hours ✓ Time off in lieu. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Work-family management training ✓ Employees counselling/assistance ✓ Work-family co-ordinator ✓ Research on employees needs ✓ Financial contributions ✓ Non-family related long term leave.
	Childcare Arrangements	Additional Family Related Leave
Ease Caring Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Workplace nursery ✓ Contracted child care places ✓ Childminding ✓ Childcare resource and referral ✓ Financial assistance ✓ Holiday play schemes/summer camps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Maternity leave above statutory minimum ✓ Parental leave above statutory minimum ✓ Paternity leave above statutory minimum ✓ Leave for family reasons (incl. elderly) ✓ Adoption leave ✓ Career break scheme.

SOURCE: European Commission (2001) cited in National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies (2007)

Apart from the direct motives of reconciling care and other responsibilities with work commitments, changing lifestyle, work style and schedule preferences, workers also have indirect motives for taking up flexible working arrangements such as:

- maximising income or improving job security through the taking up of overtime and unusual working hours. A measure of job security might be afforded in those cases where companies offer incentives to their employees for taking up overtime work.
- providing staff security and skill maintenance (Establishment Survey on Working Time, 2004-2005).

3.5 The Benefits of a Balanced Life through Work-Life Balance Measures

Many factors encourage Firms to adopt more flexible working arrangements which leave an impact on the quality of work and employment and also on the quality of life in general. The relevant findings of report ‘Work-Life Balance: The Business Case – your business can’t afford to miss it’ and those of report ‘Flexible Working – The Business Case: 50 Success Stories’, both Reports carried out on behalf of the UK’s Department of Trade and Industry and covering a wide range of sectors and small, medium and large enterprises, are referred to in the ‘Review of Work-Life Balance Policies and Practices across the Original EU-15 Member States, December

2007’ (see National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, 2007), as witness of the advantages which ensue from effectively designed and successfully implemented work-life balance practices, namely:

- Be a recruitment tool to attract the best talent
- Help the retention of valued employees
- Aid in offering better customer service
- A return on investment
- Result in staff being a truer reflection of customer diversity
- Reduce absenteeism, sickness and stress
- Improve productivity and performance
- Increase morale, commitment and loyalty
- Promote employee flexibility by supporting innovation, creativity and ability to deal with change.

The Review highlights the outcome that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to work-life balance measures and the application and development of these practices can proceed across “a range of sectors, facing many different challenges, across organisations of very different sizes” to render beneficial returns both to the Employer and to the Employee (National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, 2007).

Reference is made to ‘Working Time Flexibility in European Companies’ (see Establishment Survey on Working

Time, 2004-2005) which singles out the cost benefits that can be derived by Companies from the introduction of flexible working time arrangements. Companies can reduce costs by:

- adapting to workload as a result of fluctuations in business.
- reducing fringe benefits or social security contributions by hiring workers on temporary contracts where these and other types of workers are not covered by the social security system.
- segregating the workforce into core and peripheral workers without repercussions for their operations thus adapting to and reorganising the workload while staff are on leave or due to absenteeism among new workers on temporary contracts.
- screening new recruits before offering them open-ended employment contracts (Establishment Survey on Working Time, 2004-2005).

3.6 The Constraints Faced in Implementation of WLB Measures and How to Overcome Stumbling Blocks

The National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies (2007), in the Study 'Review of Work-life Balance Policies and Practices across the Original EU-15 Member States, December 2007' enlists a number of findings on the possible barriers that may constrain employers from implementing work-life balance measures.

The major stumbling block is cost. Employers appraise that the adoption of family friendly working initiatives are costly to them. Although employers acknowledge the fact that their employees stand to benefit from such practices, it is believed that their introduction incurs real costs to the enterprise and the resulting benefits are diffused and difficult to quantify in real terms.

Many of the initiatives were seen to involve significant time and effort to implement and manage, namely staff substitution and re-arrangement of people, time and workloads. This challenge, substantiated by the lack of knowledge or awareness on the part of the employer, not just of the options that are available, but also the training on how to implement the policies, is considered as another factor which produces a negative impact in the implementation of Work-Life Balance measures. The lack of awareness of the policies is further accentuated by the issue of deciding access to such measures, that is, who is and who is not eligible.

Employers express their fear of a low up-take by employees, should such policies be introduced, as another constraint and the Study 'Review of Work-life Balance Policies and Practices across the Original EU-15 Member States, December 2007'

refers to the 'Off the Treadmill' survey showing that this was the case for 58% of employers surveyed. It results that 'eligible' employees refrain from taking advantage of the options available because most leave arrangements and part-time work involve a drop in salary. The fear by employers of a low up-take by employees is counterbalanced by the fear that, on the other hand, too many employees might 'take advantage' and request their right to flexi- or part-time work, or other family friendly options. Furthermore, family friendly policies are seen as discriminating for one section group of workers at the exclusion of another, those without care or family responsibilities.

It has been proven that Work-Life Balance practices can be successfully adopted across different sectors, across establishments of different size, and by men and women if backed up by a number of key factors, namely:

- The development of the right range and mix of work-life balance practices, taking into account underlying business needs and the requirements of employees.
- The effective communication of the business case for adopting work-life balance practices, to all staff, and the options available through the use of good practice and success stories.
- The development of clear guidance, information and training on how to apply measures. Training can support line managers on how to respond to requests and develop their management skills; the organisation of workshops or development programmes for all staff can encourage them to change their own attitudes and behaviours, be supportive of others working different patterns and help them identify solutions to their own work-life balance issues.
- The embedding of work-life balance practices within the HR function, having the Human Resources Department undertake a more proactive role in work-life balance practices through the approving of decisions and the monitoring of actions of line managers, the publicising of the available range of practices, the monitoring of the level of demand, the maintenance of a list of people who want to job share, and influencing over whether jobs are advertised as open to those working part-time or some other flexible pattern.
- The security that the organisational culture supports work-life balance practices and the monitoring and evaluation of performance, both that of the individual and the organisation, and adjustment on the basis of the two backgrounds (National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, 2007).

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4. Work-Life Reconciliation: An Applied Perspective

In line with the objectives set by the Project, **Creating Innovative Working Arrangements through the Support of PES for a better Work-Life Reconciliation**, the five participating Partner Countries followed a common pattern in their presentation of respective Country Case Studies, primarily by a) introducing the issue and how the Country was reacting to the establishment of such practices through its Legal Framework; b) the Research Methodology adopted for the Study; c) reference to specific Work-Life Balance requests by Employees and Stumbling Blocks faced by Employers in their effective implementation; d) a number of Best Practices to substantiate the case why such practices should be adopted; and e) the presentation of researched findings and conclusions brought to the attention of Public Employment Services Organisations.

5. Case Study I - Cyprus

Creating Innovative Working Arrangements through the Support of PES for a Better Work-Life Reconciliation

*Irene Costi
Socrates Christodoulides*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Across the European Union, member states are being encouraged to incorporate policies that are aligned with Work-Life Reconciliation. Reconciliation policies can be defined as policies that are introduced by Companies in order to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. Even though the choices that men and women make in reconciling their work-life are primarily personal, the way in which individuals balance these competing demands has consequences for public policy, for example by influencing labour-market participation and fertility rates. The success of reconciliation policies affects achievement of major EU goals, in particular in the form of more and better jobs. Better support for reconciliation measures will enable men and women to exercise greater choice in balancing the work and private sides of their lives. Equally important, it will also contribute to the achievement of major policy objectives of the European Union, notably on growth and jobs, the social inclusion of vulnerable groups and gender equality (European Commission, 2008).

The main objective of this Paper is to review the existing literature and to provide information and suggestions regarding the creation of innovative working arrangements for better work-life reconciliation, through the support of Public Employment Services (PES), in Cyprus. The structure of this Report is as follows: The first part of the report gives an overview of the macroeconomic and current labour market situation. The second part explains the statutory framework that regulates the most prevalent forms of flexible employment. The third part explores the demands of Employees regarding work-life measures and addresses the stumbling blocks that Employers are facing in implementing these measures. The fourth part provides some information

on how PES can support Employers in applying reconciliation policies to balance work and family life. Lastly, the fifth part of this Report presents some of the best practices for Work-Life Measures in our local organisations.

5.2 EMPLOYMENT AND THE LABOUR MARKET

5.2.1 Macroeconomic Characteristics

Cyprus has an open, free market, services-based economy with some light manufacturing. The small and open economy of Cyprus, though quite vulnerable to developments on the international market, has demonstrated its ability to adjust to rapidly changing conditions, by achieving a very good macroeconomic performance over time. Despite the negative consequences of certain developments on the international market in the past few years, the growth rate of the Cyprus economy has continued to be very satisfactory, providing conditions of almost full employment. At the same time, as a result of appropriate monetary and fiscal policies, the conditions of domestic and foreign macroeconomic stability have been maintained. It should be underscored that since the mid-1990s, economic growth in Cyprus has been significantly higher than the average of the EU25, resulting in an increase in the average living standards.

The economy of Cyprus during 2004-2007 performed very satisfactorily and is characterised by “employment intensity” with high participation and employment rates and low unemployment rates. Particularly in 2007, the strong economic performance contributed to exceptional performances in the labour market, with an increase of employment by 5.8% and a decrease of the unemployment by 0.6%. It is important to note that the unemployment rate in Cyprus, at 4% in 2007, was the fourth lowest unemployment rate in Europe and

compares favourably with the EU27 average of 7.1%. As for the duration of unemployment, 62.0% of the total unemployed persons searched for a job for a period of less than 6 months, 16.3% for a period of 6-11 months, whereas a percentage of 21.7% searched for a job for one year and over.

Remarkably, during 2007, the annual growth rate reached 4.4% in conditions of macroeconomic stability. This increase in economic growth was reflected in an increase in the average labour productivity growth rate to 1.3% during the period 2004-2007. The real unit labour cost decreased to 2.5% from 4% in 2006. However, it continues to be higher than the EU-27 average (1.5%), indicating a lower competitiveness of the Cyprus economy (Chart I).

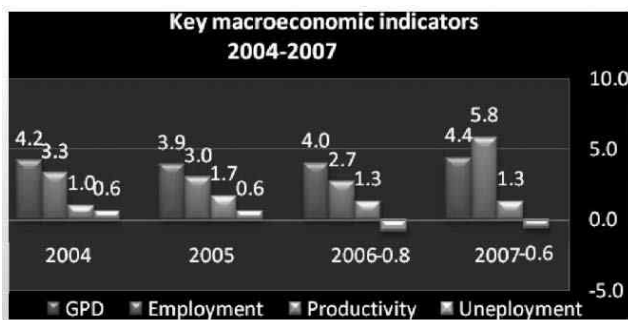


Chart I

Another issue that merits attention involves the shortages and qualitative imbalances of the Cyprus labour market. As a provisional measure for dealing with the situation, the controlled employment of foreign workers has been introduced on a temporary basis. In 2007, the employment of foreign workers, particularly in unskilled or low skilled occupations, accounted for 12.3% of gainful employment (Department of Labour, 2008).

5.2.2 Structure of the Economy

In Cyprus, the structure of the economy's production base is characterised by the dominant and constantly increasing significance of the services sector, particularly the tourism, financial and real estate sectors. As an indication of this, during 2004-2007, approximately 40,000 new jobs were created. Of these, about 90% were created in the service sector, which had an average annual growth rate of around 4% in those four years.



Chart II

According to the distribution of employment by sector, the largest percentage of employed persons was concentrated in services, at 72.7%; with manufacturing following at 22.6%, and agriculture in last place at only 4.7%.

The greatest increases in employment were in the sectors of real estate and business activities, public administration and defence, wholesale and retail trade, construction and education, while the sectors of hotels and restaurants and manufacturing demonstrated a negative employment growth.

5.2.3 General Developments in Employment

Cyprus, as mentioned above, has a high level of economic development, with relatively low rates of inflation and unemployment. In this respect, the national 2010 targets are higher than the Lisbon employment rates (71% compare to 70% overall employment rate, 63% rather than 60% for women and 53% rather than 50% for 55-64 year olds).

As indicated in (Chart I), the satisfactory growth of the economy over the past few years has encouraged the increase in employment. In 2007, the employment rate was 71%, compared to the EU-27 average of 65.4%.

5.2.4 Employment of Women

Women's labour participation has increased from 59% in 2004 to 62.4% in 2007, but still remains much lower than men's. In the case of men, the employment rate has remained rather stable at 79.8% (2004) to 80% (2007) (Chart II).

During 2007, women constituted 44.6% of the total employment. For every 100 women of age 15-64, sixty two (62) were employed, three (3) were unemployed and thirty five (35) were inactive. This compared to fifty nine (59), four (4) and thirty seven (37), respectively, in 2004.

Due to a small but steady shift of employment in women's favour, the gap between the employed men and women narrowed to 17.6 points, but still remains higher than the corresponding EU27 average of 14.2 points.

5.2.5 Employment of Older People

Cyprus has a falling birth rate, which is slowly resulting in an ageing population that will become progressively older in the coming decades. In particular, and in relation to the increase in the employment rate, the most dramatic increase was in the employment of older people 55-64 years of age, standing at 55.9% in 2007, up from 50.1% in 2004 as indicated in Chart II. This rate has steadily remained above the corresponding EU target (50%). It is worth noting that the phenomenon of an ageing population has started to become visible in Cyprus as well. During the period of 2004-2007, the population growth rate for older people (age group 55-64) was almost triple the respective rate for young people (age group 15-24). In contrast, the employment rate for older

people was almost five times greater than the respective rate for young people. Specifically, in 2007, the growth rate of young people was marginally negative (- 0.5%) as compared to 2006, while the respective rate for older persons was 7.3%. A similar picture is observed in the employment trends. The employment of young people was decreased by around 100 persons (0.3%) while the employment of older persons was increased by 4,000 persons (11.9%).

5.2.6 Employment of Young People

According to the Labour Force Survey for 2007, young people aged 15-24 constituted 18% of the total population. Young people's participation in employment was only 34%. Similar to the rest of the EU member states, unemployment rates for young people aged 15-24 is more than double the overall unemployment rate. In 2007, the average unemployment rate for the age group of 15-24 years was 10.2% (11% for males and 9.4% for females), which compares favourably to the average EU rate of 15.5%.

5.2.7 Employment by Educational Attainment

Educational level has proven to be a decisive factor in determining labour participation. In 2007, 35.7% of the total number of persons employed had completed tertiary education. The average employment rate among tertiary education graduates was 86.5%, compared to 73.6% for upper secondary level graduates and 52.8% for lower secondary and below. It is important to note that women with tertiary education were more than twice as likely (83%) to be employed than were women with lower secondary and below education (40%).

5.2.8 Working Arrangements

Most members of the working population in Cyprus hold a full time job. According to labour force survey (LFS), the average weekly hours of work were 40.2 hours (males 42.0 and females 37.9 hours). While most of the working population in Cyprus works full time, there is a small minority whose primary job is part-time. The levels of part-time work in the Cypriot labour market are still well below the corresponding European averages. The LFS reports that, in 2007, only 7.3% (4.4% males and 10.9% females) of the labour force was working part-time. The LFS also indicates that, in 2007, 38.3% of part-time workers stated that they chose this type of work for personal or family reasons, while 26.9% reported that they could not find a full-time job. Another important finding noted in the LFS is that, among the unemployed people, 53% stated that they were searching for a full time job, while 6.2% were searching for a part time job. The persons who were interested in part-time jobs were only women, since they comprised 100.0% of this group.

In addition, the Employees with temporary employment comprised 13.2% of the Employees in the labour force.

5.2.9 Size of Enterprises – Entrepreneurship

As far as the size of enterprises is concerned, there is absolute dominance of the Micro Enterprises; in other words, businesses with less than 10 Employees. More specifically, according to the latest Census of Establishments (2005), Micro Enterprises continued to represent 92.6% of all enterprises, with 49.9% of the total employing only one person. The category of 'small sized enterprises', with 10-49 employees, accounts for 6.2% of the whole, while 'medium-sized' enterprises with 50-249 Employees represent 1% of the whole. 'Large' enterprises with 250 or more Employees account for merely 0.2% of all enterprises.

5.3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

One of the most significant characteristics of the Cyprus labour market is the system that regulates labour relations, which revolves around collective agreements regulating terms of employment. Social partners' organisations play the leading role in social dialogue, since they actively represent a significant proportion of people in employment.

The role of social dialogue and of collective bargaining in regulating labour relations is not legally binding, but is based on the **Industrial Relations Code** that was developed and put into force in 1977. It should be noted that although the collective bargaining agreements are considered as "gentlemen's agreements" and not legally binding, nevertheless, on various occasions, they regulate pay and working conditions, disputes and other labour relations issues, both at enterprise and at sectoral levels.

The **Labour Advisory Board** has been established and works towards this purpose; i.e., to provide a mechanism for consultation to the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance regarding labour issues and issues that concern both the Employers and Employees, as well as to submit recommendations and proposals for the formulation of policies and the enactment of labour laws. Traditionally, it aims at unanimous consent before any such legislation is put forward.

Many developments that affected the legal framework occurred due to the May 2004 accession by Cyprus to the EU. Below, we will explain the statutory framework that regulates most known forms of flexible employment in Cyprus.

5.3.1 Part-Time Work

Part-time employment, in the sense of limited hours of work, was always permitted in Cyprus within the framework of individual labour agreements, and also within the framework of the Termination of Employment Law 24/67. In 2002,

with the Law regarding Part-time Employees (Prohibition of unfavourable and discriminatory treatment) L. 76(I)/2002 was enacted on January 1st 2003, and in view of harmonisation of the Cyprus Law with the *Acquis Communautaire*, the specific labour agreement was regulated in detail, through implementation of the Council Directives 97/81 and 98/23 on part-time work.

5.3.2 Temporary Employment – Fixed Term Contracts

Temporary employment, i.e., fixed-term work (of specific duration), has always been widely practised in Cyprus and yet it was not specifically regulated by law. According to case-law, “A fixed-term contract is an employment contract with a specific date of expiry notwithstanding other provisions stating that the same may be terminated upon prior notice before the designated expiry date”. With the Law 98(I)/2003 on fixed-term work, Cyprus legislation was aligned with the Council Directive 99/70/EC and aimed to abide by the principle of non-discrimination of fixed-term workers and to prevent abuse arising from the use of successive fixed-term employment contracts.

5.3.3 Organisation of Working Time

As a result of the harmonisation process of the Cyprus law with the *Acquis*, another law was enacted regarding the organisation of working time. The Law 63(I)/2002 was aligned with Directive 93/104/EC of the Council concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time and also with 2000/34/EC of the European Parliament and amendments to the first Council directive.

From the interpretation of the provisions of the Law, it follows that, in Cyprus, it is legal to arrange working time in the form of flexible working hours, even at a maximum. This may involve periods of increased work alternated with periods of reduced work through fewer working hours per day or through granting corresponding days off, or through a combination of the two. It is also considered legal to arrange the distribution of working hours within the same day, as long as there are no specific regulations to the contrary regarding certain categories of professions.

5.3.4 Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure Principal

The Department of Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance Law 69(I) /2002, which came into force on 1st January 2003, provides for parental leave and leave on grounds of force majeure. This Law allows all Employees, men and women, who have completed a continuous period of at least six months employment with the same Employer, to take unpaid parental leave of a duration between one and thirteen weeks in total, by reason of the birth or adoption of a child, which enables the parent to take care of

and participate in the raising of the child. Another provision of this Law is the right to unpaid leave for up to seven days each year, on grounds of force majeure, by reason of a family emergency related to an illness of, or an accident to, any dependant of the Employee that makes his/her immediate presence indispensable.

5.3.5 Maternity Leave

This legislation provides for maternity leave for a period of 18 weeks, out of which 11 weeks must be taken compulsorily during the period beginning from the second week prior to the week of confinement and ending 6 weeks after the week of confinement. In addition, an employed woman who adopts a child less than 12 years of age is allowed maternity leave of 16 weeks. The above legislation further provides for the protection of the employed woman against termination or notice of termination of employment during the period ending 3 months after the end of maternity leave. Moreover, it provides for women who have given birth and are breast feeding or have increased responsibilities for the care/raising of the child, to interrupt their employment for one hour or go to work one hour later or leave work one hour earlier, for a 9 month period commencing on the date of birth or maternity leave. This hour is considered to be working time.

5.4 METHODOLOGY

The literature surveyed is a mixture of academic literature and surveys by Experts. It is important to note that the majority of the surveys that related to the subject and took place in Cyprus have focused on women since women's employment rate is much lower in comparison to men's employment rate. However, Work-Life measures are assumed to be more beneficial for women, with work or without work, who have family responsibilities. The bibliography lists the literature that was reviewed for this paper.

An important issue that merits attention with regards to this Report is that, in Cypriot Companies, the introduction of flexible working time arrangements is a relatively recent phenomenon. Consequently, any experiences with working time arrangements are likely to be fresh in the minds of Managers and other Employee representatives that took part in previously conducted primary research.

5.4.1 The Demands of Employees Regarding Work-Life Measures

In compiling all of the results of previous research regarding underlying reasons or demands for the introduction of Work-Life measures, the findings indicated the following:

- The behaviour of women is driven mainly by their family responsibilities. The most important factor for women in selecting a job position in Cyprus is primarily the ability to

better combine work and family (or personal) life (Cyprus Workers Confederation, 2007).

- Employees seem to not be well informed regarding matters related to Work-Life Balance, since 88% of the sample responded that they are not informed in general about Work-Life Balance (Matsas & Kosma, 2007).
- Generally, the opening hours of childcare facilities play an important role in reconciliation of Work-Life Balance, since in Cyprus, child care facility hours are largely incompatible with standard working hours. Many women choose to stay home instead of working (Stavrou & Ierodiakonou, 2007; Cyprus Workers Confederation, 2007). In particular, women referred to the unavailability of childcare facilities as a deterrent to their working at all or to their working long hours (Stavrou & Ierodiakonou, 2007). Therefore, a partial demand of these groups is greater flexibility in their work-time schedules (preferably working the morning shift) or provision of more childcare facilities with extended hours in order to permit them to work, and in late afternoon if necessary. The partial cost subsidisation of childcare by the government, based on some criteria, is another demand that surfaced in the findings of the research examined.
- One research paper indicated that one out of three Employees have difficulty in balancing work and life. The most important initiative for Employees for achieving Work-Life Balance is paid parental leave, followed by flexible working hours (Cyprus Workers Confederation, 2007).
- Job security within the framework of work-life arrangements is another issue that secondary research shows as significant for analysis. It was also concluded that Employees working part-time or with some kind of flexible time arrangement are not viewed the same by Employers and, in periods of recession or economic downturn, they consider themselves as possible victims of dismissal (Cyprus Workers Confederation, 2007).
- Many women are forced to choose full-time jobs with hours that are inconvenient, especially for mothers, since there is a lack of well-paying, part-time jobs (Stavrou & Ierodiakonou, 2007).

5.4.2 The Stumbling Blocks that Employers Are Facing in Implementing Work-Life Measures

- Literature review reveals that employers face a number of problems in becoming family-friendly. Working time arrangements and programs that require changes in work patterns often impose hardships. The reconciliation of work and family life is absent from the agenda of enterprises. The large majority of these have no policy or practice for the facilitation of workers who have many family responsibilities (Cyprus Productivity Center, 2006).

- The majority of employers (83.4%) believe that women's family responsibilities have a negative impact on their work performance. Moreover, the fear of negative impact on work performance due to family responsibilities leads employers to prefer to hire men over women, especially in the case of small companies compared to large ones (Cyprus Workers Confederation, 2007). In addition, managers believe that the most common reason for the absence of women in the workplace is family related (Cyprus Workers Confederation, 2007).
- For the employers in Cyprus, the main obstacle in the adoption of policies that support work-life balance is the financial cost that may be incurred. Employers also indicated that they do not know how to develop and implement policies and arrangements for work-life reconciliation. Fear of losing control over employee working hours after the application of these measures is another stumbling block that employers reported (Cyprus Workers Confederation, 2007).
- The more powerful motives that prompt enterprises to adopt flexible forms of employment are reductions in working costs and, circumstantially, the increase in work productivity and the retention of precious workers in the potential of enterprise (Cyprus Productivity Center, 2006).
- The majority of companies and organisations that adopted some form of work-life time arrangements report that there are often personal confrontations between employees who are in need of a more flexible work schedule and enjoy more flexibility and those employees who are full timers and have limited opportunities for flexibility (Cyprus Productivity Center, 2006).
- Even if the attribution and devotion to the company of the part time and seasonal personnel correspond to those who work full time, these workers do not share the same benefits as do their colleagues who work full time. Another important finding that relates to part time workers is that managers stated that the promotion prospects of part-time workers were 'worse' than those of fulltime workers with comparable qualifications (Fagan et al., 2007). It is also important to note that part-time work in Cyprus, as in some other Eastern European countries, is largely introduced for operational requirements, with schedules mostly designed to enhance employer flexibility and with few considerations for the wishes of employees (Fagan et al., 2007).
- Employer preferences for work-life reconciliation measures are: corporations with more child-care facilities that respond to the standard working hours will help in the reconciliation of work-life balance, the possibility of choosing extended working hours (time of start and

finish) (Cyprus Workers Confederation, 2007). On the contrary, they are sufficiently cautious regarding the effectiveness of other forms of flexibility, such as seasonal employment, the lending of personnel, the compressed work week, telecommuting and the regulation of time of work (Cyprus Productivity Center, 2006).

5.5 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Even though the employment rates in Cyprus, as mentioned above, are very high compared to the rest of the EU Member states, Employees, especially women, rate balancing work and family as the most important factor for employment.

The literature review indicated that Cyprus lags behind in terms of measures that promote Work-Life Balance. In general, Cyprus is among the countries that are classified as 'in-flexicurity' countries, where both flexibility and security levels are low (Chung, Kerkhofs & Ester, 2007). This can be attributed to the dominance of small firms, as firm size is the next best predictor of the presence of Work-Life Balance policies, after the industry type. In other words, large companies are more likely to provide flexible work options than are small companies (Yasbek, 2004). Another factor that may be implicated in the limitation of Work-Life measures in Cyprus could be the extended family, which is still an important part of social life, with grandparents taking care of young children and with women still often regarded more as home-makers (Evans, 2001).

One of the main stumbling blocks that was derived from the above mentioned research is the need for good quality and affordable childcare services. It is important to note that childcare infrastructure is a relatively new concept in Cyprus. In general, the public school day in Cyprus ends at 13.00 and working families rely on informal childcare provision provided by relatives. In a Research Study conducted by Cyprus Workers Confederation (SEK) regarding work and life reconciliation, 51% of the sample indicated that they leave their children between the ages of 0-3 years with their grandparents when they are at work (Matsas & Kosma, 2007). In addition, most day care centres are closed during the Christmas and Easter holidays for two weeks and for at least the month of August in the summer. In addition, day care centres are not affordable, since they usually cost one third of the minimum wage. This leads many women, especially the ones with two or more young children, to prefer to be unemployed as it does not make economic sense to be employed (European Commission, 2005). The substantial increase in women's participation in the labour market raises the demand for availability of services for both pre-school and school-age children as well. Today, although the Government has introduced an all-day school provision, the cost of child care, as indicated in the above findings, is still an issue (Foundation, 2006). In some countries (e.g. the Netherlands), where there is a poor supply

of public child care facilities, private companies are offering their own child care facilities (Riedmann, 2006). Since the great majority of companies in Cyprus are small, public authorities need to assist these companies and develop instruments that help to increase the availability of accessible and affordable childcare facilities.

As PES, we receive much information from Employers and Job seekers regarding the need for childcare facility infrastructure. Usually this information stays within our Department, since we do not have any mechanism for communicating this information to the pertinent authorities. We recommend the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate the dissemination of this information to local authorities, to the Ministry of Education and to the Social Welfare Services. In this way, we can develop child care facilities that will be accessible to the areas where there is a greater need for Employers, Employees and Jobseekers.

Secondly, our literature review revealed that Work-Life Balance is a very new concept in Cyprus and that reconciliation of work and family life policies are absent from the agenda of enterprises. This leads to the assumption that organisations are not well informed and not particularly ready to introduce Work-Life measures.

Raising awareness on Work-Life policies seems to be an important issue. We are suggesting the involvement of PES in raising awareness of Employers who are the primary change actors in the field, by organising seminars targeted to the benefits of achieving Work-Life Balance within their organisations.

Another suggestion is the introduction and organisation of an annual "Work-Life Balance Week," during which promotional activities will be presented to help raise awareness of Work-Life Balance issues within the general public.

The main stumbling blocks for the Employers in Cyprus, as was revealed from the research examined, was an inability and lack of knowledge of appropriate ways to introduce and apply these measures. The costs that may be incurred from the application of such measures were also factors. In this case, we believe that PES can offer support towards the creation of innovative working arrangements with the introduction of special trained Work-Life Balance Counsellors. These Counsellors will help companies to develop and implement Work-Life Balance strategies that will meet Employee needs and company goals. Since the majority of companies in Cyprus are SMEs, it will probably be easier to undertake internal reorganisation since there is likely to be less role specialisation in small organisations as people need to be able to multi task. In addition, as SMEs have flatter management structures, Work-Life Balance policies are often less costly as there is less bureaucracy (Yasbek, 2004). The Counsellors will be divided into two specialisations; the Work-Life Balance Counsellors for Employees and Work-Life Balance Counsellors for Employers.

These Counsellors who will specialise in Employee issues will go into the companies and analyse the needs and desires

of the Employees to determine which work-life policies would best assist them. The Counsellors who will specialise in company needs will go into the companies and analyze the needs of the organisations to determine which work-life balance measures are feasible in a given organisation. After working closely, the two types of Counsellors will come up with written specific action plans that will fit the needs of both Employees and Employers in terms with Work-Life Balance measures. Since policies and measures need to be implemented in a way that ensures that they are effective, the Counsellors will be responsible for undertaking a cost benefit analysis to determine if the benefits from the application of Work-Life Balance measures outweigh their costs. Finally, the Counsellors will have to perform follow up and propose recommendations, when needed, for the improvement of the programme.

Another problem or risk considered by Employers who were interviewed is the fear that they will lose control if they give Employees too much flexibility. In order to alleviate this type of fear, it is prudent to state that they must devise a proper outcome appraisal system to evaluate, precisely and fairly, the performance of their Employees and to ensure that their productivity is not decreasing. PES can also contribute to the development of these appraisal and evaluation tools to help Employers measure the productivity of their Employees.

In summary, for the creation of innovating working arrangements PES can support Employers by assisting in the dissemination of information regarding locations that need childcare facilities. In addition, PES can also assist by introducing seminars aimed at raising awareness among Employers, and by introducing "Work-Life Balance Weeks" aimed at raising the awareness of the general public. Other services that PES can offer in support of the creation of innovative working arrangements are the services of specially trained Work-Life Balance Counsellors. These Counsellors will be responsible for visiting the organisations and assisting them in introducing and applying Work-Life Balance measures that benefit both the organisation and its Employees.

5.6 BEST PRACTICES

5.6.1 Cyprus Telecommunications Authority (CYTA)

CYTA is a semi-governmental organisation established by Law that is responsible for the provision, maintenance and development of telecommunications services and facilities, both local and overseas. CYTA is the biggest telecommunications service provider in Cyprus. CYTA currently employs 2,486 people. With the aim of satisfying the needs of their staff, the Work-Life Balance philosophy has been adopted. In the framework of this philosophy, CYTA launched a number of projects such as telecommuting, alternative working hours, flexitime and the creation of a model work environment. More specifically, CYTA adopted the following measures:

Flexible working hours

The CYTA staff has the possibility to arrive at work between 7:00 and 8:15 am and leave between 1:15 and 3:30 pm. Total working hours must be completed per fortnight.

Telecommuting

This gives the staff the possibility to work from a location different from the traditional work place. The alternative location may be the home of the Employee or a CYTA building near the Employee's home. This institution is implemented at a first stage for Employees who suffer from health or other problems, while it is expected that in the future it will cover all staff that would like to work in this fashion and who are qualified for telecommuting.

Individual working hours

Employees who face specific problems that do not allow them to arrive at and leave from work on the basis of flexible working hours may work for a time period on the basis of individual working hours.

Social work

Social support to CYTA Employees who face personal or family problems have been provided by hiring the services of a Social Worker.

Occupational medicine

Elevating the health and safety level of the personnel has been achieved by hiring the services of an occupational doctor.

Health, beauty and professional appearance day

This is an annual day event during which various check-ups and blood tests are offered for free to the personnel. Various information programmes are also organised on various health topics as well as nutritional, exercise and professional appearance issues.

Child care programme

This programme is under study and it concerns the establishment of a nursery and kindergarten, as well as a children's club for the Employees' children that will adjust their working hours and days to match that of the personnel.

Transfer of annual leave from employee to employee

Within the framework of personnel solidarity, in a case that an Employee exhausts his/her leave due to health problems of a family member, his/her colleagues may in good faith grant him/her their annual leave, aiming at both encouraging him/her psychologically and avoiding the reduction of his/her pay in case he/she would take unpaid leave.

Flexible work place

As a pilot project, one of the CYTA buildings will be transformed into a model environment of open working

space with high tech and special flexibility features. This pilot project aims at changing the mentality of both the personnel and hierarchy in relation to the manner of dispatching work and releasing the personnel from the office. The change of mentality will reinforce the personnel's possibilities to work at different hours and locations in a manner that will eventually positively affect their quality of life.

5.6.2 Karaiskakio Foundation

Karaiskakio Foundation employs a total of 16 persons, among which 13 are female.

Despite the relatively small number of Employees, Karaiskakio has been following a strategic approach to human resource management: there are formal written policies concerning recruitment and selection, training and development, salaries and benefits, and assessment and promotions, whilst equal opportunities and sexual harassment policies are in the development process.

The Foundation uses a variety of alternative work schedules, including weekend work, overtime, seasonal work, fixed-term contracts, part-time work, and flexitime. Given the variety of working arrangements offered, the Foundation has developed a formal, written policy concerning flexible work arrangements (FWAs): there is a formal procedure for Employees to apply to adopt a FWA and a person responsible for considering these applications. Further, Employees can ask to change from 'traditional' work schedules to more flexible ones or vice-versa.

In addition to FWAs, Karaiskakio Foundation also offers other family-friendly benefits that extend beyond any legal and contractual obligations. These include educational and family career breaks; fully paid maternity; paternity, and parental leave; providence fund, health insurance, and pension plans.

The Foundation believes that FWAs influence key performance indicators: it improves the image of the Foundation and its ability to attract and retain qualified Employees, in addition to increasing Employee productivity and reducing absenteeism. These arrangements also offer important benefits to Employees, as they improve their personal and employment relations, facilitate the caring of dependants – children or elders, and improve the quality of life whilst reducing occupational strength significantly.

5.6.3 C.A. Papaellina & Co Ltd

- C.A. Papaellina & Co Ltd employs a total of 390 persons. With the aim of satisfying the needs of their staff they are using different Work-Life Balance practices.
- The C. A. Papaellinas & Co Ltd staff has the possibility to arrive at work between 7:30am and 8:30 am and leave after the completion of 8 hours.
- Extension of maternity leave from 18 weeks to 6 months.

- Option to work from home on specific strains with free internet facility for easy access to the computerised system of the company. This allows the reduced of presence in the office for a few hours a week.
- Free mobile phone card and phone for easy communication from home.
- Providing coupon value EUR 100 per month for purchase of children's products to all the children of staff up to 2.5 years.
- Purchase child carseat for all newborns.
- Provide financial awards to the distinguished children attending staff at all levels of Secondary Education.
- Grant full fertility drugs to staff facing problems childbearing.

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6. Case Study II - Iceland

Creating Innovative Working Arrangements through the Support of PES for a Better Work-Life Reconciliation

Jóhann Ásmundsson

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 Politics and Economic Outlook

The Independence Party had led the Government for more than 17 years with neo-liberal ideologies and deregulation policies as its primary focus in its belief in the self regulatory qualities of the market. This overtly came to an end with the bank crises, surfacing in the global financial crises, triggering a collapse in the Icelandic currency further resulting in collapse of the whole Icelandic economy and foreign currency crises in beginning of October 2008. In less than 6 years after the banks had been privatised they were nationalised again by the same influential party, under the Act No 125/2008 on the Authority for Treasury Disbursements due to Unusual Financial Market circumstances. The financial system had collapsed under the weight of billions of Euros of foreign debts incurred by its banks, in part insured by the State and the Central Bank of Iceland. Following massive demonstrations and public protests owing to dissatisfaction of the general public, the Prime minister resigned his office on 26th January. The economic situation today is uncertain to say the least but Iceland's case is unique because the country's entire banking system collapsed.

A new Government was formed on the first day of February 2009 with the coalition of Social Democrats and the Left-Green Movement. This new Government has set a tone that could have indirect but general implications for Work-Life Reconciliation measures and inclusive labour markets. The Prime Minister is Johanna Sigurdardottir and five out of ten ministers are women. Further the Left-Green Movement has a strong and very visible feminist arm with prominent members of both genders. This Government, the 80 day government, was formed after the Independence party

leader and Prime minister resigned his office. Now after these 80 days and general election it is clear that these two parties, the Social Democrats and the Left Green Movement hold the majority of seats in the Icelandic parliament.

It is clear that the outlook for the Icelandic welfare system is uncertain. In political terms the parties that form the sitting Government have shown strong support for mutual social and public insurance system based on the Scandinavian welfare state models. Where generous welfare state insurances have been combined with rapid economic growth, low unemployment and high levels of labour force participation, particularly among women, have resulted. In economic terms however the debts of the nation is yet not known in its entirety. Terms and conditions of a loan from the IMF also will bind the hands of the sitting government. Extensive cut backs have been announced and unemployment is thought to increase even more although it has come to a temporarily and seasonal halt. The unemployment rate is, as for the month of March, 8.9% on average and has reached more than 14% in certain areas. The global economic outlook is also uncertain and far from positive as literally all nations are experiencing right now.

6.1.2 Setting the Scene

The Icelandic labour market has for decades been characterised by a constant demand for labour. The demand has been especially high for the last few years due to a booming economy. The labour demand has mostly, and in particular for the last five years, been met with workers from other EEA countries. The Icelandic economy is now going through a severe crisis following the collapse of the banking and financial sectors, with unemployment increasing at a fast pace. Unemployment has been exceptionally low for the last

two years and in January 2006 it was only 1.6% and gradually decreasing. In the year 2007 and 2008 unemployment was 1% or less for more than 12 executive months. However the unemployment rate is now six times as high as it was 6 months ago. Not only is the current situation severe in the sense that this much unemployment has not been experienced in Iceland in recent times but also how fast it is rising, but unemployment has gone from 1.1% in July of 2008 to 8.9% in March 2009 and still on the rise (Directorate of Labour Iceland, n.d.).

Labour market statistics approximates

	August 08	January 09	June 09
Workforce	185,000	160,000	175,000
Number of unemployed	2,000	10,000	18,000
Unemployment rate	1,1%	6,6%	9%

Table 1 - Labour market statistics: Directorate of Labour

The state and municipalities are the largest employers in Iceland, apparently not directly within the scope of this report. In relation to employment the tourist sector keeps expanding on the same time as employment in the fisheries sector is declining although value of catch is increasing every year. During the excessive influx of capital and the consequent economic boom in the last decade the demand for highly skilled specialists such as programmers and system administrators did increase. Mega projects such as the controversial Karahnjúkar dam and the Alcoa-Fjardaral plant, in addition to increased demand for new housing resulted in major expansion in construction industry, which has by now come to almost complete stop.

Iceland is moving towards economic recovery and financial stability with restructuring of its financial and banking systems,

and multilateral assistance led by the International Monetary Fund. Iceland's natural resources; potential clean energy, its marine resources, strong infrastructure, well-educated workforce and work ethics, give rise to some optimism for a slow but steady recovery in the long run. This is however very much so dependent on the global economical developments and how well and how fast the Icelandic government succeeds in re-establishing effectiveness and international trust in the Icelandic economy.

6.1.3 Labour Participation and Family Obligation

Since Statistics Iceland began its labour force surveys in 1991, the labour participation rate has remained fairly constant in the range of 81-83.6%. According to the Statistics Iceland the labour force was estimated at 184.100 persons on average in the year 2008, women 83.700 and men 100.400. That measures out to women's activity rate at 77.7% and men's activity rate to 87.1% or 82.6% on average. However, in Iceland a significant difference in occupation by gender is evident; women are predominantly employed in services and within the public sector, mainly in health and education (Statistics Iceland, n.d. a).

One of the principal features necessary for such a high participation rate of both genders is widely available and affordable child care services. In reality, preschool, generally for children from the age of two until the age of six is the first level in the education system. Children are on increased rate enrolled in preschool and at lower age. In 2007, 96% of all children between the age of 3 and 5 were enrolled in preschool, up from 92% in 2001. And 76% of all children between 3 and 5 were in school for more than 8 hours, half of whom were 9 hours or more in school on every working day. The rate of children less than three years old enrolled in preschool and staying for 8 hours or more, more than doubled between 2001 and 2007, it grew from 15% to 31% of all children two years old and younger. In 1981 the rate was only 9% (Statistics Iceland, n.d. b).

Icelandic children in preschool

		in school population	% in school	% 8 hours +		in school population	% in school	% 8 hours +
		0-2 y	0-2 y	0-2 y		3-5 y	3-5 y	3-5 y
2001	Total	3666	12839	29%		11912	12979	92%
	8 hours	1205		9%	15%	3492		27%
	9 hours +	763		6%		3411		26%
2003	Total	4722	12596	37%		11963	12652	95%
	8 hours	1708		14%	25%	3976		31%
	9 hours +	1391		11%		3903		31%
2005	Total	5066	12570	40%		11798	12615	94%
	8 hours	1987		16%	28%	4402		35%
	9 hours +	1478		12%		4116		33%
2007	Total	5419	13111	41%		12027	12464	96%
	8 hours	2340		18%	31%	4797		38%
	9 hours +	1717		13%		4712		38%

Table 2 -preschool enrolment: Statistic Iceland

The development of childcare facilities really took off in Iceland in the seventies following the dramatic increase in the number of mothers active on the labour market. It is now policy within most municipalities to provide good preschool services for all children between the ages of two and five. Elementary school starts when the child is in its sixth year. The majority of workers within the preschool level are women (RIV, n.d.).

6.1.4 Legal Framework¹

The Act no.95/2000 on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave entered into force on 1st January 2001. The payments come from a *Parental Leave Fund* which is financed by a portion of the insurance levy that all employers pay as part of the wages. In addition there are a number of employment laws in areas such as equal rights of men and women, pensions, health and safety at the workplace. The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland requires that everyone shall be equal before the Law and enjoy human rights irrespective of gender, religion, opinion, national origin, race, colour, property, birth or other status.

Maternity and paternal rights

Parents that are active on the labour market have a right to be granted maternity/paternity leave and parental leave according to Act No. 95/2000. The same applies to parents who are self-employed and to parents who are not active on the labour market and parents attending full-time educational programs as to receiving a maternity/paternity grant. The aim of the Act is twofold:

- to ensure children's access to both their parents
- to enable both women and men to co-ordinate family life and work outside the home.

Employers are obliged to make efforts to meet workers' wishes with regard to the taking of maternity/paternity leave. Both parents have an equal, non-transferable, right to take three months' leave in connection with

- the birth
- first-time adoption, or
- fostering of a child

irrespective of whether they work in the private or the public sector, or are self-employed. They are also able to divide a further three months' leave between themselves as they wish.

Maternity/paternal benefits

Parents have each an independent right to maternity/paternity leave of up to three months due to a birth, primary adoption or permanent foster care of a child. A parent obtains the right to payments from the Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund after one has been active on the domestic labour market for six consecutive months prior to the first day of the leave. A parent's working time in other EEA countries is taken into account if the parent has been employed in Iceland for at least one month during the last six months prior to the first day of the leave. These payments amount to 80% of average gross wages or calculated remuneration over the two years preceding the birth year of the child. However there is a maximum payment and in fact a minimum payment to parents. Each parent is further entitled to unpaid independent parental leave for 13 weeks to care for his/her children after completion of work for six consecutive months by the same employer. This right is non-transferable. Parental leave is not accompanied by payment from the Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund. The right to parental leave ends when the child reaches the age of eight years.

Safety and health of pregnant women

If safety or health of a pregnant woman, a woman who has recently given birth to a child, or a woman who is breastfeeding a child, is considered to be in danger according to a special assessment, her employer must make the necessary arrangements to ensure the woman's safety by temporarily changing her working conditions and/or working hours. This shall not affect her wages so as to reduce them or abridge her other job related rights.

Employment protection

The employment relationship is to remain unchanged during maternity/paternity leave and parental leave. The Employer is not permitted to dismiss a worker due to the fact that he has given notice of intended maternity/paternity leave or parental leave or during his maternity/paternity leave or parental leave, without reasonable cause. The same rule applies to pregnant women, and women who have recently given birth.

Under Act No. 27/2000 a worker may not be dismissed solely due to family responsibilities he bears. Three principal conditions must be met to demonstrate the existence of family responsibilities. Firstly, the responsibilities must be towards the worker's own children, spouse or close relatives. Secondly, the persons concerned must live in the workers own home, and thirdly, the person or persons involved must need the care or guardianship of the worker himself in connection with, e.g., illness, disability or comparable circumstances. All three conditions must be met in order for the worker to be regarded as bearing family responsibility under the Act. According to Act No. 72/2002, on Workers' Rights in the Event of Transfers of Undertakings, a transfer of an undertaking does not in itself constitute valid grounds for dismissal of workers.

Equal status and equal rights of Women and Men

Employers are prohibited from discriminating between their workers on the grounds of their gender as regards wages or other terms of employment. This principle is established in the Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 96/2000, revised and expanded in the Act under the same name No. 10/2008 which prohibits discrimination of all types, direct or indirect, on grounds of gender. The same principle applies to promotion, continuing education, vocational training, study leave, working conditions and other matters such as dismissal of workers.

Women and men who are employed by the same employer are entitled to equal pay and equal terms of employment for comparable work of equal value. Pay shall be determined in the same manner for women and men and that the criteria on which they are determined must not include any discrimination based on gender. Terms, in addition to pay, means pension rights, the rights to be granted a holiday, the

right to pay during sickness and any other terms or benefits that may be given monetary value.

Article 18 on *Reconciliation of work and family life* in the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, No. 10/2008 reads as follows:

“Enterprises and institutions with more than 25 Employees, on average over the year, shall set themselves a gender equality programme or mainstream gender equality perspectives into their personnel policy. This shall specifically include, i.e., a statement of aims, with a plan of how they are to be achieved in order to guarantee the employees the rights set forth in Articles 19-22. Gender equality programmes and gender equality perspectives in personnel policies shall be reviewed at three-year intervals“.

Further in article 21

“Employers shall take the measures necessary to enable women and men to reconcile their professional obligations and family responsibilities. Amongst other things, such measures shall be aimed at increasing flexibility in the organization of work and working hours in such a way as to take account of both workers' family circumstances and the needs of the labour market, including facilitating the return of employees to work following maternity/paternity or parental leave or leave from work due to pressing and unavoidable family circumstances“.

The labour market is still highly gender segregated and the gender pay-gap has not been closed. Women have increased their share in decision-making positions but still remain a minority. Four out of five board members and Managers of enterprises are men. Level of education is not the least of factors affecting the activity rate. The activity rate of people with the lowest level of education is much lower than that of those who have completed further education. Age and gender have less impact on activity rate than level of education. This should not be overlooked in the regards to the matter of modernising labour markets. Education level, continuous learning and mastering new skills is essential in the internationalised modern day labour market, to better cope with and respond to the ever-changing market conditions and bring in new opportunities.

Attending sick children and other compelling family reasons

Collective agreements provide parents that have worked for one month, with a total of 7 workdays out of every 12 months to attend to their sick children under the age of 13, provided that sufficient attendance cannot be arranged in another way. After a year of service with the same employer, parents are likewise permitted to devote a total of 10 days to attend to their children under the age of 13. During this time the parent has the right to full wages for day time work, including shift premiums when applicable. The Union Sickness

Funds guarantee in addition the right to 3 months or 90 days (counting 7 days a week), paid by 80% of the workers normal wages during the past 6 months in employment because of the workers children who suffer grave and lasting sickness or are invalid. The same applies if the workers spouse falls seriously sick or has a serious accident. Workers are entitled to a leave from work due to unforeseen and grave reasons or when it concerns very serious sickness or accident in his family that requires his immediate presence. Workers do not have the right to payment of wages in this case.

Mandatory occupational pension fund

The Pension Act No. 129/1997 provides for a mandatory affiliation to the pension fund provided for in the applicable collective agreement, for all workers between the ages of 16 and 70. The membership of a workers' pension fund is determined by the collective agreement on which the basic wages for each worker are determined. The minimum contribution as from 1 January 2007 is 12%, of which 4% are deducted from the worker's wages and 8% which is added by the Employer. The contribution base is comprised of all types of wages or compensation for work which is subject to income tax. The workers 4% contribution is deducted from his income before taxes are levied. The tax liability is postponed in the sense that the pension benefits are taxed as income from employment when they are eventually paid out.

Further there is a public pension scheme providing for old age pension, disability pension and survivor's pension. The old age pension is in most cases paid from the age of 67. The public pension is divided into a basic pension and supplementary pension. Both are means-tested. Pensions received from other sources are treated differently from other income and do not affect the basic pension and the level at which they begin to reduce the supplementary pension is much higher than for other income.

Working arrangements and conditions

The majority of workers are employed as full time workers on an open ended contract of employment. Full working week is generally 40 hours. Other employment arrangements, such as part-time work or fixed-term work, are also common and exist in various sectors of the labour market. Part-time workers are according to a general provision in collective agreements to be treated equally as full time workers on a pro-rata basis. It is stated in collective agreement that employers are not allowed to discriminate against part-time workers. Part-time work and the rights of part time workers is further addressed in Act No. 10/2004.

Act No. 139/2003, on Fixed Term Employment aims to improve the quality of fixed-term work by ensuring the application of the principle of non-discrimination and by

establishing a framework to prevent abuse arising from the use of successive fixed-term employment contracts or relationships.

Fixed-term workers are not to be treated in a less favourable manner than comparable permanent workers in respect of employment conditions. The Act No. 46/1980 on Working Environment, Health and Safety of Workers require employers, to appoint safety guard or a safety committee depending on the number of their workers, and to set up a consultation mechanism on health and safety issues at work i.e. working environment, health and safety at work, informing the workers of these matters, inspection of the workplaces and to ensure that measures are taken to improve the working environment and that health and safety measures are fully effective.

6.1.5 Labour Market and Labour Organisations

For most of the past 60 years, the Icelandic labour market has been characterised by excess demand for labour. Working hours have been quite long and labour participation rate has been high. Since 1996 there has been growing demand for labour and import of labour has been growing rapidly. The Icelandic labour market is highly unionised, with close to 90% of the Employees belonging to unions or similar as in the other Nordic countries. This can be compared to a 15% rate of unionisation among American workers, 40% in the UK, 30% in Japan. The Icelandic labour market is usually characterised as flexible from a regulatory point of view, with very high labour participation and the workforce is quick to adapt to changes in the labour market due to market forces, introduction of new technologies or other factors.

The largest organisation of trade unions in Iceland is the Icelandic Federation of Labour (ASI), founded in 1916. Most of the unions affiliated to the ASI are organised into 5 national federations, 66 unions and branches. Total membership of ASI was 107,859 at the end of 2007. Public Employees are organised into various unions, which in turn belong to the Federation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRB) or Association of Academics (BHM), which also organizes some Employees of private companies, or to separate unions for professions such as teaching. Employees in banks are all members of the Confederation of Icelandic Bank and Finance Employees (SSF). Private non-banking sector employers are organized into The Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA), tasks include negotiation of contracts with unions on wages and working conditions, and the interpretation and communication of decisions by governmental authorities that directly affect the financial performance of businesses at both domestic and international level. SA includes about 2,000 corporations and businesses and the organization accounts for approximately 50% of all salary-paid Employees on the Icelandic labour market.

Wages and other terms of employment concluded in collective agreements are minimum terms, applying to all workers in the applicable occupation within the geographical area covered by each agreement. Labour law enacted by the parliament supports this system by providing a legal framework which deals with certain aspects of collective bargaining, the right to strike and dispute resolution.

6.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Not much research has been conducted in Iceland which concerns the issue of work-life reconciliation measure directly, but most of the discourse has been in regards to research on gender equality, however in the late 1990's and in the beginning of the new millennia some work was done to raise the awareness of WLB measures and a publicity project was fashioned but this does not seem to have had the effect that initially was hoped for. However in recent papers and book chapters family issues have been analysed.

In Eydal & Ólafsson (2008) overview on family policies in Iceland it is stated that the most significant changes on family policies in Iceland for the last two decades are the law on gender equality and the right to parental leave in the 90's and the ratification of the ILO resolution regarding employees with family obligation. However it is stated since the average family has more children and works more than in the other Nordic countries this indicates that need for family support is higher than in the other countries in mention but the public support is actually less extensive in Iceland so there is more pressure on the average Icelandic family.

Research has shown that there is also pressure and potential conflicts within the family as between family and working life. Icelandic data from 2005 shows the majority of workers both men and women would prefer, when asked of working hours, to work the amount of work they are working for the amount of money they are earning, rather than work more for more money, or work less for less money. However, almost one third of both men and women would like to work less than they currently do. The data also shows that most people would like to spend more time with family and friends than they are able to do in their current situation. It is also evident from the data that people in Iceland experience more conflict between work and family life than people in other European countries. Icelanders tend to spend more time working than people on the mainland but they spend less time caring for the home (Stefánsson, 2008).

According to Gíslason (2007), Icelandic National Report on Fostering Caring Masculinities (FOCUS) it is evident that the attitudes prevailing both on the labour market and in the corporate sector are somewhat old fashioned where the traditional gender roles seem to prevail; the women take more responsibilities within the home even though in most cases

both partners work a full time job out of the home. These attitudes are subject to change only through the dialogue taking place between different sex partners on workload and responsibilities within the home. These attitudes are not believed to filter from other societal institutions into the family but vice versa i.e. from the family to other institutions, and will hopefully have effect on company policies in the future for stronger gender equality measures.

Even though Iceland has reached the Lisbon target of 60% female employment and the Barcelona childcare targets, motherhood means a reduction in hours of work until the youngest child is between 7 and 15 years old while fatherhood means increased work load to compensate for the reduction of the mothers income. Further Icelandic women tend to have more children and work more than other European women. However the flexibility in the Icelandic working culture is considerable in terms of hours of work and temporary reduction of working hours, it is fairly easy to get leave of absence and even working from home. One of the benefits in the Icelandic situation, and possibly the reason there of, is the role of the extended family in caring for children with extensive public child care (Mósesdóttir, 2005).

6.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR STUDY

The first step in the research plan was to gather information and ideas of possible ways in which the public sector could support employers to implement work-life reconciliation measures. Thereafter, the plan was to further the investigation by interviews built on the survey results in relation to Employee's needs and requests. Then further, to interview people from the administration and institutions involved in issues that would surface in the research relating to Work-Life Reconciliation measures. This however proved difficult task in the current national situation and upcoming elections. However in addition to survey results the key findings of the interviews were submitted for opinion to selected personnel within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security. This would then make it possible to produce a report on best practices and to put forth suggestions on policy change and reform.

In April after correspondence with the project coordinator at ETC, the work on the Survey began. In May a contract was signed with RHA – The Research Centre of the University of Akureyri. RHA advised the use of internet survey which was decided on in May. The use of computers and the internet is almost universal in Iceland and therefore internet survey was chosen as to gather primary information and first ideas from all over the island on the potential involvement of public agencies. With this method the response rate is also significantly higher in comparison to, for instance mailed surveys. Further RHA

advised that so close to summer vacation season, which is by their experience not a good time to get acceptable response rate and results, hence the Survey was postponed to the fall.

In September the work began again and the Questionnaire was finalised and the Survey was ready to be launched. On the same time the uncertainty on international financial markets was rising. The outlook in Iceland situation was dim. Again there were discussions on postponing the survey, but when the crises hit there was no option but to launch the survey or otherwise cancel it altogether. The Survey was launched the day after the collapse on 7th October and the responses to a certain extent echo this reality.

A sample was drawn from firms which had paid five or more people salaries, according to the public record attained from the Internal Revenue Directorate, from all sectors but for two; the public sector and the agricultural sector. The former for obvious reasons and latter because agriculture in Iceland is for the most part small family enterprises run within the nuclear family. Further farms do for the most part not reach the criteria of five employees and do not in general reflect well on private enterprises' work arrangements.

The Questionnaire was an e-mail survey conducted in October 2008. On 7th October an e-mail was sent out to 694 companies in Iceland. The e-mail included an introduction to the research, its objectives and a link to a survey webpage. Three reminder messages were sent out via e-mail, the first message 3 days after the launch i.e. on 10th October, then on the 21st and the last on the 28th. Initially the response rate was 17.9%, after the first reminder the response rate was 33.3%, then 53% and after the final reminder the response rate was up to 60.7%. In total 421 out of the 695 answered the survey. Five respondents were engaged in public services or administration and were removed from the sample. Number in the final sample was therefore 416.

6.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.4.1 Survey Results

Figure 1 shows how the survey responses are divided between sectors:

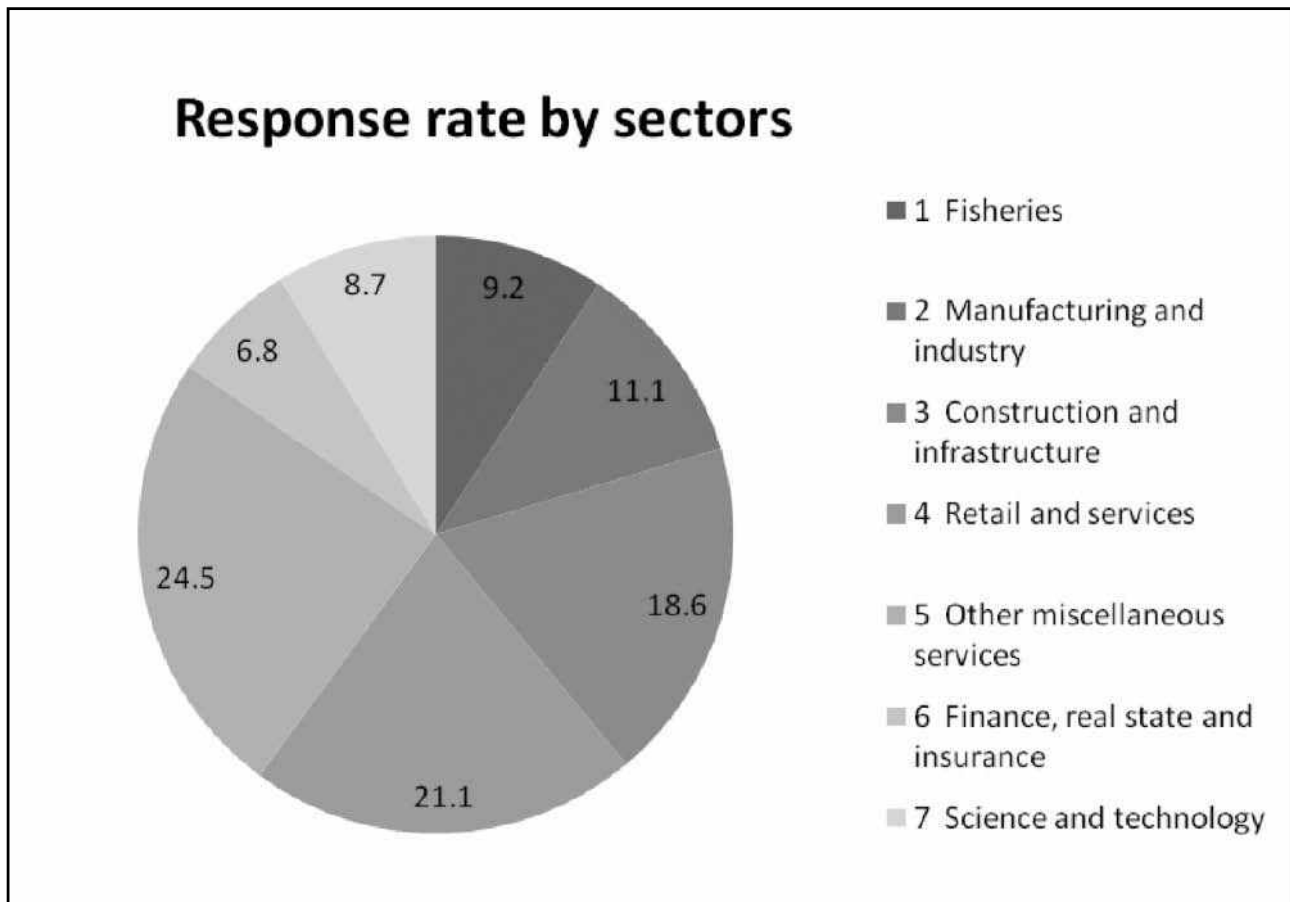


Figure 1: Responses between sectors

Majority of the respondents were male or 289 and 124 were female, men are in majority within all sectors. 70% of respondents are male and 30% are female. Gender of the respondent does not seem to explain any clear difference in the responses.

	Fisheries		Manufacturing & industry		Construction, infrastructure		Retail & services		Other services		Finance & real estate		Science & technology		Total	
Male	26	68%	39	85%	54	70%	62	71%	60	59%	20	71%	28	78%	289	70%
Female	12	32%	7	15%	23	30%	25	29%	41	41%	8	29%	8	22%	124	30%
Total	38	100%	46	100%	77	100%	87	100%	101	100%	28	100%	36	100%	413	100%

Table 3 – Respondents by gender and sector

When it comes to the proportion of gender employed in these firms within each sector a similar picture emerges, however considerable more women than men are employed within ‘Other services’, that is also true, though to a lesser extent for ‘Finance, real estate and insurance.’

	Fisheries		Manufacturing & industry		Construction, infrastructure		Retail & services		Other services		Finance & etc.		Science & technology		Total	
More women	7	18%	6	13%	3	4%	32	37%	50	50%	10	36%	8	22%	116	28%
Even	6	16%	8	17%	8	10%	7	8%	18	18%	10	36%	9	25%	66	16%
More men	25	66%	32	70%	66	86%	48	55%	33	33%	8	29%	19	53%	231	56%

Table 4- Employees by gender and sector

As stated above within the legal framework in Iceland, companies employing more than 25 people are to produce a gender equality program. In that program work-life balance measures should be addressed. It is interesting to see cross tabulation on number of workers and if firms actually do have an equality program. This clearly shows that in this regard there is discrepancy as to the fact that the intentions of the law are clearly not fulfilled.

	Yes	No	Total
25 employees and less	66	209	275
26 employees and more	51	80	131
Total	117	289	406

Table 5 – Firms with and without equality program

This calls for a speculation on the effectiveness on the regulatory framework in place in regards to the implementation of the Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men. In the context of WLB it means that the issues are perhaps avoided.

Little more than 33% of the respondent firms were outside the capital area of Reykjavik and close to 67% therefore from the Reykjavik urban zone. There is no clear difference between the firms responses from the Reykjavik area and the rest of the country.

1 - 9	167
10-69	162
70-plus	82
Total	411

Table 6 – Number of employees

The size of the firms in relation to how many are employed shows some indication of difference in dealing with work-life balance issues (table 7). The respondents of the small companies seem to ‘disagree’ or deny when asked if there are problems in regards to employees’ requests to work-life balance measures. The biggest companies do agree to lesser extent when asked if there are problems regarding work-life balance measures than the smaller companies and number of replies in ‘neither nor’ seems to indicate a certain ease towards the issue.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1 - 9	4%	17%	29%	32%	18%	100%
10-69	4%	15%	36%	33%	10%	100%
70-plus	5%	6%	40%	37%	12%	100%
Total	4%	14%	34%	34%	14%	100%

Table 7 – Difficulties regarding WLB and firm size

If compared between sectors it becomes clear that between 69% and 89% within all sectors of responding firms do not agree to the statement that there are difficulties because of Employee request to work-life balance measures (fig.2). The same comparison but now to the extent which these firms do have a work-life reconciliation guidelines (fig.3), shows that companies in fisheries do not seem to have guidelines on the same level as others. Further, within the financial sector no one disagrees with the statement that there are guidelines within the company. Interestingly firms within the Fisheries sector have a bigger proportion denying difficulties than e.g. in the ‘Other services’ sector where majority agrees on there being guidelines regarding the matter.

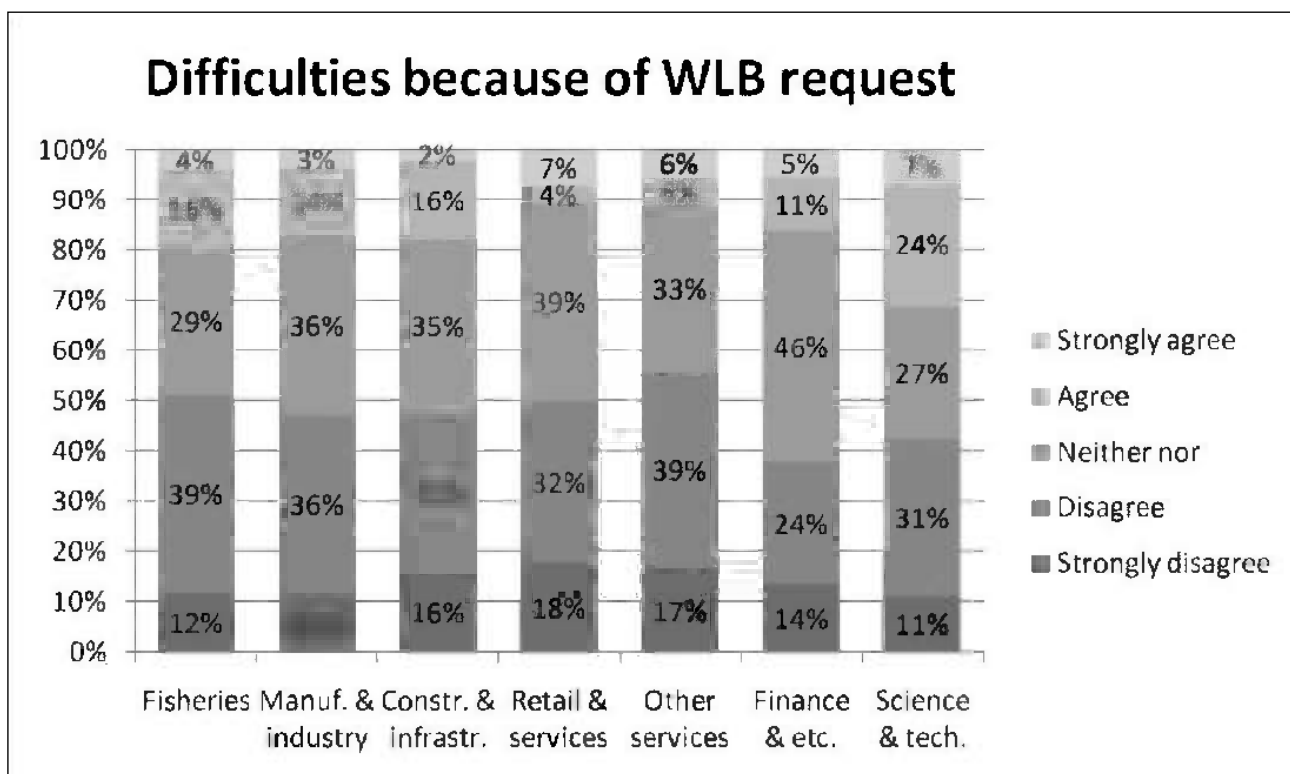


Figure 2: Difficulties in WLB by Sector

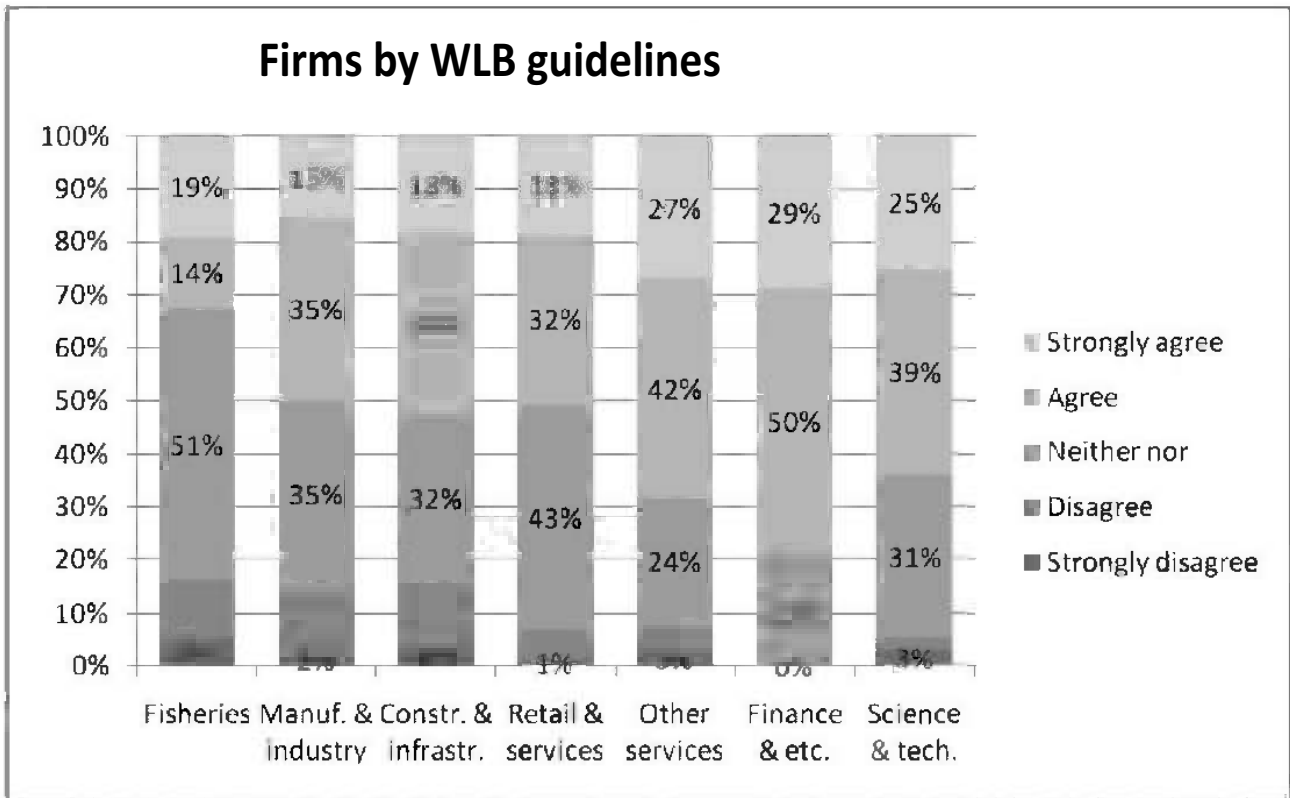


Figure 3: Firms with WLB guidelines by Sector

Here it is of interest that the two sectors that seem to have guidelines to a greater extent than the others are 'Finance and real estate' and 'Other Services'; where women are the majority of the employees. Next in line is 'Science and technology' yet

within which the most difficulties are experienced. More than 50% of all the firms within each sector seem to have some guidelines, except for firms in the fisheries sector.

	Fisheries	Industry	Construction	Sales and service	Miscellaneous services	Finance and real estate	Science and technology	Total
Tax reform	1	1	3	4	5	2	2	18
Parental leave		2	4	3	3			12
School policies		2	2	2	3	2		11
Family policies			2	3	3	2		10
Shorter workweek		1	2	1	2		1	7
Regulation	1	3		4	4		3	15
Inform			3	2				5
Good example		1		1	2			4
Nothing in particular	1		1		1			3
Could not		1	2					3
Against WLB measures		3						3
Should not	1	4	4	5	7	1	1	23
Don't know	4	4	3	10	16			37
Irrelevant			1	5	5	2	1	14
Misunderstood	1	2	2	4	4	1		14
Total	8	24	29	45	55	6	6	179

Table 8 – WLB suggestions and comments by sector

Private employers views and perceptions on WLB measures in Iceland

The final question of the survey and the one that was supposed to give direct results on the needs and concerns of Employers regarding the implementation of reconciliation measures, gave 155 responses out of the 416 that replied answers to the survey, which means that only 37 % of respondents answered this question:

In Table 8 all the answers have been categorised into 14 main suggestions between the sectors. The total count of suggestions is 179 as some had multiple suggestions. Many suggest change regarding the parental leave and school policies. The response on parental leave is mainly in regards to more flexibility within the system and to extending the time of a paid leave. The responses in regards to the school policies reflect the fact that many kids stay in school as long or longer each day than their parents stay at work. Many would like to see 'work-school' reconciliation measures.

There are 18 responses suggesting some kind of tax reforms, either or both, in the context of individuals or firms. Shorter work week is also suggested in 7 responses. Other regulation changes are also named frequently. Some kind of regulation change is suggested in 15 responses and within that category a stronger legal framework and revision of stores opening hours was most frequently suggested. However most answers are simply 'Don't know'. Quite many are of the opinion that the public sector should not be involved in private affairs at all. Also many seem to use the opportunity to express their opinion on the economic crises and current affairs not relevant to this research, others seemed to misunderstand the question or answer in other directions.

There are only 82 answers out of 179 that give useful suggestions on what should be done to aid the private sector in matters connecting with WLB measures. These suggestions are within 8 categories.

First, some kind of tax relief is mentioned on 18 occasions, both in the context of the individual so one could afford more quality time with the family, and in the context of the firm to facilitate for possible cost and inconveniences due to WLB.

Second, more flexible and/or increased parental leave is mentioned 12 times. Some of the responses go against one of the main purposes of the law on parental leave i.e. to strengthen fatherhood and even out between the genders the personal cost or opportunity cost of having a child and to ensuring children's access to both their parents, others suggest a longer possible time off.

Third, 11 respondents ask for some kind of *work-life-school* reconciliation measures. As noted above children of all ages have a busy schedule, and many think that school, sport and other recreational activities need to be within the bigger picture.

Fourth, family policies are suggested on 10 occasions, from extended rights to attend to sick family member to family subsidies and early retirement.

Fifth, shorter work week is mentioned on 7 occasions.

Sixth, the category of 'Regulations' consists of 6 main types of suggestions: 1) Change of regulatory and legal framework to facilitate WLB is suggested directly. 2) Regulation of stores opening hours i.e. shortening opening hours or vary it in some manner. 3) To implement some kind of unemployment benefits to Employers' scheme, that would lower company costs and increase employment.

Seventh, the public sector ought to have some kind of informative role in the relation to the benefits and possibilities in regards to WLB measure.

Eighth, the public sector should lead with good examples of WLB policies implemented within the sector.

The answers are otherwise evenly spread out between the sectors and there is no obvious consensus or a trend particularly tied to a certain sector. However it is an interesting result that less than half of those responding to the Survey, answer the question or make suggestions, and less than half that actually do, respond in a constructive manner. A few are against WLB in general but quite many or 23 do not think that the public sector should have anything to do with it. A few do think that the public sector could not do anything and another few think that it just should not do anything in particular about it. The biggest category is the one with those who just do not know what should or could be done or 37 of 179. A group of 14 seems to have used the opportunity to express themselves on various matters not directly relevant to this research and another group of 14 just plain misunderstood the question.

Although within this survey direct questions are not asked on Employees requests, most answers and comments to the last question are related to family issues. This, most likely reflects real requests made by Employees and issues the Employer has had to deal with. What is perhaps of particular interest is that 37 respondents state that they do not know what could or should be done. In reality one could argue that most likely many of those who do not answer this question or make any suggestions do not have a clear picture of the concepts in mention. Another interesting result is how many reject the role of the public sector all together. Quite a few seem to have misunderstood the question, or 14, which could be due to phrasing but otherwise might further indicate lack of awareness when it comes to work-life balance. Another group of 14 answered on the spur of the moment in a manner not relevant to this Research, mainly connected to the economic crisis as the banks were tumbling and their businesses at risk.

6.4.2 The Interviews

Seven interviews were conducted in each one of the sectors; fisheries, manufacturing and industry, construction and infrastructure, retail and services, other services, finance and insurance, and science and technology. The interviewees, of whom four are women, were asked more specific questions on WLB measures within the company in question in particular and also on the sector as a whole.

Fisheries

Difficulties are perceived to be second most within fisheries sector, although not considerably greater than in manufacture or construction. The company in mention has its offices in

Reykjavik but operates factories and production facilities in four main locations outside the Reykjavik metropolitan area and employs 360 people of which approximately 40% are women.

The interviewee is a factory manager. Within the factory around 120 people are working on regular basis of whom 90 are women. Different kinds of working arrangements are practised. The regular hours are from 7 -3, but the facility offers much flexibility in terms of starting and finishing time, for both part time and full time employees. Further at the office there is some flexibility and there is the possibility of working from home although it is not generally practised. The company tries to respond to individual preferences and solve temporary problems that can rise by facilitating employees' wishes. Younger women typically ask for WLB measures, i.e. people with children, but older and experienced people, who are considered valuable workers, are asking for reduced hours.

Manufacturing and industry

This is also a sector in which WLB measures can be difficult to implement due to production lines and interdependence of each work performed within the production line. The interviewee was the factory manager. The factory in mention here is situated outside of the Reykjavik metropolitan area and has 37 Employees, 3 of whom are women, the company's headquarters are in Reykjavik and whole it employs around 230 people. The factory workers are all male, the women work in laboratory and office. The women work a shorter work week i.e. part time and have some flexibility due to issues in regards to their children. The factory operates on double shifts and does offer some flexibility in regards to the shifts. For instance a single father only works day shifts and workers do exchange shifts if something comes up.

Again working arrangement seems to be dealt with on individual basis and although there was an online employee policy and a gender equality programme it sort of came as surprise to the facility manager or rather it did not seem to be relevant in day to day operations. However the factory manager implied that all cases were dealt with and in general there were very few WLB wishes from the employees. Employee issues according to the manager seem to be in fairly good shape and the workers' turnover is relatively low.

Construction and infrastructure

The company in mention is located out of the Reykjavik vicinity, a construction company engaged mainly in the construction of housing, employing 50 men and 4 women. The interviewees were two women from the office whose responsibilities are the Employee issues. No specific measures are in place but incidents are dealt with on individual basis.

Some of the workers are educating themselves within the industry and need to attend classes. If workers need to take care of personal business one can always take a longer lunch break. In general WLB measures are not much asked for but the fathers that have children, the younger people do ask for some leeway, and are usually granted such. There is no official employment strategy but according to interviewees they try to meet the needs of the workers in as much as they can. These arrangements are according to interviewees similar as in other firms within the industry.

Retail and services

One of the responses quite often quoted in the Survey as effecting way of life in a negative manner, was the stores opening hours. The interviewee is in charge of Employee issues in one of the big retailers in Iceland with headquarters in Reykjavík. The company employs many hundreds of people on many locations. The interviewee was the head of Human Resources. Although there is a company policy and a focus on certain values, of which some reflect shared values, there are no outlined specific measures in place within the company. Many work part time and a few can work from home, in the interviewees' eyes by experience not a good option and too easily ends up as constant work. Again issues are dealt with on individual basis and people do have the opportunity of some flexibility to take care of personal matters. The people that ask for WLB measures are typically young women with children where each case is considered.

Other services

The company in mention is working with information technology. It is a small company based outside the Reykjavík area. It has 11 employees of which 7 are women. The company's director was interviewed. Although there is no company policy the workers have considerable flexibility in terms of working hours and length of the work week. There is the possibility of telework or working from home with most of the work, although not exercised on regular basis. As a result there are not many formal wishes for WLB measures, however in a weekly work meeting, the week ahead is planned in relation to work load, joint projects and working arrangements. The challenge in such a small company is to be able to utilise the expertise of all employees between different projects when working arrangements do vary.

Finance and insurance

The particular company has headquarters in Reykjavik but has branches in many locations. It employs 140 people of whom 45% are women. The interviewee was head of Human Resources. Although not strict about WLB measures, many different working arrangements are in effect within the

company. Part time work and some flexibility, particularly offered after parental leave. Quite many have the possibility of teleworking and working from home although not a fixed working arrangement with anyone. Interviewee feels that the men are now, after the enactment of the parental leave, on an increased scale asking for WLB measures. As before it is those people with children that seem to need WLB measures the most, however as people grow older there is a tendency to decrease the work by shortening the workweek or the workday. Students also seem to need some flexibility in relation to work arrangements.

Science and technology

In the last sector an engineering firm employing 14 people of whom 2 are women. The firm's Director was interviewed. The firm has operated in the same way for 34 years and he responds that there is no need of certain WLB measures. The firm has Employees doing part time work and some flexibility in relation to working hours. Also when it comes to summer vacations people can freely choose a period of time that suits them and their families the best. However there is no specific WLB policies within the firm, individual wishes are respected as long as they do not interrupt the operation. Those that seem to ask most for some kind of WLB measures are people with children.

Compilation and suggested role of government agencies

It is evident from the Survey result and the interviews that WLB awareness is not particularly high. Work-life balance measures are not much requested. Whether it stems from lack of need or the reluctance to ask for such measures cannot be answered with the data conducted. Results based on employer attitudes give one sided picture. A study on employee attitudes and their need for WLB measures is needed to balance these results. However the responses and suggestions on the role of the PES, especially those from the e-mail survey, even though it was stressed that company views were sought, have a kind of personal character indicating individual attitudes to a certain degree as much as a company vision or need.

In the interviews as before in the Survey results, some kind of work-life-school balance is mentioned by three of the interviewees, there is a clear indication of a need for reconciliation between these three societal institutions. Extending the parental leave is another suggestion common with prior results was mentioned twice, and some kind of reward for those companies that do well in offering WLB measures or promote companies and strengthen the positive image derived from WLB policies, or generally to set some rules and regulation regarding WLB measures.

One suggested more focus on consultation and joint responsibility between the social partners; government

agencies, the Employers' confederation and the trade unions in regards to WLB policies. Of further concern is the shortening of the work week and issuing gender quotas on company boards. One suggested subsidising child care within companies and the issue of stores opening hours came up once. Three of the interviewees had no suggestions for the role of public agencies in facilitating WLB measures, further indicating the lack of awareness, or the lack of a dialogue on the issues of WLB.

Generally Icelandic labour market is very flexible and responsive. This seems to be the case also when it comes to day to day practice and employer and employee relations. Company employee policies are more likely affected by the working culture than the working culture is affected by employee policies. Company policies or guidelines tend to be worded in very general terms and even though work-life-balance is mentioned it is often times non specific. Although the minimum standards and workers rights are guaranteed by law, the main issues in relation to WLB as they are practised in Iceland i.e. time to care for family, the sick and the newborn are negotiated in collective bargains between employers and employees, i.e. both employers organisation, the state or the municipalities, and the different trade unions.

Furthermore, individual wishes and more specific WLB preferences are dealt with in each case and in concern to the particular circumstances which seem to be part of the working culture in Iceland and applicable to all of the companies involved in the interviews. So what seems to be the case in Iceland is the fact that there is certain flexibility and open line of communication to express and facilitate employee wishes and needs but no guarantee. The lack of a statement or an open contract in most cases, which both employer and employee can take as granted and work with, is somewhat of a downside to the situation, particularly one wonders about those that do not know the working culture in Iceland e.g. foreign workers.

The stumbling blocks identified were mainly cost and more effort needed to manage work at the workplace to plan different working arrangements and make sure to maintain efficiency levels. The idea that these arrangements only shifted the workload from the once acquiring some sort of WLB measures to the other employees. This attitude was noticed both with the company spokesmen themselves and identified by spokesmen as source for jealousy towards employee acquiring WLB measures and dislike towards WLB arrangements.

What remains to be seen is if the sudden and dramatic change in the Icelandic labour market and the economy as a whole will change the situation to the better or for worse. It is evident that rebuilding a healthy labour market calls for valuation and raised awareness of WLB issues. However,

when the employment is going down from plenty, and there is scarcity of jobs, power or leverage to make requests will somewhat shift from the employee to the employer.

6.4.3 Best Practices

Instead of finding a unique company engaged in industry where WLB measures can be applied more easily than in more common industries, where company culture and an outstanding company policy and a fancy employee strategy are maintained, a good size company on Icelandic standards engaged in the fisheries sector was chosen as an example of Icelandic best practices. The type of work performed in the fisheries is not typically the type of work where WLB measures are thought to be easily applied. However this company has found a way to offer a range of working arrangements to facilitate the different needs of the workers without compromising production efforts, quality standards or demands for profit.

The company name is Brim and has its main offices in Reykjavík but operates factories and production facilities in four main locations outside the Reykjavík area. The company employs around 350 people of whom approximately 40% are women. The Employee turnover is very low and was close to zero in the year 2008. As described above the Icelandic labour market is highly gender segregated and in relation to the fisheries this certainly holds true. With Brim most of the workers in the fish processing plants are women but the company operates two plants in Eyjafordur area in northern Iceland, it also operates a fish farm in the area. The company runs three freezer trawlers and two wet fish trawlers and one Danish seine boat, the crews are predominantly men.

Although there does not seem to be an official employee policy with clear and specific aims and how they are to be met, good and able staff is among other things, seen as precedence for success. As described by the company spokesman the employees are as valuable clientele to the company as the buyers. All the suppliers to the company are valued and not the least those who supply them with their own labour.

The fish processing plants can offer much flexibility and many different working arrangements are practised. The main working hours are from 7-15 and many work from 7- 17, but people can ask for different arrangement within the day. The working day is divided into 4 slots, from 7-9, 9-12, 12:30-15 and 15- 17 and workers can work 2, 3, and 4 slots a day given all positions are manned in the processing line, this gives a lot of flexibility for both full time and part time workers. Working arrangements can thus be, starting 7 o'clock, 7-17, 7-15 or 7-12, starting 9 o'clock, 9-15 or 9-17, some work 12:30-17. The company offers part time in terms of less hours per day and less days per week. Single parents or workers with special needs have in addition been granted other starting and quitting

times. This system offers a lot of flexibility for parents and new parents, typically mothers, can start slowly and adjust to the working life.

The work in the processing plants is very specialised and the manual labour is very technical, i.e. how to make the best use of the raw material, the fish. It takes a considerable amount of time to train an employee to become a good worker and to develop all the techniques required in handling and processing the product. Although more work is needed in management, i.e. planning day to day working arrangements and production lines within this system, it returns more content workers and makes it possible to keep valuable workers that cannot work regular hours and in the end returns pure monetary profits. The managers and office workers have also the possibility of some flexibility and there are some possibilities to work from home, and even though it is not generally practised it can be of benefit to employees.

In relation to the fishermen, it is the company policy that the fishermen on the freezers, who typically stay out fishing for a month, only go out fishing every other fishing tour. This still leaves them with relatively high salaries. Furthermore the fishermen now know 6 weeks in advance when the ship will be in harbour and when it will leave for the ocean again, which makes it possible for them to make plans with the family. This has typically been problematic for fishermen, not knowing beforehand the duration of fishing tours. The working arrangement with the wet fish trawlers who stay out fishing for a week, the fishermen typically take every third fishing tour off.

6.5 COMMENTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL SECURITY²

The main problems regarding work-life balance, or the lack of it, stem mainly from family obligations conflicting with work duties or schedules. The childbearing function of women, the care of young children during their first years of life by mothers and fathers and care of family members due to illness are integral life events of the majority of ordinary employees in one phase of their lives or another. Icelandic laws and regulations covering these areas and care services by the state or municipalities meet many of the most pressing demands of families and do free individual employers from employee pressure to meet those demands for extensive work-life measures.

In international context Icelandic employers bear proportionally little cost that stem from meeting these demands. Affordable high quality day-care facilities for children are run by the municipalities and the supply meets the general demand. The cost of maternity and paternity leave is born by a public fund financed by employers/employees collectively. There is a high degree of acceptance of both

maternity and paternity leave on behalf of the general workforce and by employers. The take-up rate by fathers of paternity leave is over 90% (the highest in the world). That wouldn't be the case if maternity or paternity leave was generally considered a problem at the workplace. Generally, it shouldn't raise problems related to the organisation of work, that exceed, in terms of complexity, those of arranging extended summer holidays. Moreover, research shows that the paternity leave is often organised in a flexible way to meet both the needs of the fathers and the workplace. Mothers of young children are highly active in the labour market, as well as the fathers and parents are by law granted paid days off in case of their children's sickness. These days are a fixed number per individual employee per year and are irrespective of the number of children in the care of an employee, this general right might therefore be insufficient in the case of single parents or parents with several children.

Although not stated explicitly as a point of concern, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security acknowledges a potential problem with employee rights to care for sick family members. Legislation on Prohibition on termination of employment due to family responsibilities, No. 27/2000, grants employees protection against dismissal on grounds of family responsibility. However, it confines the term *family responsibility* to those living in the same household as the employer, and doesn't therefore apply to elderly parents or siblings who live elsewhere.

In relation to assistance to the elderly, adult persons with disabilities and others in need, domestic and social assistance is provided according to the Legislation on Local Authorities Social Services, No. 40/1991. These services are generally accepted and improve or enable work – life reconciliation.

Interestingly, the answers in the survey seem to reveal a higher degree of work-life conflicts experienced by employers in relation to parents with older children i.e. children after the age of six, when they enter primary school. This stems probably from the fact that children spend fewer hours in elementary school than parents do at the workplace, as the tendency in Iceland is to work at least 40 hours weekly.

The Survey and interviews conducted in this project do not reveal serious problems on behalf of employers with work-life balance as far as the parental role of employees is concerned. It can be deduced, that since many of the abovementioned needs are taken care of by public means and policies, revealing pressure and costs from the individual employer, that employers are likely to regard work life issues as minor challenges. In this context, the general flexible work culture in Iceland must be born in mind.

A series of employers' concerns reveal that they endorse extended employee rights, but that these rights should be guaranteed by the state or the legislature to no extra costs or

level of flexibility to the employer. The solutions suggested bear the characteristics of wanting the state to intervene with subsidies or tax-reliefs to families in order to enable them to cut working hours, so that the individual employer is relieved of eventual demands from employees for a higher degree of flexibility.

On a positive note it can be stated as well, that employers seem to recognise their own lack of knowledge about work-life measures and their answers indicate that they would welcome more information as well as more good examples by the public sector. This could suggest a window of opportunity for The Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security or other parties to launch information activities on the reconciliation of work and family life in cooperation with the social partners.

Finally it should be mentioned that in extraordinary cases, such as chronic or long term illnesses of children and children with disabilities, parents are granted support according to the Act on payments to parents of chronically ill or severely disabled children, No. 22/2006, as amended. The act covers the right of parents to financial assistance when they are not able to pursue employment or studies due to the special care required by their children who have been diagnosed as suffering from chronic illnesses or severe disabilities. This however does not meet the needs of employers and employees in relation to work-life reconciliation, but certainly takes into account the primary needs of children for parental care.

To be able to understand the situation of reconciliation of work and life it is necessary to gather information not only from the employers themselves but also from the employees and the labour unions. Innovative creations of work-life measures need to be based on the views and needs of the social partners with the participation of the PES in the process. It is important to take into consideration family responsibilities as well as other important activities of workers.

6.6 Suggestions for Change

6.6.1 Possible New Role for PES

The results from this Study suggest the need for new role of the PES in Iceland in regards to implementation of WLB measures. Firstly, the lack of awareness is something the PES might take on to change e.g. to set up programmes to raise awareness of the importance of WLB measures to maintain a healthy labour market. One possible means could be some kind of a programme of awards for companies that are perceived as successful in applying WLB measures i.e. to

help make a positive image of companies engaged in WLB measures. Secondly, the PES could take on informative role on the overall benefits of WLB measures and what to avoid and possibly an advisory role in how to implement WLB measures effectively. Thirdly, the PES in Iceland could lead with good example and uphold visible exemplary WLB arrangements within its frame of operation.

Also there is according to these findings an urgent need to implement some kind of threefold reconciliation process; work-life-school balance measures. This is one of the responses most cited in the study findings. If PES in Iceland would attain this possible new role of implementing WLB, it could work together with the different government agencies to design such a process.

6.6.2 Possible Need for Change in Legislative Structures

The companies' spokesmen mention some kind of tax relief in relation to WLB measure as an initiative for implementing WLB measures. These results further indicate a need for a review of the Act No. 95/2000 on maternity and paternal rights to further facilitate the reconciliation. Shortening of the work week has long been debated. These ideas would however potentially induce cost too much in difficult times.

There are on the other hand suggestions that potentially could have vast effects towards more inclusive labour market and facilitate reconciliation processes without much increase in cost. First, is the idea to set gender quotas for companies' boards. This could affect the working culture and raise the awareness for WLB measures and this would in fact cost less than the current situation where men are vast majority on companies boards and tend to get higher salaries, although that would most likely be a subject to change with the gender quota. Secondly, it might be feasible to set some kind of laws to guarantee children and families the right to threefold reconciliation i.e. work-life-school. This does not necessarily induce cost but calls for coordination between different societal institutions and agencies and the effective use of joint recourses.

These suggestions are made in accordance with the study results. Some of them would mean increased government spending and in the current economic crises it is hard to say where the political will might turn to for possible solutions. Even though the WLB issues are to a large extent negotiated in collective agreements there is a possible role for the different government agencies to help implement WLB measures for the rebuilding and maintenance of an inclusive labour market.

Notes

1. The section on Legal Framework is all drawn from ASI (2006).
2. As received from the Ministry.

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7. Case Study III - Malta

Adjusting the Balance: An Employer's Perspective

Marika Fsadni

7.1 INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE

7.1.1 Malta in Figures

Malta, officially the Republic of Malta, is an island nation in the European Union, with an area of 316 km² and comprising an archipelago of seven islands situated in the Southern area of the Mediterranean Sea. Valletta is the capital city of Malta and Maltese and English are the country's official languages. Malta has a population of 410,290 inhabitants with a population density of 1,298 persons per sq. km, by far the highest in the EU and one of the highest in the world. Provisional estimates for 2008 indicated that the Gross Domestic Product amounted to €5,665,165,000, €13,741 per capita. Labour market data for November 2008 indicated that the full-time gainfully occupied population amounted to 145,417 persons. Registered unemployment stood at 6,373 persons as at December 2008. (National Statistics Office, 2008).

7.1.2 Salient, Key Issues of Work-Life Balance Measures in Malta

In December 2002, the Maltese Parliament approved a new Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) intended to enhance the general quality of life by balancing work and non-work obligations, and address, both the gender gap and the skills gap in the Maltese labour market. The Act grants: unpaid leave to parents to take care of a child for a maximum period of three months until the child reaches eight years of age; it stipulates that workers are also entitled to 15 hours of paid time off work each year for urgent family reasons; it makes provision for employees who opt to work reduced hours, to be paid a pro-rata wage to that of a full-time employee in similar employment, and to be entitled to all other benefits on a pro-rata basis. The EIRA provides

guaranteed equality of treatment to part-time workers in the form of pro-rata leave entitlement.

The Government's stance to act as a model employer led, in 2005, to the granting of a 12-month period of parental leave and the option to work on a reduced timetable until the child reaches the age of 12 years, to all public service employees. Government's proposal, in 2007, to extend some family-friendly measures within the civil service to the whole public sector, was met by apprehension from employer organisations who expressed their concern that the proposed policy might lead to the extension of such measures to the private sector, summing up to additional strain on the economic viability of companies. Notwithstanding, employer organisations stated that, in principle, they were not against these measures and trade unions have ever since striven in their efforts towards the introduction of Work-Life Balance in collective agreements (Rizzo, 2007).

In a Research study conducted in 2008 by the Malta Employers' Association amongst 121 Maltese organisations, the majority of 105 being private sector organisations, to gauge how employers deal with requests for family-friendly measures, the type of requests received and how government can help to enhance such measures, it resulted that 78% indicated that they had received requests from their employees, 54% of whom stating that such requests had been constant over the past three years. 38% emphasised that requests were on the increase and these were related to reduced working hours, flexitime, teleworking and extended parental leave. 77% of employers indicated that most requests came from women, all demands being met in the majority, except in the case of childcare services and the possibility of bringing a child to the workplace. 89% believe that Work-Life Balance measures are conducive to higher female labour market participation and Government's

support is needed by the majority of employers by way of more childcare centres, the offer of more fiscal incentives and extension of school opening hours to facilitate the introduction of more family-friendly measures (Borg, 2009).

A News Release issued on the 16th February, 2006 by the National Statistics Office, analysed the ways in which respondents managed to balance work and family life, and among those who could not, it analysed the reasons for this failure. The data collected from persons aged between 15 years and 64 years resulted in the following finding.

Childcare arrangements amongst the 59,353 persons who had children between 0 to 14 years, varied from in-house arrangements to the use of child care centres. 53.3% left their children with the husband/ wife/partner while he or she was at work. A further 31.6% did not use any child care at all despite the fact that they worked, a good proportion of whom on a part time basis. 12% of the employed population with children between 0 to 14 years said that they had to make use of their vacation leave, or that they had a specific working arrangement when their children were on holidays or when the childcare used was not available (National Statistics Office, 2006).

In a bid to increase the employment rate of women through an improved work-life balance, the Employment and Training Corporation in Malta (ETC) has taken a number of initiatives namely, the “Empowerment Skills Programme” helping women who wish to return to the labour market acquire those skills that are necessary to re-enter the world of work; the “Part-time Employment Register” providing assistance to those individuals, women in particular, who wish to take up part-time employment; the “Gender Equality Action Plan” outlining initiatives that target female employment in a comprehensive way; “Increasing Female Participation through Childcare Services at the Workplace” aimed as an accompanying measure for all Structural Fund projects to help prevent the loss of human potential and undue family stress as well as unemployment especially that of women with young children; and a study on teleworking (The Pensions Working Group, 2005).

With reference to the Annual country assessments as to the level of progress made in line with the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy reforms in Member States in 2008, the Commission recommended Malta to step up efforts to increase labour supply, in particular women. In spite of the various measures taken by the Government to minimise the gendered division of labour with a male breadwinner and female homemaker strongly entrenched historically in the Maltese social life, the employment rate for women with at least one child below the age of six years is the lowest in the EU, whilst the employment rate for young women (aged 15 to 24) is above the EU average. This illustrates that a number

of women with young children do not return quickly to the labour market after a period of maternity and suggests it is crucial to step up these reconciliation efforts (Commission of the European Communities, 2008).

The role of social partners in Malta is documented in the *Report of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2008*. Social dialogue is rated as ‘High’ through the establishment of a tripartite Employment Relations Board, stipulated in the EIRA Act, that must be consulted prior to any modification of the Act. Company-level Collective bargaining (Regulatory), fostering flexicurity and allowing for the definition of measures and regulations that are adapted to the specific enterprise situations and conditions, is given a ‘Low’ rating by the study as not many explicit flexicurity measures are introduced, nor does flexicurity represent a goal of bilateral relations. To compensate, the provision of services (Unilateral) is rated ‘High’ as trade unions have a number of initiatives in the field of continuous training of members and work-life balance (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2008).

7.1.3 First Research Study on WLB Measures Conducted in Malta

To date, no formal primary data quantitative research projects had ever been conducted on the subject of Work-Life Balance measures in Malta. Following a public call, M.FSADNI & Associates were engaged by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) to conduct a qualitative and quantitative research project with private sector employers in Malta to obtain a thorough assessment on their views, attitudes and perceptions on this subject matter.

To this end, the overriding research objective of this Research Project was to assess the local private employers’ perspective on ‘Work-Life Balance measures’ in Malta. This study also serves to identify the changes required to the current legislation and the new services to be introduced by ETC in order to support local, private sector employers in the implementation of work-life measures at their workplace.

The research project aimed at addressing the following research areas:

- To assess the nature of requests local, private sector employers receive from their employees who wish to reconcile work with life.
- Identify the main work life balance (WLB) measures being adopted at present by local, private sector employers in Malta.
- Identify the salient stumbling blocks and concerns of local, private sector employers and the implementation of work-life reconciliation measures in their respective organisations.

- Identify the changes required to local legislation/policies which will encourage local, private sector employers to implement work-life reconciliation measures.
- Identify the new services which may be introduced by ETC in order to support local, private sector employers in the implementation of WLB measures in their respective organisations.

**7.2 THE RESEARCH PLAN:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to attain the objectives of this Research Project, the following **research methodology** was adopted:

7.2.1 Primary Research – Qualitative

In order to identify the salient issues to be comprised in the quantitative research project, a focus group session and a number of in-depth personal interviews were conducted with key stakeholders between October-November 2008, namely:

- One [1] Focus Group Session conducted with leading manufacturing and service companies operating in Malta.
- Thirty-two [32] in-depth personal interviews with Managing Directors/General Managers/Human Resources Managers of companies hailing from manufacturing, wholesale & retail and service companies employing 5+ employees.

- One [1] in-depth personal interview with the Secretary General of the largest Trade Union in Malta.
- One [1] in-depth personal interview with the Secretary General of the Malta Employers’ Association [MEA].
- One [1] in-depth personal interview with the Executive Director of Malta’s National Commission for the Promotion of Equality [NCPE].
- One [1] in-depth personal interview with a leading legal advisor specialising on gender issues & equality in Malta.

7.2.2 Primary Research – Quantitative

The quantitative primary research project was conducted with employers employing 5+ employees and hailing from Malta’s [and Gozo’s] private sector. The ‘private sector’ in Malta comprises the following enterprises:

- Private, fully Maltese-owned.
- Private, fully foreign-owned.
- Private, foreign & Maltese-owned.

Public and parastatal company employers were excluded from this research study.

As at 2008, Malta’s ‘private sector’ industry employing 5+ employees in Malta stood as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Private Sector Companies in Malta - By Business Sector - 2008

Company Size	Manufacturing	Financial, Business, Personal Services	Wholesale & Retail	Construction, Real Estate	Tourism	Transport & Communications	Aggregate No of Companies
5 - 10 ees	365	265	610	501	320	158	2219
11 - 50 ees	245	239	409	353	200	119	1565
51+ ees	76	98	55	80	83	24	416
TOTAL	686	602	1074	934	603	301	4200

SOURCE: Data quoted by the Employment and Training Corporation (2008)

7.2.3 The Sample Frame

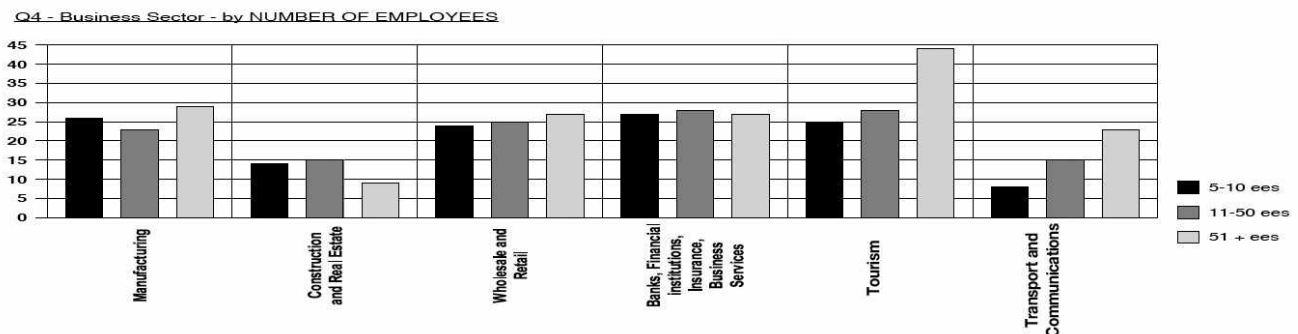
The sample frame of the quantitative research project comprised of 417 completed telephone-interviews, which were conducted with Managing Directors, Chief Executive Officers, Proprietors and Human Resources Managers of private companies operating in Malta and Gozo.

This 417-count corporate sample frame comprised companies hailing from six different business sectors namely, Manufacturing, Financial Business & Personal Services, Wholesale & Retail, Construction & Real Estate, Tourism and

Transport & Communications. Moreover, the sample frame characterised Malta's 'private sector' industry employing 5+ employees; classified in three sectors, namely, companies employing 5-10 employees, 11-50 employees and over 51+ employees. The sample frame also included companies which already adopt Work-Life Balance measures and those which do not.

To this end, the 417-count corporate sample frame comprised company survey respondents hailing from the 'business sectors' and 'no of employees' sectors indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Q4 - The Sample Frame - by 'Type of Sector' & 'No of Employees'



Survey Fieldwork Dates

The field work was conducted with local, private companies in October–November 2008.

Telephone Interviews

The telephone interviews of the Research Study were conducted by a team of fifteen experienced, in-house tele-interviewers, who were trained by the Research Consultant to conduct tele-interviews with senior management respondents so as to maximise the effectiveness of the fieldwork process.

Research Instrument Design

A structured telephone-questionnaire was specifically designed to address the data requirements of this quantitative research study. This research instrument was piloted with five company survey respondents before the commencement of the official research project.

The structured questionnaire used for this research study comprised [a] a 'corporate respondent profile' section, [b] one section for every 'research area', with questions being 'closed' questions, 1-5 Likert-Scale questions, 'structured' questions and 'open-ended' questions.

The structured questionnaire was produced both in English and Maltese for ease of use, depending on the Respondents' linguistic preferences. It comprised the following research areas:

- Respondent Screening (Q1–Q9)
- Application of WLB Measures by Private Employers' Perceptions (Q10–Q11)

- Private Employers who currently adopt WLB Measures (Q12–Q13)
- Private Employers' Perceptions on WLB Measures and Benefits (Q14–Q15)
- Possibility of Employees' Apprehension of taking WLB Measures (Q16–Q17)
- Stumbling Blocks faced by Employers when implementing WLB Measures (Q18–Q19)
- Private Employers' Perception of Employees' need for WLB Measures (Q20–Q23)
- Private Employers' Recommendations on ETC Assistance (Q24–Q26).

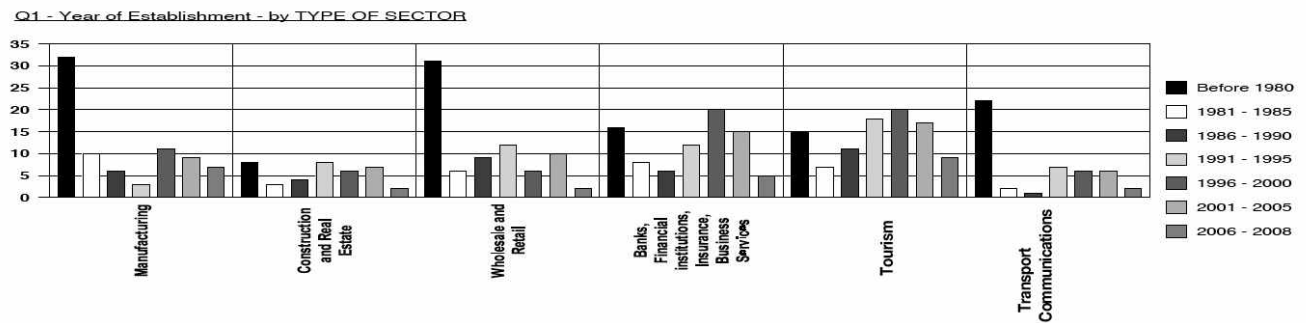
7.2.4 Survey Respondent Profile

Year of Establishment - [Q1]

The sample frame comprised companies which commenced operations over a span of over four decades. In fact, some 30% (124) of local, Private Companies were established before 1980, highest number of which being the 32 companies classified under Manufacturing, this total registering 41% of the total 78 manufacturing companies interviewed for this research study.

17% (69) of local Private Companies were established between 1996–2000 and 15% (64) were established between 2001–2005. In both these cases, the highest number of companies falls within the Tourism Sector.

Figure 2 - Q1 - Year of Establishment - by TYPE OF SECTOR

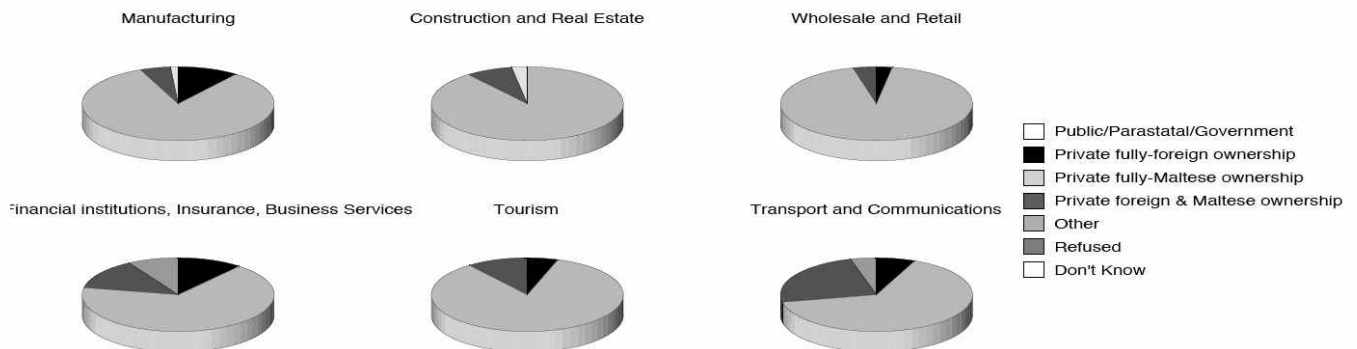


Ownership of Business/Company – [Q7]

With regards to the survey respondents’ company ownership, a high 81% (337) of the companies interviewed were Private fully-Maltese owned, this percentage covering an even distribution of companies within the three categories of number of employees, both on full-time & on part-time basis. The remaining companies had either private fully-foreign or private foreign/ Maltese ownership.

Figure 3 - Q7 - Ownership of Business/Company - by TYPE OF SECTOR

Q7 - Ownership of Business/Company - by TYPE OF SECTOR



Designation of Respondents – [Q8]

35.5% (148 respondents) of the survey respondents hold the position of Employed Divisional Manager/Financial Controller/Administrative Manager/Human Resources Manager/Human Resources responsible, within the Company; 29.7% (124 respondents) are the Owner/Co-owner or Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director/General Manager of the Company whilst 14.1% (59 respondents) occupy the post of Employed Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director/General Manager in the Company.

Gender of Respondents – [Q9]

The gender of survey respondents was predominantly Male 65.5% (273 respondents), a percentage which is almost double and contrasts significantly with the 34.5% (144 respondents) female respondents who, yet, also hold a high designation within the company.

7.3 THE RESEARCH STUDY – SALIENT FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This Section gives an overview of the salient research findings and conclusions. Depending on the research subject matter in question, some research findings will either be indicated by ‘type of business sector’, or by ‘number of employees’.

The survey structured questionnaire comprised a good number of research questions. However, due to the word-count limit of this report, some research findings have been omitted.

7.3.1 Private Sector Employers’ Views & Perceptions on WLB Measures in Malta

Survey respondents were asked whether they currently adopt WLB within their Company. Those who indicated that they do not, were asked the reason/s why they had never adopted such measures to date.

Adoption of WLB measures – [Q10]

The majority of private sector employers in Malta do adopt WLB measures. In fact, a high 77% (321 respondents), out of the total aggregate of 417 respondents, indicated that they do adopt WLB Measures within their company while 23% (96 respondents) indicated that they do not adopt these measures.

Of these 77% [321 respondents], 26% (85 respondents) originate from the Tourism Sector, 22% (69 respondents) hail from the Financial Sector and 13% (41 respondents) from the Transport and Communications Sector. This research

finding is very similar to the key finding illustrated in the report ‘Working Time and Work-life Balance in European Companies’, 2006 quoted in the ‘Review of Work-life Balance Policies and Practices Across the Original EU-15 Member States, December 2007’ commissioned by the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies in 2007, stating that a higher percentage of establishments, across the EU21, in the services sector, offer flexible working time arrangements.

Another important finding is that **WLB measures are mostly adopted by those companies which employ 51 or more employees.** In fact, a staggering 95% (151 respondents) of the companies which fall within this category of work-force size stated that they currently adopt WLB measures.

With regards to the 96 respondents (23%) who indicated that they do not adopt WLB Measures within their companies, a high 30% (29 respondents) hailed from the Manufacturing Sector, while 16% (15 respondents) hailed from the Construction & Real Estate sector.

The companies which indicated that they do not adopt WLB measures, are mainly small companies which employ 5 to 10 employees. The research findings show that 44.4% (55 respondents) out of the total of 124 respondents who have this number of personnel in employment, indicated that they do not adopt any WLB measures. This tendency that the percentage of establishments offering flexible working time arrangements increases with establishment size is also evident across the EU21, although in the latter circumstance, the percentage is quite high, even for small establishments (National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, 2007).

Table 2 – Q10 – Current Adoption of WLB Measures – by TYPE OF SECTOR

Absolute Break % Respondents	Total	Manufacturing	Construction and Real Estate	Wholesale and Retail	Banks, Financial institutions, Insurance, Busin...	Tourism	Transport and Communications
Total	417	78	38	76	82	97	46
Yes	321 77.0%	49 62.8%	23 60.5%	54 71.1%	69 84.1%	85 87.6%	41 89.1%
No	96 23.0%	29 37.2%	15 39.5%	22 28.9%	13 15.9%	12 12.4%	5 10.9%
Don't Know/Refused	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Reasons for Not Adopting WLB measures – [Q11]

The research findings show that the salient reason why WLB measures are not adopted by private sector companies is because **such measures were impossible to adopt in their line of business**. In fact, a high 37.5% (36 respondents) of the respondents expressed this view. The majority of these respondents originated from companies engaged in the Wholesale & Retail sector [12 respondents] and the Construction and Real Estate Sector [9 respondents].

Another reason mentioned by a good number of Respondents was that **there was never the need to introduce these measures**. This reason was mentioned by 16.7% (16 respondents) of the total respondents interviewed. 50% (8 respondents) of these hailed from the Financial Sector.

Other salient reasons voiced by the private sector industry included: [a]. the company does not have enough work to adopt WLB Measures, and [b]. the workforce of the Company is either predominantly male, unmarried or made up mainly of fresh graduates who, as yet, do not have any family or other commitments which necessitate reduction in working hours.

The main perception held by Survey respondents, regarding the reasons which constrain them from adopting WLB Measures, is very similar and runs on the same lines as that of various employers within Irish organisations who were interviewed for the purpose of data collection in relation to the introduction, operation and experience of family-friendly work-life balance policies and practices. It transpired that, the 'complexity of implementation' associated with the adoption of WLB Measures, headed the list of reasons why employers refrained from making such measures available within their organisation. The justification that 'there was never the need to introduce these measures' as stated by Maltese private sector employers, runs parallel to that expressed by their Irish counterparts as in the latter's opinion, the 'lack of demand by employees' triggered their non-adoption attitude in this issue (National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies, n.d.).

7.3.2 Specific WLB Requests From Employees in Malta

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the three 'specific' WLB measures most frequently requested by their employees. A profile of the employees who make WLB measures' requests is also detailed in this section namely, by gender, age, marital status and position of employee within the company.

The Three most frequently requested WLB measures – [Q12]

The most requested WLB measure by private sector employees is "to work part-time". In fact, a staggering 75.7% (243 respondents) indicated that this is the most popular WLB measure amongst their employees. The highest number of respondents [82 respondents] pointing out this measure were from the Tourism Sector, followed by 43 respondents from the Financial sector.

The "part-time work" WLB measure option resulted also very popular with employees engaged with companies employing 51+ employees. In fact, 77.5% (117 respondents) of the total aggregate of 159 respondents employing 51+ employees, mentioned "part-time work" as the first most requested WLB Measure.

"Reduced working hours" was the second mentioned WLB Measure most frequently requested by employees, this being pointed out by 37% (47) of respondents who indicated a 2nd mention. From amongst the six business sectors, a high 28% (13 respondents), indicating "reduced working hours" as their employees' most requested WLB measure, originated from the Tourism Sector. Following the same criteria, 40% (20) of respondents who stated a 3rd mention, chose to specify **"Flexi-time" as the third WLB Measure most frequently requested by employees**.

In the European Commission report 'Reconciliation of Work and Private Life: A Comparative Review of Thirty European Countries' (see European Commission, 2005), undertaken for the European Commission in 2005 and reporting on Work-Life Balance practices in each member state, it transpires that part-time is the most common form of flexible working arrangement across the EU15 countries, with flexi-time working bearing an incidence which is lower to part-time work. Analyzing the take-up of flexible working arrangements by employees of 1,462 British workplaces with five or more employees in the Third Work-life Balance Employer Survey for 2007, it results that the afore-mentioned Research study features part-time work as the form of flexible working arrangement which is most taken up by employees, such stated by 79% of employers interviewed, with the Flexitime arrangement take-up scoring far less popularity, stated by 25% of employers interviewed, followed closely by reduced hours. This resulting pattern clearly shows that Maltese employees have a similar inclination to other foreign employees when placing requests for specific Work-life Balance measures (see, for example, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007).

Table 3 - Q12 - 1st Most Requested WLB Measure by Employees - by TYPE OF SECTOR

Absolute Break % Respondents	Total	Manufacturing	Construction and Real Estate	Wholesale and Retail	Banks, Financial institutions, Insurance, Busi...	Tourism	Transport and Communicati-ns
Total	321	49	23	54	69	85	41
Reduced working hours	53 16.5%	8 16.3%	5 21.7%	10 18.5%	22 31.9%	2 2.4%	6 14.6%
Part-time work	243 75.7%	39 79.6%	14 60.9%	41 75.9%	43 62.3%	82 96.5%	24 58.5%
Flexi - time	18 5.6%	-	3 13.0%	2 3.7%	3 4.3%	-	10 24.4%
Telework	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Working from home	2 0.6%	-	-	1 1.9%	1 1.4%	-	-
In-house child care facilities, ie. on the company premises	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Financial support/vouchers for employee to use childcare facilities of his/her choice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Childcare arrangements	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Time-off to care for sick children and/or elderly/sick parents/relatives, etc.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special leave eg. Voluntary work/studies/sports/hobbies/feasts/hunting, etc.	1 0.3%	-	-	-	-	-	1 2.4%
Extended maternity and parental leave, ie. maternity leave taken over a span of time and not within the usual 3 months	1 0.3%	1 2.0%	-	-	-	-	-
Adoption leave	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Compressed working week	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Job-sharing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reduced hours/special leave for 'quality time' with 'self'	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No Opinion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Refused/Don't know	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	3 0.9%	1 2.0%	1 4.3%	-	-	1 1.2%	-

Profile of Employees who make WLB measures Requests

Gender of Employee – [Q13a]

A very interesting research finding is that **WLB measures are generally asked for by both sexes**. In fact, a high 39.3% (126 respondents), out of a total of 321 Companies who already adopt WLB measures, stated that WLB Measures are generally asked for by both sexes. The highest percentage of respondents who indicated this factor, came from the Tourism Sector, 49.4% (42 respondents) of the total Tourism Sector respondents.

Moreover, a very high 55.6% (84 respondents) of the total Respondents who employ 51+ employees, indicated that WLB Measures are asked for by both sexes.

It is also interesting to note that only 29% (93 respondents) indicated that requests for WLB measures were received mainly from female employees, the majority of which requests emerging from the Banks, Financial Institutions, Insurance and Business Services Sector.

Age of Employee – [Q13b]

With regards to the age of the respondents who make the requests, just over half of the respondents, ie. 51% (163 respondents) from the total aggregate of 321 who already adopt WLB measures, indicated that **employees between 31-40 years of age make the most requests for WLB measures**.

40.5% (130 respondents) from the total aggregate of 321 respondents interviewed, specified that **employees between 20-30 years of age usually make requests for WLB Measures** with 69.6% (48 respondents) of the total respondents from the Financial Sector stating this fact.

Marital status/Position of Employee making Requests – [Q13c]

As to the marital status or the position of the employees making requests for WLB measures, 44.5% (143 respondents), from all respondents interviewed, pointed out that **employees are generally married/with partner**. A total of 78.3% (54 respondents) from the Financial Sector indicated this marital status/position within the family.

Also, worthy of mention is the fact that, 44.2% (142 respondents) of the total respondents interviewed showed that there is no correlation between the status of the employee (whether single, married, widow, etc) and the type of WLB Measure request being made. A total of 72.9% (62 respondents) from the total respondents interviewed from the Tourism Sector indicated this non-correlation.

Moreover, a high 53.6% (37 respondents) from respondents who employ between 5-10 employees agree that the marital status of the employee is not relevant when it comes to requests for WLB Measures.

Position/Designation of Employee making Requests – [Q13d]

Asking respondents about the position in the company of those employees who make requests for WLB measures, it results that 34.3% (110 respondents) of the total respondents agreed that, similar to the marital status factor, there is no correlation between the position of the employee within the company and the type of WLB Measure request being made. Another interesting finding in this regard is that a high 40.6% [28] of Respondents whose company employs between 5-10 members indicated this non-correlation.

Moreover, 25.5% (82 respondents) stated that such requests are made by employees within the Operative field of the company, 20.2% (65 respondents) by Clerical staff, 11.2% (36 respondents) Secretarial, 10.9% (35 respondents) by employees at First-line Management/Supervisory level and 7.8% (25 respondents) by Senior Management.

7.3.3 Private Sector Employers' Perceptions on WLB Measures and Benefits

This Section addresses all respondents contributing to the Research Survey [even those who do not currently adopt WLB measures] and gives details on their views and perceptions on WLB measures and what, in their opinion, are the benefits of these measures for the employers. The respondents were, in fact, asked whether [a]. they agreed, in principle, with WLB Measures and [b]. how a private sector employer can benefit when implementing WLB Measures for employees.

Agreement, In Principle, with WLB measures – [Q14]

A staggering 92% (383 respondents) of the total 417 private sector employers, who participated in this Research Survey, indicated that **in principle, they agree with WLB Measures**. It is worthy of mention that this high positive response also includes those private employer respondents who do not currently adopt WLB measures within their company. The 92% agreeing in principle, contrasts sharply with the lower 77% who indicated that they already adopt WLB measures at their workplace (see Table 2), the vast majority of whom only indicating three measures out of the variety of WLB measures that can be adopted (see Table 3).

A similarly high 96.9% (154 respondents) of the interviewed companies with 51+ employees, also agree with the introduction of WLB measures at the workplace.

Only 6% (25 respondents) do not agree with WLB Measures, highest percentage of whom coming from the total aggregate of Manufacturing Sector with 16.7%. Furthermore, 10.5% (13 respondents) of companies who engage 5-10 employees answered that they do not agree with these measures.

Benefits for Private Sector Employers When Adopting WLB measures – [Q15]

The major perceived benefit of adopting WLB measures is that, thanks to such measures, **good, talented and trained employees are not lost**. This perception was voiced by a high 44.5% (174 respondents) of those who said that they agreed with WLB measures [383 respondents]. 64.2% (52 respondents) of the total Financial Sector Interviewees indicated this as a main benefit, this Sector registering the highest percentage of all.

Moreover, this was also perceived as the main benefit of WLB measures by 73 respondents hailing from companies engaging 51+ employees, [47% of the total respondents employing 51+ ees].

Another benefit mentioned by 34.3% (134) of the respondents who stated that they agreed with WLB measures is that such measures assist employers **to have more motivated employees on their payroll**.

37.3% (41 respondents) of Companies which employ between 5-10 employees also indicated **more motivated employees** as the main benefit of WLB Measures.

Other WLB measures which were perceived by respondents as beneficial include **part-time/temping** as it was expressed that Part-timers come in handy to deal with the volume of work and part-time work results in a more efficient output, a saving on wages and a larger female workforce. Respondents feel that it is not always convenient to employ workers on a 40 hour week basis, for a short period of time. **Flexibility in working hours**, coding with the volume of work, was also perceived as leading to better results.

These findings mirror those in the report, 'Flexible Working: Impact and Implementation – an Employer Survey, CIPD' (February, 2005) which examines how organisations are making use of flexible working practices. It results that retention of staff was indicated as a main reason for using flexible working practices, with one in three survey participants perceiving that such measures have, in actual fact, had a major positive effect for good, talented and trained employees not being lost to other competing organisations. Furthermore, the implementation of flexible working practices was also reported as having a major beneficial impact on employee motivation, such being stated by 70% of survey respondents (National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, 2007).

7.3.4 Private Sector Employees' Apprehension of Requesting WLB Measures

This Section gives details on whether there were instances when the respondents sensed that employees wanted to request or take on WLB Measures, but were apprehensive to do so.

The respondents were, in fact, asked whether [a]. they have ever encountered or sensed instances when employees seemed apprehensive to ask for WLB Measures and, [b]. what, in their opinion, was/were the reason/s for such apprehension on the employees' part.

Instances where Employees Were Apprehensive to ask for WLB measures - [Q16]

A staggering 93.3% (389 respondents) of the total Interviewees, indicated that **they had never been aware of instances where employees were apprehensive to ask for WLB Measures**. The highest percentage was registered from the Tourism Sector, 97.9% (95 respondents) of the total Tourism Sector respondents indicating this perception.

Possible reasons for such Apprehension by Employees – [Q17]

The main reasons voiced by those respondents who indicated that within their company they had encountered or sensed instances where employees wanted to take some WLB measure but were apprehensive to do so, were that [a]. **employees know that WLB Measures are not offered by the private sector employer in question**, [b]. **they fear unsupportive attitudes and behaviour of senior management**, and [c]. **employees do not wish to disrupt the work schedule**.

7.3.5 Stumbling Blocks Faced by Private Sector Employers when Implementing WLR Requests

As private sector employers, survey respondents were asked to state what they perceived to be the stumbling blocks and challenges they encounter when implementing WLB measures, and their views on whether the 'Organisational Climate/Culture', nurtured by private sector senior management in Malta, is conducive towards the introduction and development of WLB measures at their workplace.

Major stumbling blocks encountered – [Q18]

The survey identified some worrying findings in this regard. 27.3% (114 respondents) of the total respondents concluded that **Management does not have the knowledge or capability of implementing such measures**, followed by 26.6% (111 respondents) who stated that **the perceived costs of implementing WLB measures by Management** posed the major stumbling block. A further 19.4% (81 respondents) feel that **there exists a lack of adequate knowledge and information on the benefits of WLB measures** for the 'employer' and the 'employee.'

It was also observed that a high 31.9% (133) of the total respondents identified various other stumbling blocks when one comes to actually implement WLB measures. A

significant number of interviewees felt that **the adoption of WLB measures would disrupt the Company's set-up** as one would have to juggle human resources to accommodate the implementation of these measures. Moreover, **adapting to a change in the system** might also prove difficult to master.

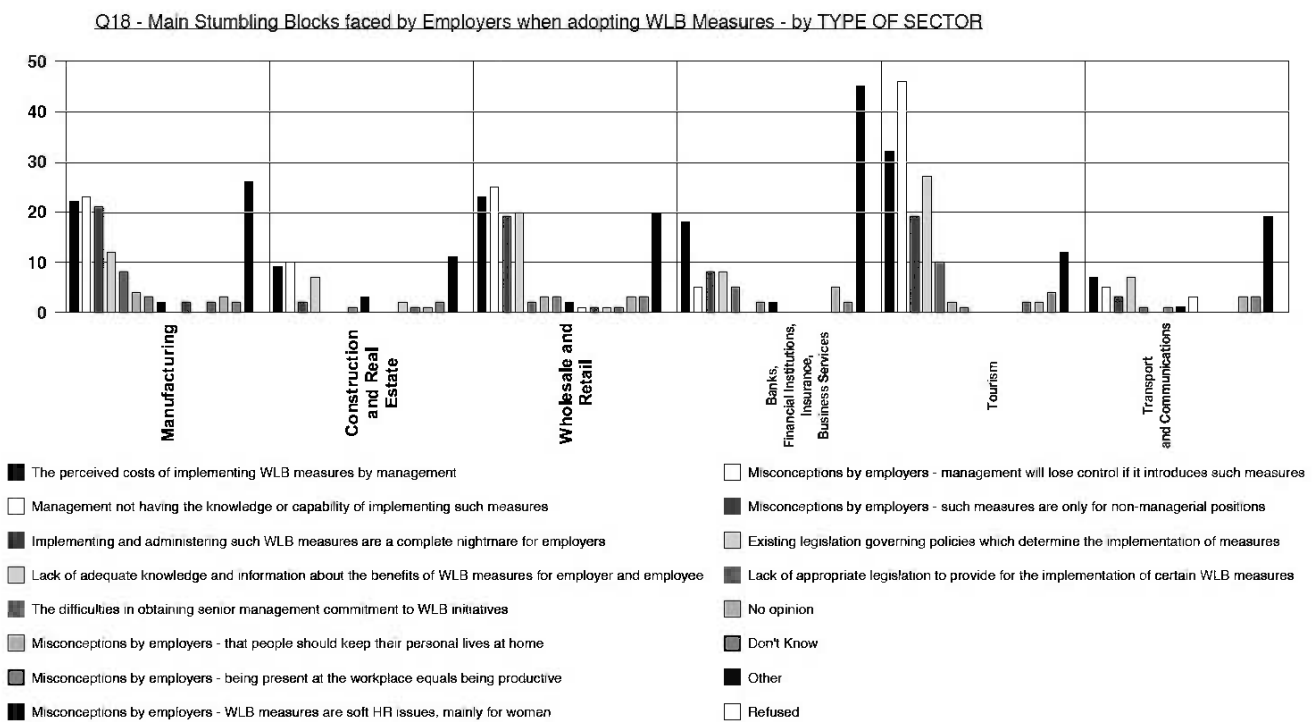
The adoption of WLB measures is also seen to give rise to **costs and time management the company would have to incur**. Such an exercise would imply the need to organise ongoing in-house training to render the replacement of employees possible.

To some survey respondents, **'reduced hours' mean 'reduced output' which, in turn, would create logistic challenges for the company**. Moreover, the notion of having full-time employees working 'extra' on behalf of other members of staff engaged on reduced hours, is deemed as unacceptable by certain individuals [engaged on a full-time basis].

The difficulty of finding employees with the required experience, coupled with lack of work due to competition on the local market and perceptions of high taxation, increased cost of overheads, are other stumbling blocks mentioned by survey respondents when considering adopting WLB measures.

This emerging scenario, regarding major stumbling blocks encountered by local private sector employers, highly resembles the findings on possible negative impacts/challenges for employers outlined in the 'Review of Work-life Balance Policies Across the Original EU-15 Member States, December 2007' (see National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies, 2007). The employer gauges the success of the adoption of Work-Life Balance arrangements not only from the perspective of attaining a happier workforce, higher staff retention and improved employee motivation but also on how these practices impact upon the business, namely in terms of a) cost, as it is believed that the introduction of flexible options incurs real costs to the enterprise; b) staff substitution and re-arrangement of people, time and workloads, considered a key issue, which can easily be minimized through the ability of managers in substituting absent employees in terms of both numbers and skills; c) the lack of knowledge or awareness, not just of the options that are available but also the training required on how to implement such policies. These are all regarded as challenges which correspond to the stumbling blocks indicated by participating local private sector employers in this survey.

Figure 4 - Q18 - Main Stumbling Blocks faced by Private Sector Employers When Adopting WLB Measures - by TYPE OF SECTOR



Organisational climate/culture nurtured by senior management vis-à-vis WLB measures – [Q19]

The survey respondents' perceptions were rather positive in this regard. In fact, out of the total of 417 respondents, 45.8% (191 respondents) indicated **that private sector senior management think very positively about the introduction or development of WLB measures** at the workplace.

Some of the respondents, who answered in the affirmative, commented that companies are generally very much aware of the benefits which may be derived from implementing WLB measures. Moreover, other survey respondents indicated that, although substantial progress has been made, especially on making it attractive for women to return to the workforce, **more incentives/subsidies should be offered to support this issue.**

A good number of survey respondents also observed that they are aware that there are organisations and companies in Malta, like commercial banks, the public service and private factories which already adopt such WLB measures at their workplace and that success was registered in their implementation.

Conversely, the 29.3% (122 respondents) of the total respondents who had a negative opinion in this regard, indicated that the **Maltese Culture is too focused on 'family life', and senior management must drastically address their 'old-fashioned' way of thinking** vis-à-vis adopting WLB measures at their workplace.

Some respondents observed that they perceive a **distinct difference in approach and perception between 'operations management' [e.g., First-Line Management, e.g., Human Resources Managers] and 'senior management' personnel [e.g., Chief Executive Officers, Managing Directors, etc]** vis-

à-vis the introduction and development of WLB measures at the workplace. Senior management personnel are usually more hesitant and reluctant towards the adoption of such WLB measures. Also, these respondents observed that such private sector employers may not be knowledgeable enough on the benefits and implementation of such WLB measures and hence they need more assistance and information in this regard.

An interesting finding is that **a relatively high 20.4% (85 respondents) did not have an opinion** on this research area.

7.3.6 Reasons to Grant WLB Measures to Employees

The survey respondents were asked to give details on the occasions when they would be inclined to grant WLB measures to their employees. A typical work scenario was presented whereby, an employee requests to work on reduced hours, after taking into account that such a concession would not disrupt the existing work operations and would not have an adverse effect on the company. Respondents were also asked for which reasons they would allow [and not allow] employees to take on WLB measures.

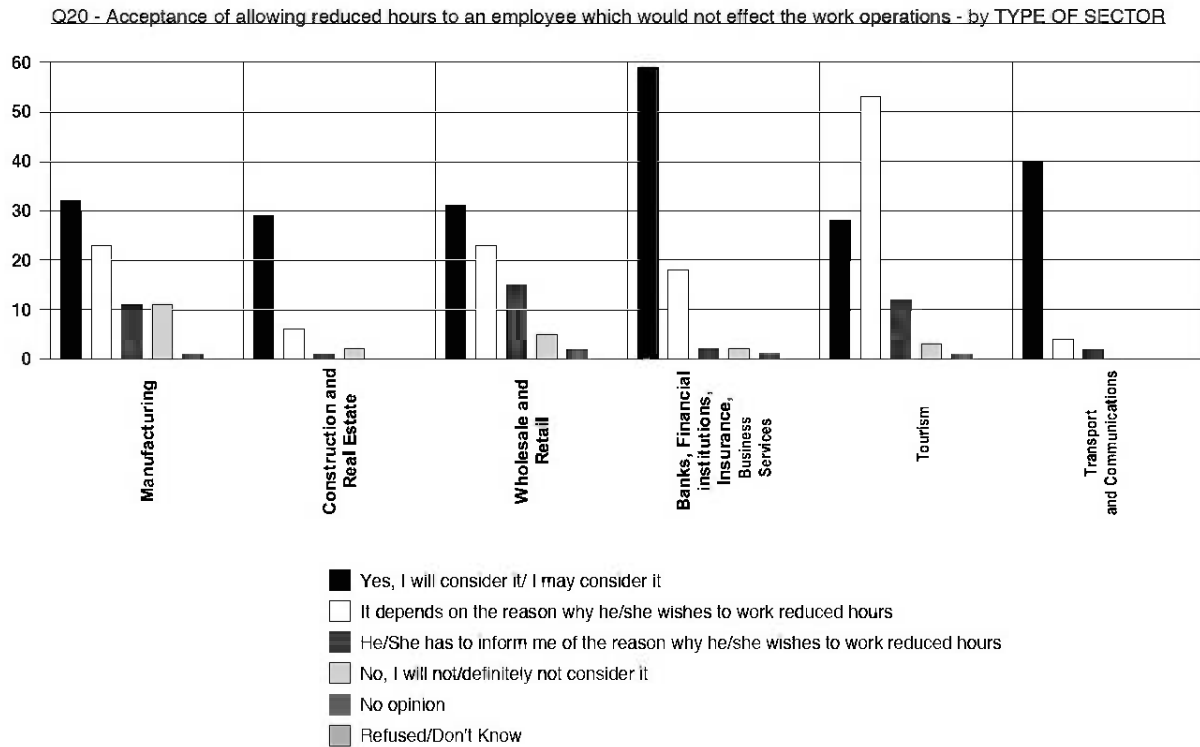
Employer's Acceptance on Presentation of Typical Work Scenario - [Q20]

A high 52.5% (219), of the total respondents indicated that they would consider implementing this WLB measure.

An also high 30.5% (127) indicated that they would grant this WLB measure depending on the reason why the employee wishes to work reduced hours.

Only a meagre 5.5% (23) claimed that they would not/definitely would not consider taking such a step, on the grounds that such measures were unacceptable due to the line of business of the Company and the fierce competition on the market.

Figure 5 - Q20 - Acceptance of Allowing Employee to Take on a 'Reduced Hours' WLB Measure Which Would Not Affect the Company's Work Operations - by TYPE OF SECTOR



Possibility of Allowing Reduced Hours To Employees For Various Reasons - [Q21]

Family matters, Voluntary/Philanthropic Work and Further Studying were the three reasons for which private sector employers would consider the possibility of granting WLB measures to their employees.

Out of a total aggregate of 394 respondents who answered this research question, the following findings emerged:

'Family Matters' Reason – 53.6% (211 respondents) stated a 'Definitely Yes' response followed by 170 respondents (43.1%) indicating a 'Probably Yes' choice, a **96.7% positive inclination**.

'Voluntary/Philanthropic Work' Reason - 48.7% (192 respondents) stated a 'Probably Yes' response whilst 88 (22.3%) indicated a 'Definitely Yes' answer, a **71% positive inclination**.

'Further Studying' Reason - 47.2% (186 respondents) stated 'Probably Yes' and 30.7% (121) opted for a 'Definitely Yes' response, **77.9% positive inclination**.

'Quality to Self [e.g., feasts, sports, holidays] Reason - 27.9% (110 respondents) stated a 'Probably Yes' response whilst 34 (8.6%) indicated 'Definitely Yes'. **'Quality to Self' Reason scored the least positive inclination standing at 36.5%**, followed by a 24.6% negative response and a high incidence of 37.8% of respondents indicating a 'No Opinion' attitude.

7.3.7 Private Sector Employers' Recommendations on ETC's Potential Assistance on WLB Measures

This Section gives details on the recommendations given by respondents on ETC's potential assistance to local Private Employers, thus enabling them to offer more WLB measures to their employees.

Respondents' Recommendations for ETC assistance - [Q24]

Out of the 417 respondents interviewed in this Research Survey, 33.6% (140 respondents) either did not have any recommendations to make or they thought that ETC should not do anything to improve such measures, or had no opinion with regards to the subject in question. The highest percentage of respondents who did not give any recommendation, from amongst the 6 business sectors, resulted from the Financial Sector with 51% (42 respondents) of the total of this Sector.

The other 66.4% (277 respondents), of the total respondents interviewed, indicated various recommendations, many of which, however, go beyond the subject of 'Implementing WLB measures'. Amongst the valid suggestions indicated, stand the following:

Generally, Interviewees claimed the need of more **Information and Awareness**: they sustained that a better-structured ETC should strive to raise the awareness of the benefits that stand to be gained through the implementation

of WLB measures. It is suggested that ETC introduces more incentives and benefits for private sector employers to be able to implement WLB measures at their workplace. ETC should keep employers constantly informed as to the schemes ETC offers, encourage employers through the promotion of best practices and foster better communication between the employer and the employee.

Striving for a more **selective and specific workforce** was indicated by respondents as the prime issue that ETC should enlist on its agenda. It is imperative that ETC helps with vacancy recruitment and provides trained workers. Individuals recommended by ETC should be better screened and only those who are motivated to work are chosen in the offing. It is desired that ETC should promote and enforce **flexibility and job security**, and the availability of a **Part-time/Reduced Hours Register** is deemed necessary. The enforcement of **fair regulations**, making it easier for women to apply for schemes, and ETC's assistance in **childcare services** were other recommendations that were put forth. Respondents argued that ETC should strongly enforce its laws vis-à-vis the black economy to help **control abuse** by individuals who register and work at the same time. On the other hand, it was claimed that red tape and bureaucracy hinder the employment of foreigners.

The role of ETC is synonymous with Training. Yet respondents from all Sectors expressed the need of the organisation of **more training with professional content and in various skills and trades**, in collaboration with other important entities and schools, such as MCAST, to attain specialized workers in the different fields: secretarial, customer care, retail, sales and installation, interior design, the service industry, the training of private guards, refresher courses for nurses and training of care workers, health and safety, catering and hygiene and the training of confectioners amongst others.

Prompted Specific WLB measures - [Q26]

Spurred by the limited response emerging from 33.6% (140) of interviewees who either did not have any recommendations to make/thought that ETC should not do anything to improve such measures, or had no opinion with regards to the subject in question; and the responses of the remaining difference of 66.4% (277 respondents) who proposed suggestions that were out of context to subject of Survey, the Research Consultant sought to probe further by prompting to the interviewees, seven possible WLB measures that could be implemented through public policy more broadly.

These ranged from the extension of school hours and maternity leave; Government subsidization of telework

equipment/software and childcare centres at the place of work or close by; to the possibility of buying temping services from employment agencies, including ETC, and tax credit benefits for employers; prompted measures that were deemed viable to help ease the burden on local, private employers and encourage them to offer new Work-Life Balance measures to their employees. Survey respondents were asked to give their opinion on a specific measure by rating if they: agreed/completely agreed with the indicated measure; if they disagreed/completely disagreed; neither agreed nor disagreed; the options of 'no opinion', 'did not know' or 'refused' were also enlisted.

372 Interviewees (89%) agreed/completely agreed with the prompted measure for the concession of tax credits or financial benefits by Government, for employers who introduce flexible work arrangements. This latter percentage finding resulting 'at par' with interviewees' response to the setting up of childcare centres at the place of work, or close to the place of work, with Government subsidization. The extension of school hours to tally with office hours was favoured by 276 respondents (66%) whilst, in descending order, 248, of the total 417 interviewed, agreed/completely agreed with Government's subsidization of telework equipment/software.

54% (225 respondents) of survey respondents agreed/completely agreed with the possibility of female employees working in a flexible manner after returning from maternity leave, 128 respondents (31%) standing in disagreement on this issue and a further 61 (15%) stating that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this prompted measure. The extension of maternity leave – with extra weeks being unpaid or subsidized by Government – cannot be described as being a measure which was considered recommendable by survey respondents and findings read 49% (204 respondents) interviewees expressing their agreement with this proposal compared to a high 42% (174 respondents) in disagreement and a further 9% (37 respondents) unable to take a stand if 'for' or 'against'.

Out of the total seven measures prompted by Research Consultant, respondents viewed the update of legislation to include the possibility of buying temping services from employment agencies, including ETC, as the least commendable with 46% (190 respondents) stating that they agreed/completely agreed with the introduction of this measure, as against a high 33% (137 respondents) indicating that they were in disagreement and a further 20% (82 respondents) opting for the neither agree nor disagree alternative. The incidence in choice of 'No opinion', 'Don't Know/Refused' options was scarce throughout.

Table 4 - Q26 - Respondents' Agreement with Various Measures To Encourage The Adoption of WLB measures And Ease The Burden On The Private Employer - by TYPE OF SECTOR

Absolute Break % Respondents	Total	Manufacturing	Construction and Real Estate	Wholesale and Retail	Banks, Financial Institutions, Insurance, B...	Tourism	Transport and Communicatio
Total	417	78	38	76	82	97	46
Extension of school hours to tally with office hours							
Completely Disagree	41 9.8%	4 5.1%	7 18.4%	6 7.9%	10 12.2%	1 1.0%	13 28.3%
Disagree	59 14.1%	10 12.8%	11 28.9%	7 9.2%	14 17.1%	10 10.3%	7 15.2%
Neither Agree not Disagree	38 9.1%	14 17.9%	1 2.6%	2 2.6%	6 7.3%	13 13.4%	2 4.3%
Agree	197 47.2%	31 39.7%	11 28.9%	46 60.5%	29 35.4%	63 64.9%	17 37.0%
Completely Agree	79 18.9%	19 24.4%	8 21.1%	14 18.4%	21 25.6%	10 10.3%	7 15.2%
No opinion	3 0.7%	-	-	1 1.3%	2 2.4%	-	-
Don't Know/ Refused	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Extension of maternity leave - with extra weeks being unpaid or subsidized by government							
Completely Disagree	103 24.7%	30 38.5%	5 13.2%	14 18.4%	11 13.4%	38 39.2%	5 10.9%
Disagree	71 17.0%	11 14.1%	6 15.8%	12 15.8%	10 12.2%	26 26.8%	6 13.0%
Neither Agree not Disagree	37 8.9%	6 7.7%	4 10.5%	10 13.2%	10 12.2%	6 6.2%	1 2.2%
Agree	142 34.1%	19 24.4%	17 44.7%	34 44.7%	27 32.9%	23 23.7%	22 47.8%
Completely Agree	62 14.9%	11 14.1%	6 15.8%	5 6.6%	24 29.3%	4 4.1%	12 26.1%
No opinion	2 0.5%	1 1.3%	-	1 1.3%	-	-	-
Don't Know/ Refused	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Possibility to work in a flexible manner after returning from maternity leave							
Completely Disagree	16 3.8%	5 6.4%	1 2.6%	3 3.9%	4 4.9%	3 3.1%	-
Disagree	112 26.9%	27 34.6%	4 10.5%	18 23.7%	12 14.6%	46 47.4%	5 10.9%
Neither Agree not Disagree	61 14.6%	10 12.8%	2 5.3%	22 28.9%	8 9.8%	18 18.6%	1 2.2%
Agree	135 32.4%	19 24.4%	26 68.4%	24 31.6%	23 28.0%	20 20.6%	23 50.0%
Completely Agree	90 21.6%	15 19.2%	5 13.2%	8 10.5%	35 42.7%	10 10.3%	17 37.0%
No opinion	2 0.5%	2 2.6%	-	-	-	-	-
Don't Know/ Refused	1 0.2%	-	-	1 1.3%	-	-	-
Government subsidization of telework equipment/software							
Completely Disagree	20 4.8%	5 6.4%	-	1 1.3%	2 2.4%	10 10.3%	2 4.3%
Disagree	85 20.4%	28 35.9%	8 21.1%	5 6.6%	6 7.3%	36 37.1%	2 4.3%
Neither Agree not Disagree	64 15.3%	11 14.1%	-	25 32.9%	9 11.0%	18 18.6%	1 2.2%
Agree	169 40.5%	25 32.1%	24 63.2%	40 52.6%	26 31.7%	29 29.9%	25 54.3%
Completely Agree	79 18.9%	9 11.5%	6 15.8%	5 6.6%	39 47.6%	4 4.1%	16 34.8%
No opinion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't Know/ Refused	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Absolute Break % Respondents	Total	Manufacturing	Construction and Real Estate	Wholesale and Retail	Banks, Financial institutions, Insurance, Busi...	Tourism	Transport and Communications
Total	417	78	38	76	82	97	46
Tax credits or financial benefits for employers who introduce flexible work arrangements							
Completely Disagree	3 0.7%	1 1.3%	- -	- -	1 1.2%	- -	1 2.2%
Disagree	13 3.1%	1 1.3%	1 2.6%	- -	7 8.5%	3 3.1%	1 2.2%
Neither Agree not Disagree	27 6.5%	2 2.6%	2 5.3%	9 11.8%	5 6.1%	8 8.2%	1 2.2%
Agree	191 45.8%	28 35.9%	21 55.3%	47 61.8%	23 28.0%	55 56.7%	17 37.0%
Completely Agree	181 43.4%	45 57.7%	14 36.8%	20 26.3%	45 54.9%	31 32.0%	26 56.5%
No opinion	1 0.2%	- -	- -	- -	1 1.2%	- -	- -
Don't Know/ Refused	1 0.2%	1 1.3%	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -
Update of legislation to include the possibility of buying temping services from employment agencies - including ETC							
Completely Disagree	15 3.6%	1 1.3%	- -	- -	4 4.9%	8 8.2%	2 4.3%
Disagree	122 29.3%	33 42.3%	7 18.4%	21 27.6%	8 9.8%	50 51.5%	3 6.5%
Neither Agree not Disagree	82 19.7%	16 20.5%	4 10.5%	24 31.6%	14 17.1%	14 14.4%	10 21.7%
Agree	126 30.2%	17 21.8%	22 57.9%	24 31.6%	30 36.6%	17 17.5%	16 34.8%
Completely Agree	64 15.3%	7 9.0%	5 13.2%	5 6.6%	26 31.7%	6 6.2%	15 32.6%
No opinion	5 1.2%	3 3.8%	- -	1 1.3%	- -	1 1.0%	- -
Don't Know/ Refused	3 0.7%	1 1.3%	- -	1 1.3%	- -	1 1.0%	- -
The setting up of childcare centres at the place of work or close to the place of work with government subsidization							
Completely Disagree	2 0.5%	1 1.3%	- -	- -	- -	- -	1 2.2%
Disagree	14 3.4%	4 5.1%	4 10.5%	1 1.3%	2 2.4%	1 1.0%	2 4.3%
Neither Agree not Disagree	28 6.7%	4 5.1%	- -	7 9.2%	8 9.8%	5 5.2%	4 8.7%
Agree	211 50.6%	38 48.7%	22 57.9%	51 67.1%	22 26.8%	62 63.9%	16 34.8%
Completely Agree	161 38.6%	31 39.7%	12 31.6%	16 21.1%	50 61.0%	29 29.9%	23 50.0%
No opinion	1 0.2%	- -	- -	1 1.3%	- -	- -	- -
Don't Know/ Refused	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -

7.3.8 Private Sector Employers' Recommendations on the Introduction of Government Policies and Legislation on WLB Measures

This Section gives details on the recommendations given by respondents on the changes that Government may consider, in its policies and legislation, to ease the burden of Private Employers when offering WLB measures.

Respondents' Recommendations for Introduction of Government Policies and Legislation - [Q25]

From the total of 417 respondents interviewed, **a rather high 40.8% (170 respondents) indicated that they either think that the Government should not change anything; they had no opinion on this matter, or else, they could not think of any changes which they could recommend.** The highest percentage of respondents, who did not make any recommendations, came from the Transport and Communications Sector with 61% of its respondents not suggesting any fresh proposal.

The other 59.2% (247 respondents) mentioned various issues that the Government should address. It was deemed necessary that **websites offering information** on WLB Measures' legislation are updated, and **bureaucracy in the processing of departmental procedures**, particularly in the actioning of permits for the engagement of foreign manpower, is minimised. The **revision of Social Security Regulations and their enforcement**, with ensuing harsher penalties for those employers who engage manpower in unregistered work and likewise for the employee, in the event of abuse in registration, was pointed out by Respondents. It was argued that a reform in Social Security Regulations, regarding the **National Insurance contributions** paid by both employer and employee on **part-time work**, is imperative. Besides, part-timers stand to lose if they worked a certain number of hours and a change in the rules pertaining to this section of employment, would result in the availability of more workers inclined to join the workforce. It was also claimed that policies should be amended to ease the burden of administrative costs that employers incur when engaging part-timers on their workforce.

Government aid, by way of **fiscal incentives** to employers to encourage them to adopt WLB Measures and employees to partake of same, was called for in the following areas: wider tax bands for businesses, tax relief to make it financially viable for women to return to employment, the easing of the tax burden on overtime worked by both full-time and part-time staff, the part-subsidisation, for the first two months, for employers who take on employees availing themselves of a WLB Measure scheme, burden sharing in the case of flexi-time, tele-working, and reduced hours of work possibilities, Government subsidisation of maternity leave, and paternal

leave on incentive basis, giving the husband the opportunity to care for kids at home - it was also pointed out that the fact that maternity leave has to be paid by the Company makes it difficult for small companies to adopt such a measure, subsidisation of training costs incurred by the employer, and sports and relaxation opportunities for the employee.

7.4 IDENTIFICATION OF WLB MEASURES BEST PRACTICE IN MALTA

While conducting the in-depth personal interviews during the qualitative phase of this research project, the Research Consultant interviewed the Human Resources Managers of two companies in Malta, namely, Bank of Valletta (BOV) plc, a leading commercial bank and Playmobil Malta, a leading manufacturing concern. These two companies may be considered as pioneers in the introduction and adoption of formal companywide WLB measures offered to their employees. Some interesting WLB measures adopted by these two companies are herewith described.

7.4.1 Case Study I – BANK OF VALLETTA plc, A Leading Commercial Bank in Malta

Bank of Valletta (BOV) plc is the largest financial institution in Malta with a total workforce of 1,555 employees, of whom 1,517 are full-timers and 38 are employed on a part-time basis. Fully committed to its goal to be the best financial service provider in Malta, the BOV Group values its employees as the most important asset the Bank has, to always improve its performance, by offering added value quality service to customers, be they personal, business or corporate, and an equitable return to shareholders to increase their value and to sustain the strength and growth of the Group by using the capital entrusted to BOV Group prudently.

In its Mission Statement, Bank of Valletta embraces the principles of corporate responsibility and plays a leading and effective role in the country's sustainable development. Similarly, in support of the care that the Bank professes for its people, BOV positions itself as the Best Employer through the adoption and implementation of Work-life Balance measures on the workplace, in line with the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) which leads towards the enhancement of the general quality of life by balancing work and non-work obligations, and addresses, both the gender gap and the skills gap in the Maltese labour market.

Gender equality is optimum for BOV and this is evident from statistics showing that the female labour share totals 54.34%, of the Bank's work force, in comparison with 45.66% being male employees. The possibility of working flexible hours is offered to both genders, enabling them to balance both their financial and family needs. In firm belief that Parenting is crucial to child development, as it helps to shape

future societies, Bank of Valletta assists Parent employees, having minors in their care, during this phase of parenting, by offering them the opportunity to work from a Bank Branch closer to home, childcare centre or school, thus enabling them to accommodate their needs and to balance work and family. Furthermore, BOV employees benefit from subsidized childcare, with special attention given to children with a disability, the subsidy received up to the 8th birthday of the child; and summer school facilities for children, the latter offered to parents of children aged 3 to 12 years.

The need by employees to further their career, especially during the 'rush-hour of life', by investing in lifelong learning, is complemented by the Bank's commitment to promote the academic development of its workforce through various incentives; additional days of leave given to those who require further time to complete work associated with their study such as for assignments and exams; and subsidised study loans; giving the opportunity to staff members to obtain qualifications.

7.4.2 Case Study II – PLAYMOBIL Malta, A Leading Manufacturing Company in Malta

Playmobil Malta is one of Malta's leading manufacturing companies, which has been operating on the island incessantly since 1971. It is a subsidiary company of the Brandstatter Group, of Germany, which produces the well-renowned, plastic toys under the 'Playmobil' brand. To date, Playmobil Malta has a strong 814-employee workforce, the majority of who are engaged in operations. True to its Mission Statement, which claims that "*Playmobil Malta seeks to excel and satisfy Customers through its commitment to Quality*", it also treats its employees as esteemed 'internal customers'. Firmly believing that its workforce is its major asset in meeting its mission statement commitment to its 'external' customers, it strives to continuously invest in its people and is highly sensitive to their requests for work-life balance measures, and it invariably tries its utmost to accommodate as best it can.

As a manufacturing concern, Playmobil Malta operates on a three-work-shift time-table, which, *per se*, may be perceived as a major stumbling block to being able to accommodate its employees' requests for work-life balance measures in that its work-shifts pattern is fixed and cannot be changed. However, notwithstanding this stumbling block, Playmobil still tries to introduce such work-life balance measures even to its shopfloor employees. Work-life balance measures already being adopted at Playmobil range from reduced working hours, part-time employment, job-sharing, teleworking/ working from home to work-shift changes for parents with young children, sick/ elderly relatives, married couples who opt to work same work-shifts, etc. The company also allows in some cases the accumulation of vacation leave days and the conversion of

performed overtime hours into vacation leave, in the case of special circumstances or for health purposes.

Moreover, where and when required, in order to ensure that such work-life balance measures do not, in any way jeopardise the quality and volume of production output, Playmobil also recruits part-time personnel to compliment the work-shift workforce. It is worthy of mention that for its office administration and maintenance work-teams and other supporting departmental functions, the company offers a flexi-time working hours option around the company's 'core working hours', ie from 0900 hrs – 1400 hrs.

Playmobil Malta is a firm believer that life-long learning enhances one's skills and a better performance can be attained from a more 'developed' employee. Adhering to this concept, the company constantly offers training to its employees and, over the years, has sponsored individuals in reading university degrees, diplomas or equivalent. Committed to this conviction, as from this year, Playmobil Malta will be embarking on a more formal and innovative way of relating the progression in 'salary scales' to 'personal development' of its workforce, companywide. With this new 'upscales system', which will be managed by a newly set-up 'upscales task force committee', made up of representatives from management, its recognised trade unions under an independent Chairperson, employees will be encouraged to improve their individual personal development through 'education'. Initially, voluntary literacy courses in Maltese and English Languages and Mathematics will be offered to production workers. These training programmes will be fully paid for by Playmobil and organised on company premises right after working hours. Other training programmes which will also be offered at a later stage include other languages, e.g., German and other subjects as requested by the employees themselves.

7.5 ENHANCING WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN MALTA – THE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING CORPORATION [ETC]

7.5.1 Recommendations for ETC

The analysis of the registered findings leads to a significant conclusion: the important role which the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), Malta's Public Employment Service (PES) has, in promoting a better Work-Life Balance in the private sector. This can be seen to be an indirect prerequisite of its Mission Statement, "to provide and ensure equitable access to training programmes and employment services that contribute towards the social and economic development of the community".

The changing nature of Malta's demographics revealing a rapidly falling birth rate, an ageing population, and the lowest rate in the EU 27 of female participation in the labour

force, are all factors which press towards the harmonisation of family friendly measures in the Maltese work place as a means to increase labour supply. By means of various initiatives, the “Empowerment Skills Programme”, “Gender Equality Action Plan” and “Increasing Female Participation through Childcare Services at the Workplace”, all endeavours relevant to help augment women’s participation rate, ETC has already left a significant impression in this area. Moreover, the facility of the “Part-time Employment Register” in conjunction with the Research finding that 76% of Respondents indicated the preference to work part-time as the most popular WLB measure amongst their employees, is another positive merit on ETC’s behalf in extending assistance.

In a bid to maximise the development and adoption of work-life balance in the private sector, it is recommended that the ETC undertakes a three-fold approach in its contribution, namely:

- **INFORMATIVE**
- **ADVISORY**
- **CONSULTATIVE**

ETC: An “informative agent”, towards a better work-life balance in the private sector

The encouraging finding of 92%, of the total 417 private sector employers, amongst whom also those private employer respondents who do not currently adopt such measures within their company, all agreeing in principle with WLB measures, augurs well for the country in its efforts to combine a more flexible labour market with better job security for employees. In contrast:

- the perception of the lack of adequate knowledge, both by employees and, far more so, by the Management, a deficiency considered as a stumbling block in the implementation of measures and their benefits by 47% of respondents;
- the research finding that Part-Time, Reduced working hours and Flexi-time are the three WLB measures most requested, with the exclusion of various other options that can be adopted by the Company to the benefit of the employee;
- the majority of 66% of respondents proposing suggestions to ETC that were out of context to subject of Survey;

all go to explain why it is imperative that ETC embarks on an “**Information campaign**” to improve employers’ perception in this field.

1. Promoting awareness

Through the implementation of an effective WLB strategy campaign, ETC would reach out to inform private sector employers that work and non-work activities are compatible. Their effective balance renders a happier workforce, in turn leading to potential growth within the enterprise.

2. Adapting to change

The strategic objective of the “Information campaign” has to endeavour to change the attitudes and perceptions of employers to WLB. This campaign has to centre on how employers can adapt to change by using flexible work practices that allow a better Work-Life Balance.

3. Promoting the range of WLB measures available

Drawing on existing public sector availabilities, ETC would seek to publicise, through various forms of local media and ETC’s website, those practices that can help workers to better manage and balance work and private life demands, through the utilisation of flexible working arrangements and employer support, with regard to childcare arrangements, thus establishing a “win-win” situation for employer and employee alike.

ETC: An “advisory agent”, towards a better work-life balance in the private sector

In the Research Study it results that, a good number of Respondents stated that there was never the need to introduce WLB measures and furthermore, describe their adoption as a complex issue which disrupts the company’s set-up and translates into a cost and time management exercise for the company. This exercise implies the need to organise ongoing in-house training to render the replacement of employees possible. These salient reasons, an indication of a non-adoption attitude, could be counterbalanced by ETC’s “**Advisory**” approach on the enlisting of training that is required, both by management and employees, towards the attainment of WLB policies within the enterprise.

1. Improving skills for employability

ETC has to strive to engage employers to raise the skills level, both of management and employees, to attain full potentiality of workforce whilst supporting a healthy Work-Life Balance. This advisory process can be further substantiated by the company’s participation in such training programmes as the Training Aid Framework, TAF, a scheme partly funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) under Malta’s Operational Programme ‘Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life’ for the 2007-2013 Programming Period. Under this Scheme, ETC gives financial assistance to companies investing in the training of their workforce.

2. Training for managers

Highly proficient in the Training Field, ETC would train managers, during workshops and empowerment sessions, in the adaptation of more flexible working options for their staff, and help them in their effective implementation.

3. Trouble-shooting

From time to time, ETC is to assess the effectiveness and competence of WLB Training by testing out WLB Solutions, identify problems encountered, and offer solutions accordingly.

ETC: A “consultative agent”, towards a better work-life balance in the private sector

In the undertaking of the third approach, in its contribution towards a better work-life balance in the private sector, Malta’s Public Employment Service, ETC, has to analyse the findings of the Study to the Research Consultant’s prompted measures to respondents, to be aware of the necessities and requirements that were pointed out by employers. It is recommended that ETC proceeds to “**Consult with higher authorities**” on their viability for implementation.

1. Consultation on prompted measures most favoured by respondents

- The concession of tax credits or financial benefits by the Government for employers who introduce flexible work arrangements,
- the setting up of childcare centres at the place of work, or close to the place of work, with Government subsidisation, and
- the extension of school hours to tally with office hours,

were the three prompted measures most favoured by respondents. This choice of measures was also indicated by the majority of employers in another Research study conducted in 2008 by the Malta Employers’ Association amongst 121 Maltese organisations, the majority being private sector organisations.

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8. Case Study IV - Slovenia¹

Reconciliation of Work and Family Life in Slovenia: The Role of Public Employment Service

Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela, Nevenka Černigoj Sadar

8.1 INTRODUCTION

8.1.1 Recent Economic and Employment Trends

For the assessment of the adequacy of existing policies and initiatives relevant for reconciliation and its improvements it is important to understand the economic and employment context in which these are embedded. The macroeconomic context and the labour market developments in Slovenia in the period 2006-2007 could be described as stabile and positive. GDP growth was 5.6% in 2006 and in 2007 Slovenian economy achieved the highest yearly GDP growth (6.1%) in the last decade (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia [SORS], 2007b; Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia [CCIS], 2007). GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (PPS) was 20,600 in 2006 (84% of EU25 average). Slovenia was listed 28th among more than 130 countries on the global scale by international rating agency Dun&Bradstreet, ranked ahead of all other Eastern European countries and also ahead Italy and Greece. A relatively high (and increasing) inflation rate (year-on-year inflation in July 2007 was 3.8%, and in July 2008 it was 6.9%) was caused by higher oil prices on the global market, food prices and in the smaller degree rounding-up of prices and the price rises due to the introduction of the Euro in 2007.

Activity rate for men was 75.8% and 66.6% for women in 2007, thus the activity gender gap was 9.2%. That was for 1 percentage point worse compared to year 2006 when the gender activity gap was 8.2 p.p. (SORS, 2007a; SORS, 2008; European Commission, 2008). Male activity rate of 75.8% in 2007 was slightly above EU-25 average of 77.6% while female activity rate of 66.6% was considerably higher than EU-25 average (63.3%) (European Commission, 2008).

The employment rate of 67.8% in 2007 increased from years 2006 (66.6%) and 2005 (66.0%). The employment rate for men at 72.7% was higher than employment rate for women (62.6%) in 2007. Employment growth for women of 0.7 p.p. was lower in 2007 than that for men of 1.6 p.p. However, the employment rate for women increased from 2006 when it was at 61.8% already above the EU target of employment rate of women of 60% and above the EU 25 average. There are several reasons for the high employment rate of women in Slovenia that include not only the demand for labour and ideological reasons but also the increased level of education that women had achieved in the second half of the 20th century. As early as the second half of the seventies the proportion of women aged 7 to 24 participating in education was higher than that of men.

During the last decade the variety of working arrangements in Slovenia has significantly increased. Data on diversity of contractual arrangements shows that in Slovenia 26.5% of persons in employment are employees in part-time and/or fixed-term contracts and self-employed. That is below the EU average, but while the share of employees in part time and self-employed are considerably below the EU average, the share of employees in fixed-term employments is above the EU average (European Commission, 2006).

Analysis show that young people are in worse position than population in general. More than one third (37%) of young people in employment aged between 15 and 29 years are in part time and fixed term jobs (Kanjuo Mrčela & Ignjatović, 2005). Fixed-term contracts stay the main part of new employments in Slovenia: fixed-term contracts represented 75.1% of all new employments in 2005; that was more than 73.7% in 2004 (Employment Service of Slovenia [ESS], 2005). The share of fixed term employments of active

population in the age group 15 – 24 amounts to 41.9% and is considerably higher than in other age groups (12.4% in age group 25-49; 3.2% in age group 50-64 and 11.5% in age group 65+) (Labour Force Survey [LFS], 2005, 2nd quarter; cited in Ignjatovic, 2006).

Unemployment rate has been decreasing from 6.6% in 2003 to 5.6% in 2006 and 4.2% in 2008 respectively (SORS, 2007b, p. 236; SORS, 2008). During the mentioned years the unemployment rate for women was always higher compared to men, in the second quarter of 2008 unemployment rate for men was 3.5% and for women 4.9%. Although the unemployment rate in 2008 has reached the lowest level after 1993, it was the highest among young generation – 9.3% (Svetin, 2008) but in previous years it was significantly higher, for example in 2005 it was 16.0% and there was a gap in favour of men of 3.2 p.p.: the unemployment rate in this age group was 14.6% for men and 17.8% for women. Even ever higher professional attainment of young people is not a guarantee for greater employment opportunities. On the contrary, there exists a trend of increase of number of unemployed young people with university degrees – from 826 in 1998, 1,305 in 2001 to 2,499 in 2003 (Ignjatović, 2006).

Among long-term unemployed first-time job-seekers there are more women than men, and among newcomers to the labour market, more women are temporarily employed compared to men while highly qualified women have greater problems getting their first job than their male counterparts (Černigoj Sadar & Verša, 2002; Kanjuo Mrčela & Černigoj Sadar, 2006).

8.1.2 Public Policies Related to Reconciliation of Work and Family Life

Reconciliation of work and family/private life has been for decades successfully supported by public policies in Slovenia. During the second half of the 20th century public policies that enabled parents to balance their work and family lives were successfully developed. There exists a long tradition of national regulation of paid parental leaves and provision of publicly subsidised child-care services that has been seen as a way of helping parents (especially mothers) in combining work and family obligations. Since the early nineties of the last century there were more than half of preschool children attending child care centres (50.9% in 1991/1992; SORS, 1995), the share of children attending child care centres has been steadily increasing up to 68% in the school year 2007/2008 (SORS, 2008).

Maternity leave in duration of 12 weeks of with a 100% wage replacement was introduced in Slovenia immediately after the Second World War. It was extended to 105 days with

a full wage replacement in 1957. In 1975, parental leave was first regulated in Slovenian legislation with the duration of 141 days or until the child was one year of age, providing one of the parents worked four hours per day (Černič Istenič, 1994). According to the *Labour Relations Act* (1986) the duration of maternity leave was 105 days. Parental leave (leave for caring the children with full wage remuneration), which could be taken by either parent, was provided in the duration of 260 days or up to the child's 17th month in the case of working half-time (Jesih, 1998). Unlike in other post-communist, Slovene statutory regulation concerning parental leaves and provision of public child care services did not deteriorate in the last decade, some measures have been even improved (Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs [MLFSA], 2008). Recently passed measures that directly ease work- family balancing should be mentioned.

Parental leave arrangements and benefits

Parental Care and Family Benefit Act (2001) defines four types of parental leaves. All forms of parental leave are financed by the state social security system.

1. Maternity leave: 105 days with 100% compensation of the average employee wage during the last year;
2. Paternity leave (non-transferable father's right): 90 days – 15 days father receives 100% of his wage, for the remaining 75 days he gets social security contribution based on statutory minimum wage. At least 15 days must be used until the child's 6th month, the remaining days before the child's third birthday.
3. Child care leave: 260 days -100% payment (benefit is based on average employee wage during the last year of employment). This leave is family based which means that it could be taken by mother or father. However, in most cases it is taken by mother, during the last years only from 1-2 % of fathers have taken this opportunity – mostly in case of mother's illness or absence.
4. Adoption leave: 150 days for a child aged from 1 to 4 years, 120 days for a child aged from 4 to 10 years.

The child care leave can be taken as a full- time or part time absence from work; in the latter case, the duration of leave is prolonged accordingly; it can be used in different time sequences or as a lump sum for certain purposes defined by law (for example for payment for childcare or for solving housing problem). The parents who are not entitled to insurance –based parental leave get a lump sum parental allowance.

The parent who is caring for child has the right to work part time (at least 20 hours a week) in agreement with his/

her employer until the child is three years old. The parent who cares for two children has the right to work part time until the younger child is six years old. During this period, the parent's wage depends on actual hours worked, for the rest up to full time the state pays social security contributions on a proportional share of the minimum wage. In case of caring for a child with severe motor handicap or moderate to severe mental handicap a parent can work part time until the child is 18 years old. The aforementioned right may be extended on the basis of the opinion of a medical commission.

In 2006, the right to payment of social security contribution based on minimum wage was introduced for the parent who leaves the labour market because of caring for four or more children until the youngest child has completed ten years of age.

In addition to above mentioned parental leave arrangement and benefits the parents have the right (defined in the *Health Care and Health Insurance Act*, 2004) to leave in case of child's/ family member's illness up to 15 working days with 80% of wage replacement.

Majority of fathers use the paid part of paternity leave, but still do not participate in other forms of parental leaves or in child-care schemes in similar terms as mothers.

Child care arrangements and benefits

In Slovenia institutional child-care is available and affordable through dense network of public/ publicly subsidized private providers. Pre-school child-care institutions are funded by municipalities, by parents' fees, the sale of services and products (for example lunch made by cooks employed in the kindergarten can be bought by residents in the neighbourhood). Depending on the income per family member and family property parents contribute from 10% to 80% of the programme costs for the first child, while since 1 September 2008 parents do not pay anything for the second child in the kindergarten (at the same time as the first one).

In 2007/2008 68% of children aged from 11 months to obligatory school age (6 years) were enrolled in kindergartens (SORS, 2008). Parents take advantage of these services mostly for children aged over three years; in 2006 81% of children from 3 years to obligatory school age were in childcare centres, mostly on full time basis (usually about 8 hours per day), the share of children up to age of 2 years is lower -18%, however most of them spend over 30 hours per week in child care centres (Kanjuo Mrčela, 2008).

The working hours of childcare centres are 6 to 9 hours usually from 5.30 or 6.00 a.m. to 4.00 or 4.30 p.m. In urban centres, some care centres are open later (until 5.00 p.m.)

and some larger pre-school institutions offer afternoon departments which are open until 8.00 p.m. Because of diverse and increasingly long working hours more and more parents demand longer and more flexible working hours of kindergartens that would suit their needs.

Analysis of the Institute of Republic of Slovenia for education "Quality of pedagogic work in kindergartens" in 2006 showed still low flexibility and traditional working hours in Slovene kindergartens. Working hours of a major part of education and care staff is up to 2.00 p.m. and that does not allow for high quality work in afternoons when there is a lot of work with children leaving the kindergartens. The analysis concludes that a re-conceptualisation of the working hours in kindergartens is needed (Predalič, 2007).

Assistance for a new born child and once a year benefit for a large family allowance (family with three or more children) are universal while child allowances are means- tested and targeted on middle-income families (Kanjuo Mrčela, 2005). Child allowance increases by 10% in case a child lives in a one-parent family, and by 20% in case a preschool child does not attend crèches or kindergarten.

Involvement of social partners in work- family policies

Empirical research in Slovenia confirmed that until recently neither employers (see the next section) nor trade unions saw work -family issues as a problem that is worth to be focused on. We could see the year 2006 as a turning point partly because of very intensive and extended PR activities related to EQUAL project Family/ Mothers Friendly employment (2005-2007) developed in cooperation of academics, trade unions, employers and non- governmental organisation (Kanjuo Mrčela & Černigoj Sadar, 2007), and gender mainstreaming actions as a part of implementation of the *Act on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men* (2002) and *Employment Relations Act* (2002) that prohibits any discrimination in job recruitment and at working place and underlines the responsibility of employer to help employee in solving the problems of paid work and family life reconciliation. In the Social agreement for the period 2007-2009 the twelfth chapter is dedicated to the reconciliation of occupational and family obligations. In this chapter the responsibilities are clearly divided between government, employers and trade unions. The important change in the public discourse was enhanced by endeavours of governmental Office for Equal Opportunities and rather diffused but empirically documented academic work, which eventually had an impact on attitudes and practice of some of the social partners.

8.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR STUDY

8.2.1 Methodological Approach

The empirical part of this report is based on analysis of the empirical data obtained within the research project on reconciliation of work and family life that was performed in 2005 and 2006 and an internet survey of employers/managers performed in October 2008.

Secondary analysis of the empirical data obtained with telephone interviews with 882 persons aged from 22 to 35 years and in focus groups in which 70 young people (aged 22-35) participated, of which 30 were parents. The selection of this age group was based on previous research results (Černigoj Sadar & Brešar, 1996; Ule & Kuhar, 2003; Kanjuo Mrčela & Černigoj Sadar, 2006) that indicated that this age group bears the greatest burden as far as production and reproduction is concerned. The quota sample of telephone interviews had the following characteristics:

- 31% aged 22 to 25 years, 32% aged 26 to 30 years and 37% 31 years and more.
- 5% with primary school, 12% with vocational school, 49% with secondary school, 32% with higher school or university and 2% with master or doctoral degree

The post secondary level groups were overrepresented compared to statistical data for this age group. 66% of respondents were employed/self-employed. In our analysis we focused on the above mentioned group of young people to identify the problems in the reconciliation of private and work obligations. In the analysis of focus group discussion we focused on the expectations and demands of employees regarding work- family relationships.

Internet survey of employers/managers was carried out on the base of the standardised project questionnaire which allows international data comparison. The three set of questions were following:

- a. Perception of (Human Resources, HR) managers/ employers about the WLB (Work Life Balance – reconciliation of formal paid work and private life) requests from employees
- b. WLB measures offered by employers
- c. The role of Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) regarding reconciliation.

8.2.2 Data gathering and the characteristic of the sample

We decided to send our questionnaire to e-mail addresses

of members of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of Slovenia and the Slovenian Association for Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations.

Our questionnaire was answered by representatives of 90 companies. Respondents did not answer all questions; therefore the further analysis was done on the basis of valid answers for each question. Our respondents were from different organisations. 33.3 % of companies were big companies (more than 200 employees), most of organisations/companies (38.7%) have 51 to 200 employees, 21.3% companies/organisations from the sample have 10 to 51 employees and the smallest part (6.7%) have up to 10 employees. Distribution by sector of activity was following; more than half of companies in (58.7%) are in the services, 40.0% in industrial sector and only 1.3% in agriculture. Most of organisations (81.3%) are private owned, 8.0% are mixed private-public ownership, 8.0% are public and only 2.7% are non for profit organisations.

To summarise, our sample consisted of 52% of small/ middle sized (less than 200 employees) private companies/ organisations, 29.3% big (more than 200 employees) private companies/organisations and 14.7% small and 4% big companies/organisations from other sectors.

8.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Employers' Views and Perceptions on WLR Measures in Slovenia

Based on both empirical researches in Slovenia (Černigoj Sadar & Kersnik, 2004; Kanjuo Mrčela & Černigoj Sadar, 2007) we came to several indicative findings. As the extent (and financial coverage) of statutory parental leave is considered to be satisfactory in terms of reconciling work and family obligations, there are no additional provisions for parental leave at company level. There are only some additional provisions related to time arrangements (leave in case of the need to provide care for an ill family member) in some sectors/ company collective agreements that could help in reconciling family and work obligations. Results of the CRANET survey in 2001 revealed that in 36.6% of organisations, employees are entitled to a short period of leave in the event of an emergency, 25.4% of organisations offer long leaves to care for a seriously ill family member (Černigoj Sadar & Vladimirov, 2004).

The CRANET survey in 2001 indicated that about one third of organisations with more than 200 employees have informal equal opportunity/ diversity policies and flexible working practices; somewhat lower share of organisations

reported on work/ family informal policies. The prevalence of informal policies indicates that employees are dependent on management discretion in their attempts to reconcile their work and family obligations (Černigoj Sadar & Vladimirov, 2004). The introduction of Work –family programmes in organisation was very rare, while prolonged parental leave outside of the statutory requirements (6.7%) and career breaks (9.4%) were most often mentioned measures (Černigoj Sadar & Vladimirov, 2004, p. 275). Research results indicated that the introduction of measures that ease the work–family balancing is related to the size of organization and also to some extent to the educational structure of the labour force: the bigger the organisation and the higher the level of education of labour force the greater the possibility for WLB measures in organisation (Černigoj Sadar & Vladimirov, 2004).

Table 1 - Family friendly organisational policies

Family friendly organisational policies	Positive answers in %
Equal opportunities/diversity	
Unwritten	31.5
Written	6.6
Flexible working practices	
Unwritten	36.0
Written	20.4
Work/family coordination	
Unwritten	22.2
Written	5.3

Source: Černigoj Sadar & Vladimirov, 2004, p. 270

The concept of equal employment opportunity is related to legal acts that prohibit discrimination in employment, while diversity management is a business initiative. The latter means 'planning and implementing organizational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximised while its potential disadvantages are minimised' (Cox, 1993). Regarding employees' opportunities for autonomy, their work loads and prevailing institutional regulations flexible working practices are divided into two groups: these with potentially positive impacts such as: part-time work, job sharing, flexi-time, home based work and tele-work; and the others that potentially increase conflicts between

different roles and have negative impacts on employees such as: weekend work, shift work, overtime, temporary work, etc. (Černigoj Sadar, 2006). Equal employment opportunities, diversity management and flexible working practices with potentially positive impacts on employees contribute to the work/family coordination in case they are focused on employees with family obligations and have holistic view on working life. Results presented in the Table 1 indicated that in Slovenia, with the exception of flexible working practices, there are no written organisational policies that could potentially contribute to balancing work and family life. The percentage of organisations that indicated unwritten policies related to this subject is higher.

Results of a case study of a Slovene private finance company (reported in Černigoj Sadar & Kersnik, 2004) that was done in 2003 as a part of European comparative project "Gender, parenthood, and the changing European workplace: young adults negotiating the work-family boundary" illustrated the experience of Slovene parents in the workplace. This organisation did introduce just some family friendly organisational policies (in excess of the statutory requirements), as managers thought that such policies were not needed due to the small number of young parents and the fact that the organisation's rules complied with national legislation on the reconciliation of work and family. Parents who use their legally guaranteed rights (for example taking leave to care for a sick child) report that it negatively influences their relations with co-workers (lowering trust among them) while "managers' comments vary from very benevolent opinions up to clear descriptions of management problems in the case of an unexpected parental leave" (Černigoj Sadar & Kersnik, 2004, p. 18). Černigoj Sadar & Kersnik (2004) conclude that in the organisation exist "implicit expectations that hinder the implementation of national policies and turn them into a family-unfriendly organisational practice." The results of this case study confirmed that problems of reconciliation are more often experienced and solved by women than by men, that management do not consider reconciliation policies to increase employee motivation, but to only as increase the costs of labour and that public policies' implementation could be threatened by both employers and employees (Černigoj Sadar & Kersnik, 2004).

In our research in October 2008 employers and HR managers we find that in the majority of companies in our sample (61.0%) there are no measures for reconciliation of work and family life. In other companies measures are offered as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - WLB Measures offered in the companies/organisations in the sample

Type of WLB measure	Number of companies offering the WLB measure
Flexible working time	27
Shorter working time	15
Special leaves (education, voluntary work)	14
Work from home	13
Part time work (half time work)	12
Prolonged maternity/parental leave	12
Leave for care for older/sick dependants	11
Job sharing	4
Additional benefits for employees (medical check-ups, additional insurance, and redundancies)	4
Adoption leave	3
Compressed working time	2
Tele-work	2
Career break	1
Child-care facilities	0

In more than a half of companies/organisations in our sample (54.9%) trade unions are, according to our respondents, not actively involved in promotion and implementation of reconciliation measures. There exists a statistically significant relationship between the size of company and commitment of trade union to reconciliation issues: in bigger companies trade unions are more often actively involved in promotion of reconciliation policies and measures. Analysis of the activity of trade unions in companies regarding the respondents' definition of the source of difficulties concerning implementation of reconciliation measures (within or outside of the company) show that trade unions are more active in companies in which difficulties are seen as coming from outside of the company.

The most frequent reasons for introduction of WLB measures in the companies in our sample are the following:

- to increase employees satisfaction (13.4%);
- to increase various benefits for employees (11.1%);
- to increase employees' trust (9.0%);
- to retain core and talented workforce (9.0%);
- to improve health and reduce absenteeism (6.0%);
- to become an attractive employer (6.0%).

In bigger companies reconciliation measures are more often than in small introduced in order to retain core and talented workforce. According to our respondents, the increase of the number of women in management is not a reason for the implementation of reconciliation measures in Slovene companies/organisations. Neither is creation of new jobs. In bigger companies the following reasons for the introduction of WLB measures were stated more often than in smaller companies: increase of trust of employees, increase the satisfaction of employees and a wish to become an attractive employer.

Our research indicated that currently ESS does not have an active and discernable role regarding reconciliation policies/measures in Slovene companies/organisations. Great majority of our respondents (93.7%) reported that they do not discuss reconciliation issues with ESS. There were no statistically significant relationship shown, but there is more of discussion about the reconciliation with ESS in smaller companies and private ones than other companies.

However, more than a half of our respondents (57.7%) estimated that ESS could (in at least some extent) help them introduce and implement reconciliation measures. In companies in which managers do not think that ESS could have such a role trade unions are also less involved in support of reconciliation measures (however there is no statistically significant relationship). Table 3 shows data on which type of support would employers/managers like to have from the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS).

Table 3. Desirable support of the ESS in introduction and implementation of WLB measures

Type of support of the ESS	Positive responses (in %)
Financial support	57.8
Informing about reconciliation measures and its outcomes, legislative framework	40.0
Acting as a mediator between employer and employees	33.3
Education (workshops and similar)	30.0
Collection of information about problems in implementation of reconciliation measures and policies in companies	17.8

The wish that ESS collect information about problems concerning implementation of reconciliation was more often reported in bigger companies. Smaller companies more often than big ones reported the need for education/training. Private companies more than others reported about the need for financial support of the ESS. Our respondents gave some additional explanations on some types of the ESS support:

- Financial support could encompass measures as subventions for employment and education of substitute employees, part-time work options, saving jobs, afternoon child care;
- Informing and education could encompass lectures and workshops, regular e-mail informing and professional help.

8.4 SPECIFIC WLR REQUESTS FROM EMPLOYEES IN SLOVENIA

Empirical research in Slovenia (Černigoj Sadar & Kersnik, 2004; Kanjuo Mrčela & Černigoj Sadar, 2007) indicated that WLB policy/practice begins already in the recruitment phase. Women more frequently reported having had problems due to potential or actual parenthood while looking for a job. Decision for parenthood is highly correlated with type of employment contract and regular wage. Young people reported the following conditions as being necessary for a positive decision to have a child: a permanent employment contract, resolved housing problem and reasonable financial resources. A permanent employment contract, as the first key condition for a decision to have a first child, is not only a source of permanent financial means but it is also the condition for loans and access to the advantages of social policy benefits and other measures related to parenthood. About a third

of the employed respondents were anxious about losing their jobs; this illustrates the current situation of continuous economic and political changes and enhanced labour market flexibilisation in Slovenia.

Both young people without children and young parents in the focus groups reported a permanent and critical lack of time for personal needs, but they consider that to be unavoidable:

'Work must be done...mostly you put work in first place, other things are further back' (father, employed in retail, 34);

'Work must be done, it is your problem how much time you need for it' (woman without children employed in computer industry, 28).

In some organisations, due to the nature of work (e.g. long working hours and shift work in catering, health services or retail) such problems of reconciliation are quite severe for working parents and young people without children.

Flexible working practices such as working at home or arranging working time according to one's own needs could often lead to even longer working hours and extra reconciliation problems. The measure that is treated as a positive has also its negative side:

'When you are at home, you actually work more and longer. I wake up at 7.00 and sit down in my pyjamas in front of the computer; at 10.00 I put on a pullover and forget ...' (mother employed in computer industry, 31).

I only have to change when I go to kindergarten...' (mother employed in computer industry, 31).

'...then you put the kids to sleep around 8.00 and check your inbox and work to ensure you have a clean inbox in the morning' (mother employed in the computer industry, 33).

Reasons for working long hours are various: to increase employees' financial resources and to increase chances for promotion. Organisations demand long hours work because of the lack of labour force, in case of inefficient management or the demands of specific work process. With few exceptions, workers do not like working long hours, however most of workers accept long hours work because they are afraid of negative consequences in case of refusal. Take up of parental and sick leave is strongly related to gender, mostly women take it. Fathers who would like to have more active parental role reported the need to change the attitudes which connect parental role mostly with women.

Mothers more frequently reported having problems in the work place after the birth of a child, such as: unwanted increased workload, not getting a job position they wanted, hindered promotion, demotion, worse social relations in the work place and the employer's termination of their job contract. Fathers more frequently than mothers reported about: a 'blank' contract for the termination of employment, unwanted long work hours (over 8 hours per day) and the termination of a job contract at their own initiative due to unbearable problems at work. Young people who had no children reported fewer problems in the workplace and in this group there were no gender differences in negative experience at work.

Young employees' evaluations regarding their employers' demands on them were quite contradictory. Most respondents experienced balancing of work and family life as being burdensome to various extents; navigating between these two spheres of life was not found to be a burden by just 38% of the respondents. On the other hand, a good share of the respondents (58%) evaluated their employers as being understanding regarding the needs of parents with young children. The data indicated that our young respondents were not very critical and had relatively low expectations in relation to their employers. In the reconciliation of work and private life young people and especially young parents count on their own parents to help them. They also expect that the state should take some responsibility and help out young parents. That is why young people treat their (potential) parenthood as a private matter that they alone should deal with:

'It is not my employers' duty to care if I decided to become a mum' (mother employed in retail, 33).

Young people would appreciate if employers showed more understanding:

'If they could only see you, understand and put themselves in your shoes, not only take care of their own interests (father employed in retail, 34).'

To create supportive WLB work environment employers need more problem oriented information and skills for time management while employees need empowerment and raising of personal awareness.

In our research in October 2008 employers and (HR) managers reported that employees in their organisations most often demand the following statutory defined forms/ measures of reconciliation (answers in absolute numbers): additional parental leave (49), part-time work (21), flexible work time (19), home work (11), paternal leave (5), all listed measures (2), sick leave, and schooling. Respondents reported that employees are also interested in using some measures/ policies of reconciliation that are above the statutory defined ones, such as a kindergarten in company (11), career break (5), financial support for childcare (5) and several others (afternoon childcare facilities, additional time off, flexible schedules, additional pension insurance).

Among employees who are interested in using reconciliation measures in organisations are more often women (62.7%) than men (37.3%). It is interesting that in small and in private organisations men are more interested in reconciliation measures while in big companies and in companies in other sectors women are more often interested in reconciliation measures (difference is not statistically significant).

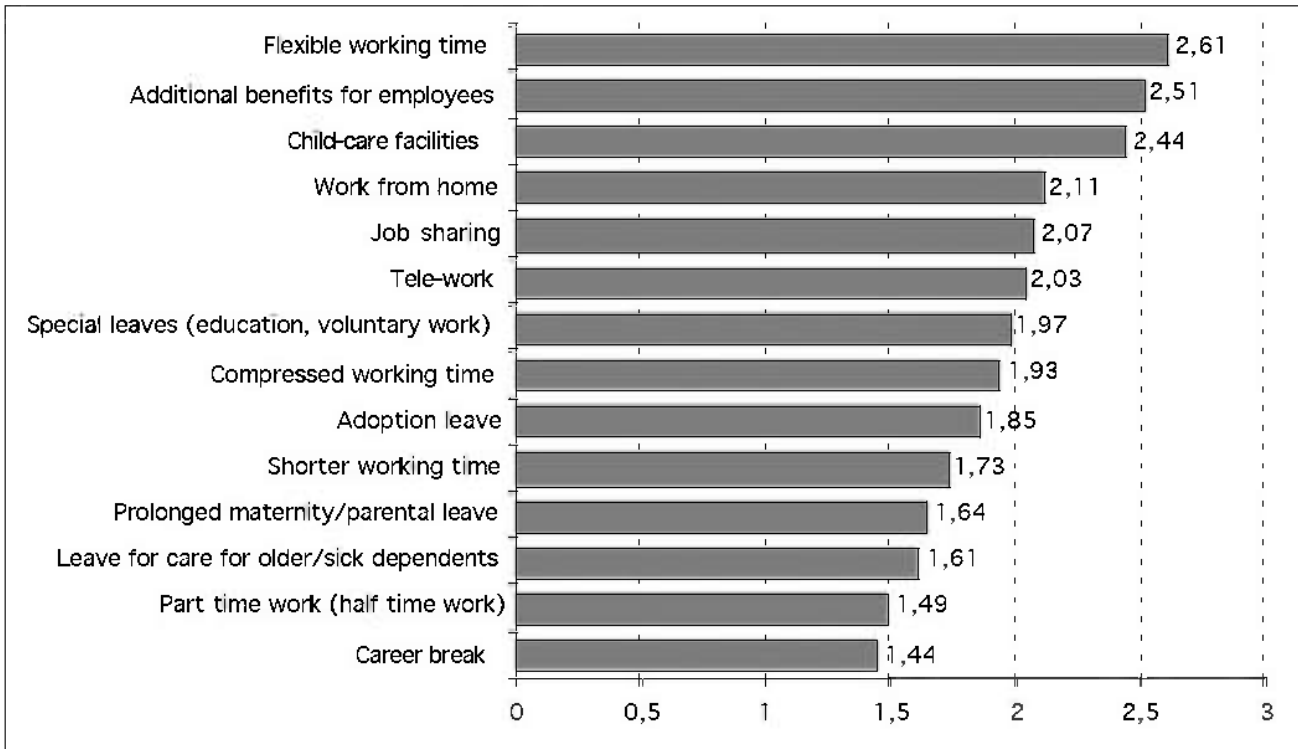
Majority of employees who most often demand WLB measures are in the age group from 26 to 35 years (81.0%) and the smallest is the share of employees older than 46 years (4.8%). Majority of employees who are interested in WLB measures are on non managerial position (87.8%).

8.5 STUMBLING BLOCKS FACED BY EMPLOYERS WHEN IMPLEMENTING WLB MEASURES

About two fifths of our respondents (41.1%) estimated that there are no obstacles for the introduction of WLB measures in their companies, 34.4% reported that obstacles are inside the organisation and 24.4% that obstacles come from outside of the company.

Most of the proposed WLB measures, with few exceptions, were on average evaluated as having no benefit or even a negative impact for employer. Our respondents estimated that the most beneficial reconciliation measures from the employers' point of view are flexible working time, increase of benefits for employees and child-care facilities, while the least beneficial for employers are career breaks and part-time work. In Graph 1 are the respondents benefit evaluations of different reconciliation measures.

Graph 1. Benefits of WLB measures for employers

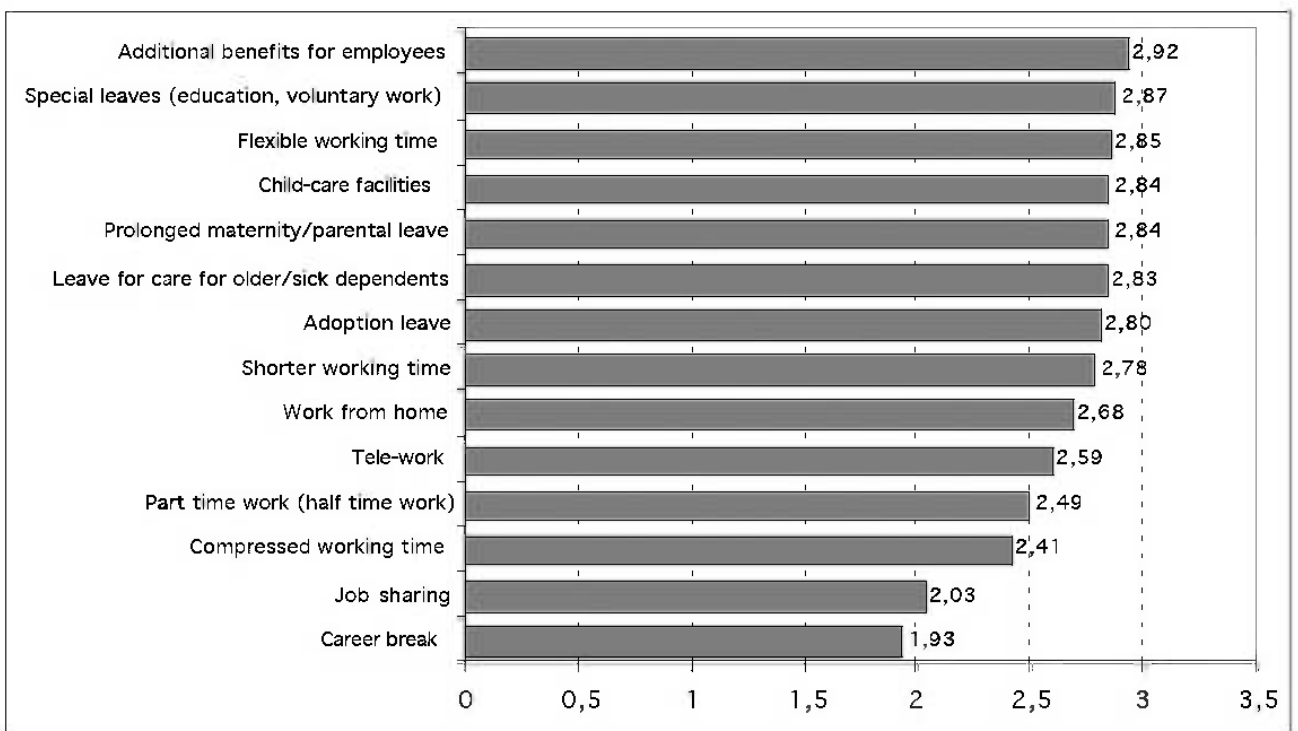


Scale: 1-negative, 2-no influence, 3-positive

Our respondents estimated that reconciliation measures are more beneficial to employees and thus the arithmetic means estimating the benefits for employees are higher for all

the reconciliation measure than those estimating the benefits for employers as seen from Graph 2. The following measures were seen as the most beneficial for employees: increase of benefits for employees, additional leaves, child-care facilities, flexible working time, prolonged maternity or parental leave, care leave and adoption leave.

Graph 2. Benefits of WLB for employees



Scale: 1-negative, 2-no influence, 3-positive

Managers and employers representatives estimated that quite a number of measures that are useful for reconciliation of work and family life of employees often have a negative impact on their productivity and efficiency, namely: part-time work, job sharing, career break, compressed week, additional leaves, distant work or work from home. Some managers are aware of win-win effects of reconciliation practices and measures and did not report the existence of a tension between benefits for employees and negative influence for employers.

8.6 WLB MEASURES OFFERED BY PRIVATE EMPLOYERS IN SLOVENIA – IDENTIFYING BEST PRACTICE

As already mentioned, during the first years of this century the work-family reconciliation issues in Slovenia gradually became a part of public discourse. Some of the most important promoters of it are among the first generation of enterprises that got basic Certificate of Family Friendly Company in Slovenia. We chose two of them as examples of good practice in helping employees in the reconciliation of work and family life. The third example of good practice is a textile company in which a friendly organisational climate created by managers and colleagues eases reconciliation of work and family lives of employees.

LEK – a member of Sandoz group, is a pharmaceutical joint stock company with over two thousands of employees that provides equal opportunities in recruitment, selection, promotion and training of employees as well as “Equal pay” policy for male and female associates. There are 43.2% female managers in Lek. Numerous benefits are provided by Lek’s collective agreement (flexible working time, childcare facilities on site in Ljubljana etc.) in order to help employees (women in particular) to balance their private and professional life. Programme “Complaint officer” takes care for gender equality policies. The company employs a general practitioner and a dentist.

Lek has decided to join “Family Friendly Company” initiative to further improve and promote equal opportunities policy within the company and in the broader community. From 2007 to 2010 the company will be gradually introducing the following measures to ease employee work-family coordination: providing employees with the opportunities to be well informed (intranet and internal newspapers pages dedicated to work-family issues); reconciliation topics are/ will be discussed at working groups, trade unions and workers’ council meetings. Lek nominates a person who is responsible for reconciliation of work and family programmes/measures. Company has the ‘Open door’ day to explain and to show the employees’ family members and other community members the functioning of organisation and work process.

One of the most important services for families is the new kindergarten close to the companies’ headquarters (in which 700,000.00 euro were invested) with well equipped playground and art classroom. Kindergarten is attended by 51 children of employees. The programme and the cost of regular maintenance are paid by the municipality of Ljubljana. The company also organizes active holidays for children and traditional family cycling marathon.

As far as working time is concerned all employees who have flexible working time can start their work until 8.30. Accumulated overtime hours can be used as free day/s, eight overtime hours could be transferred to next year. In the case that work process is not disturbed employees can work also at home.

The company also offers time management, stress management and various other health promotion workshops to increase work motivation and work-life balance. Special attention is paid to improvement of managers’ social skills and sensitivity to employees needs. Special services are offered to employees who are responsible for long term care of a family member. In advertising the company uses the symbol of a family friendly enterprise and underline equal opportunity policy. All the above mentioned measures are implemented by distributing related tasks and obligations among persons who are already employed. An attitude survey about the availability and efficiency of measures is planned for next year.

MERCATOR, a private retail company is among the employers with highest number of employees (about 10.000) in Slovenia (about 70% of employees are women). Mercator has a special information strategy (based on intranet and company publications) in order to inform employees about the existing work- family reconciliation measures. Employees with children have one additional day of leave per year for each child under 15 years of age. In planning shift work and other forms of working time (work at weekends) the needs of parents are taken into consideration. In new collective agreement the younger employees have more days, off while the number of days off for older worker has decreased a bit. Parents have priority in hiring Mercator’s holiday houses. “Mercatoriada” is a company holiday for all employees and their family members. Every year each child under the age of seven years receives a Santa Claus gift. In 2008 the package for a newborn child ‘Lumpi’ was introduced. The company welcomes employees’ suggestions on quality of work improvements; most of them are related to health promotion. Therefore a special project for health promotion is planned that will consist of preventive health check-ups, mammography for women, offer of various sport activities and educational programme for 800 shop stewards on health promotion and stress. The company also plans the “returning to work programme” for employees returning to work after

long leaves (e.g. after maternity and parental leave). All work-family measures are to be evaluated by empirical survey among employees.

In both companies managements are aware that introducing family friendly culture into a company is a long term project. However, they are convinced that the new work-family measures will increase the efficiency of employees, their motivation for work and satisfaction and it will also improve company's image.

In addition to this, the companies which got basic Family Friendly Company certificate there are many companies which have mostly informal family friendly measures that are implemented by line managers. Everyday management practices are decisive to create family friendly organizational climate. Such a climate has been identified during the discussions in focus groups in one of companies in research project in 2006 (Kanjuro Mrčela & Černigoj Sadar, 2007). "TEXTILE" (the real name of the company is not used, as the companies in the research sample were promised full anonymity) is a small private company having over 80% of female employees. The company develops new fashion collections and is oriented mostly towards design and development of new technology, while production is outsourced. It means that company has seasonal peaks demanding very intensive and long work hours (ten hours per day and work on Saturdays). Usually employees come to work from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m., and if somebody is late that has no negative consequences. There is a lot of solidarity and interpersonal help in work groups. Line manager (a women, mother of two children) has a democratic leadership style with charismatic elements and always tries to respond to co-workers' needs. She thinks that parenthood has a positive impact on work: parents are more responsible, have better communication skills and higher level of tolerance compared to employees without children. The top management in Textile is also quite responsive to the employee needs. There is an understanding between management and employees and both sides are very committed to the implementation of organisational goals. Attitudes towards parenthood in organisation are very positive; parents are treated as persons to rely upon and as high quality workers. The organisation is situated outside an urban area and all employees have strong support from their family members in solving work-family reconciliation problems. Textile has a special organisational climate which is created by management and employees in a small organisation with a lot of face to face communications.

8.7 SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW PES SERVICES OR STRUCTURE

8.7.1 General Recommendations

The results of our research indicate that in order to improve

the possibilities for reconciliation of work and parenthood for employees in Slovene companies it would be necessary to change expectations and practices of (young) parents and employees as well as employment and work policies and practices in organisations.

As the research results show that expectations of young people towards employers are quite low, young people should be informed about their rights, their awareness regarding employers' role in easing of reconciliation should be raised and they should be empowered for the realisation of successful reconciliation.

On the other hand, the following organisational practices and dimensions of organisational culture should be taken into consideration in organisations in order to improve possibilities for reconciliation: non-discriminatory employment, time and space flexibility (part-time work, abandoning unnecessary rigidity and the equalisation of one's presence at work with actual efficiency, work at home), the development of a culture of caring for employees and understanding and adapting to the needs of parents, long-term and non-discriminatory career plans.

The definition of reconciliation practices is strongly influenced by traditional cultural norms that attribute the role of the main provider of care for children/family members mostly to women. That is causing the marginalisation of women in the labour market and is seriously endangering the emancipation of men in the private sphere. Because of that, a special consideration should be paid to the gender-specific experience of parents and development of practices that would enable the equal inclusion of both men and women in care responsibilities.

Research data show that employers/managers estimate a number of reconciliation measures as primarily positive for employees and often fail to grasp the benefits that these measures have for the employers. Business case for reconciliation policies has been repeatedly proved (see the review in Stropnik, 2007) and it is illustrated by the high commitment of some of the most successful Slovene companies in introducing reconciliation measures and programmes. However, the public discourse is too often distracted by other urgent financial or political themes and obviously has not paid enough attention to the positive outcomes of work-family measures. The most efficient communication strategy would be one based on dissemination of positive experience of the representatives of organisations in which the positive impacts of work-family measures are proved as creating added value for organisation.

8.7.2 Recommendation for PES

Our research shows that Employment Service of Slovenia is currently not seen as actively involved in activities concerning reconciliation measures/policies. However, its more active role

would be welcome. Our research also gave some indications in which ways its role would be best performed and how to respond to different needs of different companies. Our suggestions should be taken into consideration as proposals for improvement or development of ESS activities that should be coordinated with other relevant actors that should be active in supporting reconciliation of work and family/life of employees.

Based on data from previous research and the latest collection of data (opinions of representatives of employers), the following **proposals to the ESS** could be given:

1. ESS should answer the expectations of employers and managers and start to play a **more active role** in promotion and implementation of reconciliation measures. For example the promotion of good practice in work life reconciliation on its promotion space such as a web site, publicity boards in ESS offices, at employment fairs and other public promotion events.
2. The reconciliation themes should become a part of the **ESS communication with employers as well as with job seekers/employees**. ESS could inform employers that problems related to work–family issues are the part of the HR management and that it could be resolved in cooperation between different social partners.
3. ESS should take an active part in awareness rising of **employers** – primarily about the potential benefits of reconciliation policies/measures for employers and thus help overcome outdated stereotypes on optimal work organisation, gender work and care roles. For example, regular visits to employers by ESS staff from local employment offices could be used as an opportunity to inform employers on possible work–family reconciliation measures its benefits, and on employers with examples of such good practices. ESS should **take into consideration organisational and employees' characteristics** and differences that are important in coping with work- family reconciliation issues.
4. ESS should take an active part in awareness rising and **education of job seekers/employees** – primarily about the work–family reconciliation possibilities ensured by law to all workers and specially underlining employers with good practices concerning this issue. For example such awareness rising could be a part of employment counselling process and of the Centres for vocational guidance. Work life reconciliation issue can be added to different job searching skill workshops for job seekers, which are performed as a part of active labour market measures.
5. ESS should suggest some solutions for work-family problems that could be introduced in **short term** period as a solid motivational base for those solutions that need more **long term** organisational change.

6. ESS could **facilitate exchange of positive experience** in good work- family practices among employers as the most successful strategy to induce organisational change.
7. Active labour market policy is an efficient tool for labour market interventions part of which could support work life reconciliation in companies/organisations. Selected and targeted actions for the stimulation of work life reconciliation measures could be listed and co-financed by governmental active labour market policy.

8.8 SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES IN LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE/ FRAMEWORK

Slovenia has a series of strategic documents and legal basis such as the *Employment Relationships Act* (2002), *Parental Care and Family Benefit Act* (2001), *Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* (2002), National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2005 - 2013) and others which provide a rather high level of work and family life reconciliation in a formal sense. However, in practice the level of the opportunities for the reconciliation of work and family life is somewhat lower, as there are different practices applied from the procedure of selecting new employees to the flexibility of working time, hindering the reconciliation of both spheres of life.

From this aspect there is a need for a continuous care about making employers and employees aware about the importance and possibilities of reconciling work and family life. In addition to this, implementation of legal standards, ensuring reconciliation of work and family life, should be controlled.

Based on data both research employers/managers gave a number of suggestions and initiatives that would help them introduce and implement reconciliation policies and measures:

- Labour inspectorate should perform its role more strictly and punish employers for legal violations;
- Tax breaks for introduction of WLB measures and for additional benefits for employees such as medical check-ups, additional insurance, and redundancies;
- Reduction of contributions for part-time employees;
- Flexible work possibilities for older employees;
- Less regulated labour market;
- Subventions for social contributions and compensations in feminised companies;
- Lower age limit for part-time of older workers;
- Intervention fund that will help with subventions to employers in need.

Note

1. The Employment Service of Slovenia contracted this research, which was conducted by the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. The research group included Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela, Nevenka Černigoj Sadar, Barbara Lužar and Tina Dolenc.

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9. Case Study V - Sweden

Reconciliation of Work and Family Life in Sweden

Erna Hellberg

9.1 INTRODUCTION

9.1.1 Labour Market and Economic Development in Sweden

Employment levels for women and men in Sweden

According to Statistics Sweden (see <http://www.scb.se/>), the percentage of women on the Swedish labour market increased between 1970 (59% in ages 16-64 years) and 1990 (82% in ages 16-64 years). The percentage of men on the Swedish labour market was constant between 1970 (87% in ages 16-64 years) and 1990 (87% in ages 16-64 years) (Statistics Sweden, 2005).

In 1990, Sweden had its highest level of employment ever. A recession began shortly after 1990, when employment decreased and unemployment increased. Unemployment was highest in 1993, when the total level reached 8.2%, while the unemployment level was 9.7% for men and 6.6% for women.

After 1993 unemployment decreased until 2002, when the total level of unemployment was 4.0%, while the level was 4.4% for men and 3.6% for women. Unemployment then started increasing somewhat again. Even if unemployment decreased after 1993, the employment level in Sweden has not reached the same high level as in 1990.

In 2007, the relative figure of women aged 20–64 years in the labour force of Sweden was 81 per cent and the relative unemployment figure was 4 per cent. In the same year, the relative figure of men aged 20–64 years in the labour force was 87 percent and the relative unemployment figure 4 percent (Statistics Sweden, 2008).

Employment rates

According to Eurostat, the total employment rate for Sweden in 2007 was 74.2%, while the EU-25 total average was 65.8 percent. That year, the employment rate for men in Sweden was 76.5% while it was 71.8% for women. In 2007, the EU-25 average employment rate for men was 73.0% while it was 58.6% for women (Eurostat, 2008). The EU target for the employment rate of women was set at 60 percentage points.

Unemployment rates

According to Eurostat, the annual harmonized unemployment rate for Sweden in 2007 was 6.1%, compared to the EU-27 average of 7.1 percent (European Commission, 2008).

Part-time and full-time work

During the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the percentage of women working on a long-term part-time basis increased in Sweden. During all of the 1980s the percentage of women working full-time increased. In 2007, 66% of all gainfully employed women aged 20–64 were employed full-time, while 34% worked part-time. The corresponding figures for men were 90 and 10 percent respectively (Statistics Sweden, 2008).

Increased diversity in forms of employment

According to Tyrkkö (2002), the late 1990s and early 2000s in Sweden were characterized by major changes in workplaces, such as downsizing and internal organisation development. This led to the growth of different forms of employment with varying degrees of security for the employees, such as probationary employment, temporary contracts and employment per hour, among other things.

When analysing the job placements results after labour market programmes the Swedish PES has found that women, more often than men, get jobs with less secure employment forms (The Swedish Public Employment Service, 2007).

Recent economic development

According to Eurostat, the GDP growth in Sweden in 2006 was 4.2% and 2.65% in 2007. The GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (PPS) in Sweden was 121,400 in 2006 and 122.2 in 2007, i.e. considerably above the EU27 average.

For 2008, the GDP growth in Sweden was – 0.2%, compared to the EU27 average of 0.9 percent. The forecast for 2009 is a negative GDP development of -4.0% in Sweden and for the EU27 average also (Eurostat, 2008).

According to Statistics Sweden, the number of unemployed persons in Sweden in January 2009 was 351 000, an increase with 44 000 persons. The relative unemployment was 7.3% of the labour force, an increase with 0.9 percent. The relative unemployment for men was 7.5% while it was 7.0% for women. In January 2009, 41 000 more men were unemployed compared to the year before, an increase with 27,3 percent. The greatest increase of unemployment was among men in the ages 25-64 years, from 88 000 in January 2008 to 118 000 in January 2009 (Statistics Sweden, 2009).

In March 2009 the total unemployment rate in Sweden had risen to 8.3%, according to Statistics Sweden.

According to the latest forecast from The Swedish Public Employment Service (2009), unemployment is increasing fast, from 6.0% in February 2008 to 8.1% in February 2009 in ages 16-64 years (ILO definition). Young people have been hit hardest by increasing unemployment. The unemployment among young persons 20-24 years has increased from 14.4% in February 2008 to 20.1% in February 2009.

Unemployment increases on the whole labour market in Sweden but the increase is significantly higher for men, since traditionally male dominated sectors were hit hardest in the beginning of the economic recession. As the cut back on labour increases in the service sector, and especially in the public service sector, the rate of increase in unemployment among women will rise.

The average unemployment level for 2010 in Sweden is expected to reach 11 percent (The Swedish Public Employment Service, 2009).

9.1.2 Laws and Regulations on Parental Benefits and Parental Leave

Sweden has extensive laws and regulations concerning the rights and obligations of parents in working life, leave entitlements, parental benefits etc. The parental benefits stipulated by law are financed through the social security system.

The rights of parents in working life are regulated mainly in the following laws (for more information, see Appendix 1):

The Employment Protection Act, the Act on the Right to Leave of Absence for Urgent Family Reasons, Prohibition of Discrimination of Employees Working Part Time and Employees with Fixed-term Employment Act, the Parental Leave Act, the Public Insurance Act (especially Chapter 4 on parental benefits), the Social Insurance Act and the Discrimination Act, which came into effect in Sweden on January 1, 2009, replacing The Equal Opportunities Act and six other Acts against different forms of discrimination (sources: Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009 and The Government and the Government Offices of Sweden – see <http://www.sweden.gov.se/>).

The following parental benefit measures are stipulated through law and regulated in the Swedish social security system (for more information, see Appendix 2):

Maternity leave seven weeks prior to the estimated time for delivery and seven weeks after the delivery, **Paternity leave** – ten days' leave in connection with the birth of the child, **Full leave with or without parental benefit** until the child is 18 months old, **Parental benefit** payable for 480 days until the child is eight or comes to the end of the first year at school, **Partial leave with parental benefit**, i.e. reduced working hours combined with partial parental benefit, **Partial leave without parental benefit**, Leave with temporary parental benefit to look after a sick child. **Pension-qualifying time** is awarded for the first four years of a child's life, for one child at a time. There are special paternal benefit rules for adoptive parents (source: The Swedish Social Security Agency – see <http://www.forsakringskassan.se/>).

Gender equality bonus

In 2008 a gender equality bonus was introduced, with the aim to give incentives to share the parental leave as equally as possible between both parents.

Child-raising allowance

In 2008, the municipalities were given the right to introduce a municipal childraising allowance for children aged 1 to 3 of maximum SEK 3 000 per month. It is voluntary for municipalities to introduce the childraising allowance, which is paid for by the municipality (source: The Government and the Government Offices of Sweden – see <http://www.sweden.gov.se/>).

The provisions concerning parental leave and parental benefits in national legislation are supplemented through collective agreements between employers and trade unions.

Work-life reconciliation measures in Sweden are regulated in laws and collective agreements and handled by employers, employees and trade unions.

The Swedish Public Employment Service does not have the task to support employers to implement work-life balance measures. The Swedish PES has a uniform array of services, two for employers and seven for jobseekers. The services for employers are: 1. Recruiting new employees and 2. Pre-recruitment training.

9.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR STUDY

Information concerning employer attitudes to work-life reconciliation measures and employee requests for measures to make working life more family-friendly has been collected from available research and from reports published by The Gender Equality Ombudsman, from employers' organisations and trade unions.

No independent research has been carried out.

9.2.1 Available Research

Ms Arja Tyrkkö, Ph.D., wrote her doctoral thesis in 1999 on the subject of work-life reconciliation. The title of her dissertation is "The Intersection between Working Life and Parenthood. A Study of Life-Modes in Sweden in the 1990s". Dr Tyrkkö has also made an extensive bibliography of the research available at the time of her thesis in the article "The Intersection between Working Life and Parenthood: A Literature Review" (see Tyrkkö, 2002). The article is focussed on the research concerning the situation of parents in Swedish working life. It contains a survey of the questions at issue within the field of research, divided between different analytical levels. Some theories and models of integration of paid work and parenthood are presented together with a survey of approaches and methods used within the field of research.

The relationship between working life and parenthood is affected by several factors and research has focussed on the following analytical levels: The Society, The Local Community, The Workplace, The Family and The Individual.

An overview is given of various theoretical models that have been used by different researchers in the examination of the connection between paid work and parenthood. Among the models described are the life mode theory, where three modes of life have been identified; the life context theory, where everyday life has been studied from a gender point of view; the concept of "gender contract", which refers to an unspoken contract between the sexes, which regulates the gendered division of labour at different levels and in different contexts; and, the (family) life cycle perspective, which puts the strategy for allocating time between work and family in relation to different stages of parenthood.

Research shows that the gender segregation in working life affects the possibilities to integrate paid work and parenthood,

and confines both women's and men's freedom of action in the labour market and in the family.

Time allocation studies show that women and men work just as much, but distribute their time differently between paid and unpaid work. Nearly two-thirds of the unpaid work is carried out by women. Different forms of working hours restrictions as well as the extent and allocation of the working hours have an impact on the adjustment between work and family.

Men have extended their participation in the practical care of children at the same time as women have increased their participation in employment. This has reduced the differences between various strategies to integrate work and family, but the old patterns of a gendered division of labour exist parallel to new patterns.

The social/political ideology stresses equality and that parenthood and paid work should be possible to combine. Legislation within the area of parental leave is gender neutral. There are reports which show that the idea of sharing equally the responsibilities for child care and household work are deeply rooted, as a principle, but the actual division of labour between the sexes is still to a large extent gender determined.

9.3 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

9.3.1 Private Employers' Views and Perceptions on WLR Measures in Sweden

Views expressed by the Swedish social partners

The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, The National Section of CEEP in Sweden, The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO), The Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO), in response to a questionnaire on measures for reconciliation of professional and family life from BusinessEurope/CEEP/ETUC, stated that they consider that the existing Swedish legislation measures are adequate for the reconciliation of professional and family life for both men and women (Swedish Social Partners, 2007).

Parental leave entitlements, care facilities and flexible working arrangements for employees with small children are important issues for the social partners in Sweden, who describe it as their role to help employees achieve a balance between work and family, while at the same time satisfying the requirements of businesses. The creation of favourable workplaces for women and men is an important factor for recruitment.

The provisions concerning parental leave and parental benefits in national legislation are supplemented and improved through collective agreements and company policies, with various provisions that are more advantageous compared to

legislation, such as supplementary parental pay, and flexible working arrangements.

There is a number of different work schedule models in the Swedish labour market, based both on the needs of businesses and on the needs of employees, aimed to facilitate the reconciliation between work and family. Flexible working hours are applied by companies whose operations make it possible. The use of telework, working from home, scheduling meetings at times that are suitable also for parents with small children and motivating managers to create a “work-life-balance” culture are other examples of what is done to create family-friendly workplaces.

There are many collective agreements, relating to supplementary parental pay, in the Swedish labour market. In the public sector there is a standardized agreement, according to which all employees are covered by parental leave pay. In the private sector there is a large number of agreements, and provisions for supplementary parental pay vary between different branches and occupational groups. In addition to that, there are local agreements which are more generous than the collective agreement for the sector in question.

The views of The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise¹

In the report *Women and Labour Market, Manual for Gender Equality – From the Perspective of The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise*, Håkan Eriksson (2005) points out that gender equality has improved over time. The share of women among managers in private enterprises, which was 9 percent in 1992, had increased to 31 percent in 2004. Swedish women have steadily advanced their positions in society generally, in education and in working life. This is the result of the free choice of individuals in interaction with actively interested enterprises. The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise considers that it is important to identify and remove obstacles which stand in the way of equal opportunities. A lack of gender equality is an impediment to the free choice of individuals, which is seen as a key factor for increased gender equality in the labour market.

Eriksson describes a number of obstacles to an increase of women in leading positions. Time for work and family is one of them. Nine out of ten Swedish women in management positions have children. In families where both the woman and the man are making careers, it is practically impossible for the couple to share household duties equally while working full-time and advancing to leading positions on the job. Swedish women hired household help to a much lesser degree, compared to German and French women, in 2005. Only families with very good incomes could afford it. The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise identified that as an obstacle for women who want to commit themselves to making a career.

The level of parental benefits is another problem. It covers 80 percent of income, up to a certain level. The parent who has a monthly wage above that level will lose more than 20 percent of his/her income when taking parental leave. Families naturally choose that the partner with the higher income (usually the man) should do the paid work, while the partner with the lower income takes a greater responsibility for the unpaid work. The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise points out that it is important to remove economic obstacles, to give parents a real choice about how they want to share parental benefits between them.

Views expressed by The Federation of Private Enterprises²

The Federation of Private Enterprises describes the marked difference between entrepreneurs and employees when it comes to their use of benefits from the social security system. The report *Others Can Be More Secure – The Social Security System and Small Enterprises* (see The Federation of Private Enterprises, 2007) is based on material produced by Statistics Sweden, mainly the *Labour Force Survey* of 2005.

Both male and female entrepreneurs are decidedly less absent from work due to illness, compared to employees. Male entrepreneurs were absent due to illness 2,9 % of their normal working time, compared to 4 % for male employees. Female entrepreneurs were absent due to illness 3,5 % of their normal working time, compared to 6,2 % for female employees.

There are also considerable differences in the use of parental leave. Female entrepreneurs are absent for parental leave 11,8 % of their normal working time, only half of the 22,3 % parental leave that is taken by female employees. Male entrepreneurs take parental leave 1,4 % of their normal working time, i.e. about a third of the 4,5 % parental leave taken by male employees.

It is difficult for entrepreneurs to be absent from their business for any length of time. Even short periods of absence from work due to illness often result in considerable financial setbacks, especially for small entrepreneurs. The sickness benefit covers about 80 % of their own wage, up to a certain level, but beside that they have to cover the costs of the business. If an entrepreneur were to take parental leave for a year, he or she might not have a business to come back to.

Entrepreneurs use less sickness benefits, parental benefits and unemployment insurance, compared to employees, but help finance the system to the same degree.

The Federation of Private Enterprises have argued that the social security system needs to be reviewed: entrepreneurs should be given the choice to refrain from using parts of the social security system in exchange for lower contributions.

9.3.2 Specific WLR Requests from Employees in Sweden

Parenthood, overview of facts and conditions in Sweden 2006

Within the frame of the project “children AND work”, The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman in 2003 and 2004 produced an overview of legislation, reports, surveys, research and statistics concerning parenthood and working life. The report *Parenthood, Overview of Facts and Present Situation* (see The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, 2006) also summarizes the views of the Swedish social partners on work-life reconciliation. The report was updated during 2006.

Research results show that long periods of parental leave have negative effects on career and pay prospects, especially for women. Men take only about a 20 percent share of the total used number of parental leave days. About 60 percent of men had taken no parental leave at all during their child's first year. One consequence of the unequal use of parental benefits is that women of fertile age risk disadvantageous treatment in working life, irrespective of whether they plan to have children or not.

The picture of the attitudes of employers towards parenthood is slightly contradictory. Many employees expect, and experience, that parental leave will have negative effects on their career and pay prospects. And there is a risk that employers may apply different strategies to compensate themselves for the extra costs associated with parenthood: women get lower wages, men are preferred before women at recruitment – to avoid absence periods from work – or women are given jobs where they are easily replaced. On the other hand, many employers have provisions for supplementary parental pay, but this opportunity is unknown by many employees.

One often hears that fathers cannot take more parental leave because the family would lose too much money. Families with high incomes tend to lose more money if the father takes a larger share of the parental leave, provided that he earns more than the mother. In families with low incomes, the loss of money would be marginal. However, both the share of men taking parental leave and the length of their parental leave increase with the level of the male's income, as shown by statistics from The Swedish Social Security Agency. Men with low income take fewer days of parental leave, even though the family would lose less. Research shows that economic arguments are used to explain why men do not take parental leave, both when he earns more than his partner (“we would lose so much income”) and when he earns less (“the parental benefit would be too low”). Traditional choices are made irrespective of the actual economic effect.

According to a survey made by the Swedish Social Security Agency, parents are satisfied with mothers taking the greater responsibility for children and household, an attitude which

differs from the political goal that parental leave should be shared equally. Parents seldom connect their unequal division of parental leave with the inequality in working life.

Child friendly work-life

In the report *Child Friendly Worklife* (see Unionen, 2008), the trade union Unionen³ presents the results of a survey among 1 800 members. Almost 30 percent of parents are of the opinion that it is very, or rather, difficult to combine working life and parenthood. The main conclusion is that working life is NOT child friendly.

30 percent of women in the survey had been asked in job interviews if they planned to have children. 11 percent of the men had been asked the same question.

Almost eight out of ten reported that their employer was very, or rather, positive when being told that the employee was going to become a parent. In spite of this, 14 percent of the women felt that they were being disadvantageously treated during pregnancy already.

Many employees with small children experienced problems when they returned to work after a period of parental leave. Ten percent had met with disadvantageous treatment, such as slow pay development, fewer training and career opportunities, being transferred to other tasks or another job, and a negative attitude from the employer.

Working hours restrictions and demands for overtime work often cause problems, for instance when leaving/fetching children. Jobs which include journeys and over-night stays are difficult to combine with parenthood.

One out of four mention flexible work-time arrangements, increased influence over work schedules, working from home, work organised and adapted to the need of parents, as important work-life balance measures. Meetings scheduled at “parent-friendly” times, routines for contacts with employees on parental leave and better planning for their return to work are other suggestions.

Decrease in time worked after parental leave

In 2005, Lena Westerlund, Jenny Lindblad and Mats Larsson examined how much parents work after parental leave. The report *Parental Leave and Time Worked – How Much do Parents Work after Parental Leave* (see Westerlund, Lindblad & Larsson, 2005) was commissioned and published by LO, The Swedish Trade Union Confederation⁴.

The results show that the share of women in blue collar jobs in the public sector, which was as low as 39 percent before parental leave, decreased to only 29 percent after parental leave. The share of women in white collar jobs in the public sector was 84 percent before parental leave and decreased drastically to 41 percent after parental leave.

The hours worked by men are hardly affected at all by parental leave, neither in blue collar jobs nor in white collar jobs. Parental leave has no effect on the share of men who work full-time in the private sector, while the share of men who work full-time in the public sector decreases slightly after parental leave.

Before parental leave, the amount of time worked is mainly determined by differences in social class, while sex is the determining factor after parental leave. Women decrease their working time after parental leave, while men hardly do so at all. Since women take the main part of the responsibility for children and unpaid household work, their position on the labour market is weakened.

LO indicates a number of measures which would be needed to equalize the very different conditions for women and men, among those:

- The social partners in the labour market must take responsibility for lessening the *pay gap* between women and men.
- The number of *involuntary temporary jobs* must be decreased. It is far more common for women to get only temporary jobs, compared to men.
- LO argues that the *right to a full-time job* should be confirmed by law. Roughly 170 000 women work part-time, not by their own choice but because some employers offer only part-time jobs.
- LO argues that *one third of parental benefits* by law should be reserved for the father, one third for the mother. More equally shared parent responsibilities would contribute to more equal conditions in working life and less negative treatment of working mothers.

Kids and career

The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers⁵ carried out a member survey on parental leave during 2004. The results are presented in the report *Kids and Career* (see The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, 2005):

Eight of ten male engineers who took less than 4 months leave would take longer parental leave if benefits were higher. A raise in the level of parental insurance or an increase in supplementary parental pay from employers would make the use of parental leave longer and more gender equal.

Even if fathers generally take shorter leave than mothers, responsibilities for somewhat older children are shared almost evenly between the parents, for example leaving/fetching the children and taking leave to care for a sick child.

About 50 percent of the women and 25 percent of the men stated that parental leave had a negative impact on their pay development and career opportunities.

Almost 90 percent stated that employers have a positive attitude towards parental leave and almost 80 percent said

that their manager had an equally positive attitude. In spite of that, 50 percent stated that employers do not do enough to facilitate work-life reconciliation among their employees.

Requests for reconciliation measures included flexible work-time arrangements, working from home, telework, scheduling meetings at times that can be combined with leaving and fetching children, and part-time work.

The hidden "child effect" 2008

Statistician Lena Orpana at TCO, The Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees⁶, has examined what happens to wages when employees get children (see Öfverberg Orpana, 2008). She found a marked relation between, wages, sex and parenthood.

Having children and a family tends to have a different impact on the wages of women and men, respectively. Men with family and children have higher average wages compared to men who do not have children or who are single fathers. Women have lower wages, compared to men, whether they have children or not. Women who have children have significantly lower wages compared to women who don't. Single mothers have the lowest wages of all groups on the labour market.

Women who become parents take the greater part of the parental leave and decrease their hours of work, which enables fathers of small children to continue their careers and increase their wages. Men with family and small children work full-time and overtime to the largest extent, compared to other groups on the labour market.

When women get children, their job and wage prospects deteriorate. When men get children, it has quite the opposite effect on career and pay. This effect of parenthood – the "child effect", as Ms Orpana designates it – shows that working life in Sweden is still characterised by traditional attitudes. Being a mother usually has a negative effect on pay development, even in higher wage levels, while being a father has a positive effect.

In 2004 TCO proposed that a "gender equality bonus" should be introduced, to motivate parents to share leave and benefit entitlements more equally. Both men and women should be able to combine work and family life on the same terms. Long-term efforts are needed to change attitudes and achieve a more equal and family-friendly working life.

9.3.3 Stumbling Blocks faced by Private Employers when Implementing WLR Measures

Inferences can be drawn from reports about employer attitudes and employee requests for reconciliation measures concerning stumbling blocks faced by private employers in Sweden when implementing WLR measures.

The reconciliation between work and family calls for possibilities to adapt working hours to family duties. This might present varying degrees of difficulties for employers,

depending on the kind of production operations that prevail in the company. Operations may require strict work schedules, shiftwork or inconvenient working hours, for instance.

Avoiding journeys or conferences with overnight stays, compulsory work activities late in the day or during weekends, and scheduling meetings at times that are suitable for parents with small children may restrict employers' possibilities to plan work in a way that satisfies business requirements.

Absence from work at short notice to care for a sick child may cause difficulties at the workplace, especially if the employee has some kind of key function.

9.3.4 WLR Measures Offered by Private Employers in Sweden

Employer experiences of WLR measures – results from a survey

In 2003, The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman carried out a survey among employers known for good work-life balance measures. The questionnaire was sent to 53 employers and 39 responded. The results are presented in the report *“A Positive Attitude from the Management is Crucial...”, Employer Experiences of Making It Easier for Employees to Reconcile Work and Parenthood – Some Learning Examples* (see The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, 2003).

Most employers described their attitude to parenthood, as also to parental leave, as positive or very positive. More than half of the employers stated that work-life balance measures led to satisfied employees and a good working atmosphere, and also made it easier to recruit young, well-educated employees.

The attitude, and actions, of employers were found to be the most decisive factors for the success of work-life balance measures at the workplace.

The most commonly mentioned obstacles to reconciling work and parenthood are the working hours (work schedules, shiftwork, inconvenient working hours, overtime work), heavy workload, journeys or conferences with overnight stays, compulsory meetings late in the day or during weekends.

Flexitime, working from home, supplementary parental pay, keeping contact with employees during parental leave, and following up pay development in connection with parental leave are the reconciliation measures most frequently used by the employers. Some employers mention other measures, such as “Strategy for Life Balance”, subsidized household services, nursing table available at the workplace, family-friendly holiday opportunities.

Examples and suggestions from The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise

In their 2006 report *This is How We Can Create the Workplace of the Future – Family-Friendly for Both Women and Men*, The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (2006) presents good examples of family-friendly workplaces from small, middle-size and big companies. The report also contains a number of suggestions about what employers can do to create favourable workplaces for both women and men. Some examples are:

- Create a family policy and show it up on the company web site, in brochures and at recruitment activities
- Motivate men to take parental leave
- Supplementary parental pay
- Keep contact with employees during parental leave, invite them to events at the workplace
- “Return-to-work”-programme for employees on parental leave, follow-up interviews before and after parental leave
- Guarantee the same job position and pay as before parental leave
- Offer flexibility measures such as flexitime, part-time work, compressed working week
- Adapt meetings in time and place to the needs of parents working from home part of the time
- “Strategy for Life Balance”-policy, make managers responsible for the dissemination and implementation among employees
- Subsidized household services
- Career development programmes aimed at women
- Set goals for the share of women on manager positions, in management groups, on specialist jobs, in high pay levels, in staff training programmes etc.
- Recruitment policy to increase the share of women, generally or on manager positions, specialist jobs etc.

9.3.5 Suggestions/Recommendations for New PES Services/Structures

Work-life reconciliation measures in Sweden are regulated in laws and in the Swedish social security system. The provisions concerning parental leave and parental benefits in national legislation are supplemented through collective agreements between employers and trade unions. The implementation of work-life reconciliation measures are handled at the workplaces by employers, employees and trade unions, using the provisions in the Swedish social security system, in collective agreements and company policies.

As mentioned earlier (see section 3.1.1), the social partners consider that the existing Swedish legislation measures are adequate for the reconciliation of professional and family life for both men and women.

There have been no requests from local private or public employers to the Swedish PES for services or support, to assist them in implementing effective work-life reconciliation measures at their workplace.

There have been no requests or suggestions for new services or structures to be offered by the the Swedish PES from employer organisations, for instance The Federation of Private Enterprises or The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise.

It is presently not a task for the Swedish Public Employment Service to support employers to implement work-life balance measures, and no change in that direction is foreseen.

9.3.6 Suggestions/Recommendations for Changes in Legislative Structure/Framework

The government report *Social Security System for Entrepreneurs* (see Commission of Inquiry on Social Security System for Entrepreneurs, 2008) has proposed a number of changes in the social security system for entrepreneurs, among them:

- entrepreneurs shall be able to choose a longer waiting period before sickness benefit is paid, against a reduction of their social security contributions,
- sickness benefit should be computed on the average income from the two best of the three last income tax assessments,
- it shall be possible to combine temporary parental benefit with gainful employment, if the entrepreneur parent arranges for care of the sick child through purchase of home services at reduced tax level, in order to be able to continue working.

9.3.7 Suggestions and Recommendations Directed at Policy-Makers

At this point, there are no suggestions or recommendations, directed at policy-makers, for legislative changes to ease the burdens of private employers to implement WLR measures.

As described earlier, the social partners are of the opinion that the existing Swedish legislation measures are adequate for the reconciliation of professional and family life for both men and women.

The social partners play an active part in the legislative process. Employers' organisations and trade unions regularly scrutinise how laws, regulations and different conditions in working life and society affect their members. The results are used to form proposals for improvements, which sometimes lead to changes in the legislation. Three examples are found in this report.

One is the introduction of the gender equality bonus, a concept which originally came from TCO (The Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees).

Another example concerns the government's proposal for changes in the social security system for entrepreneurs. Based on their study of how entrepreneurs avail themselves of, and contribute to, benefits from the social security system, The Federation of Private Enterprises has worked systematically to create an opinion for a review of the social security system for entrepreneurs.

The third example is the argument from The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise that it ought to be made easier and more affordable to hire household help in Sweden. The Government has since then introduced more advantageous tax rules for purchase of household services.

9.4 CONCLUSION

Sweden has extensive laws and regulations concerning the rights and obligations of parents in working life, parental benefits, leave entitlements etc. Through the social security system, parental benefits cover 80 percent of income, up to a certain level.

Most employers describe their attitude to parenthood and to parental leave as positive or very positive. Many employers also state that work-life balance measures and family-friendly workplaces, besides leading to satisfied employees and a good working atmosphere, are important factors for recruitment.

In different surveys, a majority of employees report that their employers have expressed a very, or rather, positive attitude when being told that the employee was going to become a parent.

The work-life reconciliation measures offered by private employers measures coincide to a large degree with the kind of measures requested by employees.

In spite of this, in some surveys as much as 50 percent of employees stated that employers do not do enough to facilitate the combination of work and family.

Results from surveys show that about 50 percent of women and 25 percent of men had experienced that parental leave had had a negative impact on their pay development and career opportunities. Many employees with small children reported negative attitudes from employers.

It is apparent that work-life reconciliation measures, as put into practice, do not correspond fully with company policies for family-friendly workplaces. A reasonable conclusion is that employer/manager attitudes to parenthood and parental leave are positive *in principle*, but that the requirements of the business operations take priority over parents' needs for flexible work arrangements.

Dr. Arja Tyrkkö (2002) has described a still prevalent attitude to parenthood in working life in this way:

The research results mentioned in this article show without exception that working life and family life are closely integrated at a society level, an organizational level and at

the individual level. In working life organizations, however, parenthood is often looked upon as an individual problem, and by tradition, in the first place a female problem. It is something the individuals have to take care of themselves. For future research it is an important task to study which institutional and organizational solutions lead to a more family-friendly labour market practice. (p. 119)

Tyrkkö (2002) also writes:

Different types of parental leave and the right to work part-time until the youngest child is eight years old are the most important instruments for parents in Sweden to adjust their working life to parenthood. The parents' insurance has contributed to keep women in the labour market, as it reduces the pressure on women to choose between motherhood and paid work. (p. 118)

Notes

1. The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise is a business federation representing 50 member organizations and 54,000 member companies with some 1.5 million employees.
2. The Federation of Private Enterprises is an organisation which represents 70 000 entrepreneurs who own their own businesses, large and small.
3. Unionen is a white-collar trade union on the private labour market with approximately 500 000 members in over 65 000 companies and organisations, from major international groups to small family companies in a large number of labour market sectors.
4. LO, The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, is the central organisation for 15 affiliates which organise workers within both the private and the public sectors. Together, the 15 affiliates have about 1 700 000 members of whom about 770 000 are women.
5. The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers is a network for graduate engineers with about 120,000 members. One of the goals of the organisation is to make easier for small and mid-size companies to employ engineers.
6. TCO, The Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees, comprises 16 affiliated trade unions with 1.2 million members, about half in the private and half in the public sector. Members work in all parts of the labour market, such as schools, healthcare, trade, media, police, industry, IT and telecom.

APPENDIX 1

Swedish laws regulating the rights of parents in working life:

Employment Protection Act (SFS 1982:80). In 2006, employment protection for employees on parental leave was strengthened, so that if notice of termination owing to shortage of work is given, the period of notice shall not start to run until the employee has completely or partially resumed work.

Act on the Right to Leave of Absence for Urgent Family Reasons (SFS 1998:209).

Prohibition of Discrimination of Employees Working Part Time and Employees with Fixed-term Employment Act (SFS 2002:29). The purpose of this Act is to combat discrimination of employees working part time and employees with fixed-term employment as regards pay and other terms and conditions.

Parental Leave Act (SFS 1995:584). In 2006, the prohibition of disfavourable treatment for reasons related to parental leave was introduced in this Act. An employer may not disfavour an employee as regards promotion, training, pay or other terms of employment.

Public Insurance Act (SFS 1962:381), especially Chapter 4 on parental benefits.

Social Insurance Act (SFS 1999:799).

A new Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567) came into effect in Sweden on January 1, 2009, replacing The Equal Opportunities Act and six other Acts against different forms of discrimination. The purpose of the new Discrimination Act is to combat discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. The Act requires employers to actively promote equal rights and opportunities in working life regardless of sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief. Employers are to help enable both female and male employees to combine employment and parenthood. Employers and employees are in particular to endeavour to equalise and prevent differences in pay and other terms of employment between women and men who perform work which is to be regarded as equal or of equal value. They are also to promote equal pay growth opportunities for women and men (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009).

(source: The Government and the Government Offices of Sweden – see <http://www.sweden.gov.se/>).

APPENDIX 2

Parental benefits in Sweden, stipulated by law

Maternity leave

A female employee is entitled to full leave in connection with her child's birth during a continuous period of at least seven weeks prior to the estimated time for delivery and seven weeks after the delivery. The employee is also entitled to be on leave for breast feeding the child. Maternity leave need not be taken in conjunction with the payment of parental benefit.

Paternity leave

A male employee who has recently become a father is entitled to ten days' leave on temporary parental benefit in connection with the birth of the child. These ten days may be taken within sixty days of when the child comes home from the hospital. Adoptive parents are eligible for five days each, unless they have agreed to divide the days up otherwise. These days may be taken within sixty days after the child has entered their care.

Full leave with or without parental benefit

A parent is entitled to full leave for the care of a child until the child reaches 18 months, irrespective of whether the parent receives parental benefit. In addition, a parent is entitled to full leave during the period when the parent receives full parental benefit. With respect to an employee who has adopted a child, the eighteen month period is instead counted from the time when the employee received the child into her or his care.

Parental benefit is payable for 480 days for children born in 2002 or later and for 450 days for children born before 2002. The days of parental benefit are always shared equally between both parents. One parent may give up the right to parental benefit to the other parent, apart from 30 days for children born before 2002 and 60 days for children born in 2002 or later.

Parental benefit may be drawn until the child reaches the age of eight or when the child comes to the end of his or her first year at school. One can choose to draw full, three-quarters, half, one quarter or one-eighth parental benefit.

Partial leave with parental benefit

Leave for a parent in the form of a reduction of normal working hours by three quarters, one half, one quarter or one eighth while the parent has three quarters, one half, one quarter or one eighth parental benefit respectively.

Partial leave without parental benefit

A parent is entitled to a reduction of the normal working hours by up to one quarter for the care of a child which has not yet reached the age of eight years or which is older but has not yet concluded its first year of school.

Leave with temporary parental benefit

An employee is entitled to leave during the period in which the employee receives temporary parental benefit. A parent is entitled to take leave to care for her or his child in circumstances where the ordinary care provider has become sick or contagious, notwithstanding that the parent is not entitled to temporary parental leave because the child is younger than 240 days.

A parent who has to stay at home from work in order to look after a sick child under the age of twelve may be entitled to temporary parental benefit. This also applies if the person who normally looks after the child falls ill. Parents together are eligible for temporary parental benefit for 60 days per child and year. After these 60 days have been used up, a further 60 days can be taken out. One can also draw temporary parental benefit for visits to a doctor or a child healthcare centre.

Parents can also draw temporary parental benefit for children who are 12 and below the age of 16. This may be the case if the child, when ill, is in special need of care and supervision. A certificate from a doctor that the child is in special need of care and supervision is required.

Pension-qualifying time for "child years"

When an employee takes parental leave or partial leave to care for a child, this has an impact on how much pension-qualifying income the person gets. Pension-qualifying time for "child years" is a way of compensating parents for this. Pension-qualifying time is awarded for the first four years of a child's life, irrespective of whether the parent takes parental leave or not. Pension-qualifying "child time" is only awarded for one child at a time. Adoptive parents can be awarded pension-qualifying time for "child years" for the first four years that they have care of the child, up to the age of ten years.

The pension-qualifying time for "child years" is automatically awarded to the parent who has the smaller income during a year, unless the parents notify the Swedish Social Insurance Agency otherwise (The Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2008).

"Gender equality bonus"

In 2008 a "gender equality bonus" was introduced. This bonus aims to give incentives to share the parental leave as equally as possible between both parents. The reason for this is that by far the greatest part of parental leave is taken by women. The greatest proportion of parents working part-time to care for children are also women. The "gender equality bonus" only applies if the parent who has taken the most parental benefits works or studies while the other parent is on parental leave. The maximum bonus is SEK 3 000 per month, a total of SEK 13 500. The "gender equality bonus" is deposited in the tax account.

Child raising allowance

In 2008, the municipalities were given the right to introduce a municipal childraising allowance for children aged 1 to 3 of maximum SEK 3 000 per month. This childcare subsidy is available only after a total of 250 entire days of parental benefits have been paid for the child. It is voluntary for municipalities to introduce the childraising allowance, which is paid for by the municipality (source: The Government and the Government Offices of Sweden – see <http://www.sweden.gov.se/>).

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10. Major Research Findings in Work-Life Balance: A Transnational Perspective

Work-Life Balance is considered as one of the four main pillars which form the basis for quality of work and employment, together with career and employment status, health and well-being at work and career development. Although there is no “one size fits all” solution to Work-Life Balance measures, it emerges that the application and development of these practices can proceed across various sectors, organisations of very different sizes, each encountering their own stumbling blocks, but ultimately reaching the goal of rendering beneficial returns both to the Employer and to the Employee. Such is the case of the five Partner Countries participating in this Project namely, Cyprus, Iceland, Malta, Slovenia and Sweden.

10.1 Views and Perceptions of Different Countries on Work-Life Balance Measures

Cyprus is a country where the dominance of Micro Enterprises is absolute, which makes Work-Life Balance policies a significant challenge. Consequently, the introduction of flexible working time arrangements is reported in the Country Report as ‘a relatively recent phenomenon’.

In Iceland, extensive legal framework regulates rights and obligations of both employers and employees and guarantees equal rights of men and women. However these rights could be extended further by new legislation and by amending existing laws. Awareness of the significance of prescribed Work-Life Reconciliation practices is somewhat low in Iceland and the means for Work-Life Balance measures is generally informal.

Malta’s Employment and Industrial Relations Act enhances the general quality of life by balancing work and non-work obligations, and addresses both the gender gap and the skills gap in the Maltese labour market. Acting as a model employer, the Maltese Government introduced an extension

of the measures stipulated and granted by the Act, within the Civil Service, same extension to be applied voluntarily by the private sector. To this end Maltese trade unions have committed themselves to strive towards the introduction of Work-Life Balance in collective agreements.

From the Research Study conducted in Slovenia for the purpose of this Report, it results that in the majority of companies contacted, no measures for reconciliation of work and family life are present and the commitment of trade unions to reconciliation issues in this country is closely related to the size of the company; it results that in bigger companies, trade unions are more often actively involved in the promotion of reconciliation policies and measures.

Work-Life Reconciliation measures in Sweden are regulated by Law and the Swedish Social Security system. In response to a survey questionnaire formerly conducted in 2007, the Swedish Social Partners stated that they consider the existing Swedish legislation measures as adequate for the reconciliation of professional and family life for both men and women.

10.2 Work-Life Balance Requests and Demands by Employees

At their workplace, employees request and demand: a) practices that can help them to better manage and balance work and private life demands through the utilisation of flexible working arrangements and the provision of supportive arrangements by way of information and training and b) practices that ease caring responsibilities from workers and which include additional family related leave, beyond statutory minimums, and employer support with regard to childcare arrangements.

In the Research Study conducted by Slovenia in October 2008, Slovenian Employers and HR Managers reported that employees in their organisations most often demanded the following statutory defined forms of reconciliation, namely, parental leave, part-time work, flexible work time, home work, paternal leave, sick leave, and schooling. Other measures that are above the statutory defined ones, such as a kindergarten in company, career break, financial support for childcare, afternoon childcare facilities, additional time-off, flexible schedules and additional pension insurance are measures/policies of reconciliation in which employees have shown an interest. Slovenian Companies, in a bid to be considered attractive employers, regard the introduction of Work-Life Balance measures as a means of increasing the satisfaction and the trust of employees and their benefits; such measures improve health, reduce absenteeism and help retain core and talented personnel on the workforce.

Similar to Slovenian Employers, Maltese Private Sector Employers value the acquisition of motivated employees and retention of good, talented and trained workers on their payroll, through the adoption of such measures. In line with the take-up of part-time as the most common form of flexible working arrangement across the EU15 countries, Maltese Private Sector employees choose this measure most when requesting specific Work-Life Balance measures, followed by reduced working hours and flexi-time.

In Sweden, the implementation of Work-Life Reconciliation measures is regulated by Law and handled at the workplaces by employers, employees and trade unions, using the provisions in the Swedish social security system, in collective agreements and company policies. Similar to the finding of the Slovenian Research Study, parental leave entitlements and flexible working arrangements, coupled with care facilities, are the most important issues for the social partners in this country.

The take-up rate by Icelandic fathers of paternity leave standing over 90%, the highest in the world, is evident proof that the general workforce and employers in this country highly accept paternity and maternity leave. Affordable high quality day-care facilities for children run by the municipalities, with supply meeting the general demand, is another measure which is taken care of by public means and policies, thus relieving pressure and costs from the Icelandic individual employer.

It is reported in the Research Study submitted by Cyprus that, in this country, one out of three employees have difficulty in balancing work and life and the most important initiative for employees for achieving Work-Life Balance is paid parental leave, followed by flexible working hours. Greater flexibility in work-time schedules, the provision of childcare facilities having extended hours, and offering more good quality, affordable or partially cost subsidized by Government, and

better job security, are amongst the demands that are posed by the employees in Cyprus.

10.3 Stumbling Blocks faced by Private Sector Employers and Demands for the Adoption of WLB Measures

Employers gauge the success of the adoption of Work-Life Balance arrangements not only from the perspective of attaining a happier workforce, higher staff retention and improved employee motivation but also on how these practices impact upon the business, namely in terms of cost, staff substitution and re-arrangement of people, time and workloads, and the knowledge required by means of training in the implementation of such policies. These are all regarded as challenges which correspond to the stumbling blocks indicated by participating Maltese Private Sector employers in the Research Study.

In Sweden, the adaptation of working hours to family duties might present varying degrees of difficulties for employers, depending on the kind of production operations that prevail in the company. Planning work to meet business requirements can be restricted by the avoidance of: journeys or conferences with overnight stays, compulsory work activities late in the day or during weekends, and the scheduling of meetings at times that are suitable for parents with small children. The absence from work at short notice to care for a sick child may cause difficulties at the workplace, especially if the employee has some kind of key function.

Likewise, Slovenian managers and employers' representatives also reported that, although they agree that Work-Life Balance measures are beneficial to employees, they have experienced a negative impact on the company's productivity and efficiency in the adoption of such measures as part-time work, job sharing, career break, compressed week, additional leave, distant work or work from home.

Always bearing in mind the general flexible work culture in Iceland, no serious problems with Work-Life Balance, as far as the parental role of employees is concerned, resulted from the Survey and Interviews conducted with employers in this country. However a high degree of work-life conflicts was experienced by employers in relation to parents with older children, children after the age of six, when they enter primary school. Suggestions of threefold reconciliation process were made in a number of cases; some kind of work-life-school balance measures. Stumbling blocks identified were mainly cost-related and the effort required in planning and managing work to maintain efficiency levels.

It is stated in the Cyprus Country Report that the reconciliation of work and family life is absent from the agenda of enterprises, and the large majority of these have no policy or practice for the facilitation of workers who have many family responsibilities. Although reductions in working costs,

the increase in work productivity and the retention of precious workers in the potential of the enterprise are claimed to be the more powerful motives that prompt enterprises to adopt flexible forms of employment, the main obstacle for the employers in Cyprus in the adoption of these measures is the financial cost that may be incurred. Employers also indicated that they do not know how to develop and implement policies and arrangements for Work-Life Reconciliation. Fear of losing control over employee working hours, after the application of these measures, is another stumbling block that employers reported.

A number of demands were presented by the employers of different nationalities. The Icelandic employers are of the opinion that Work-Life Balance measures should be guaranteed by the State by means of tax-relief to families

in order to enable them to cut working hours, so that the individual employer is relieved of eventual demands from employees for a higher degree of flexibility. On the other hand, Maltese employers favour the concession of tax credits or financial benefits, by the Government, to those employers who introduce flexible work arrangements. The setting up of childcare centres at the place of work, or close to the place of work, with Government subsidization, the possibility of choosing extended working hours (time of start and finish), the extension of school hours to tally with office hours, more flexibility in parental leave and the revision of stores' opening hours were other popular demands that resulted from the Reports submitted by the five participating Partner Countries in this Project.

11. Recommendations for Enhanced Work-Life Balance in the Private Sector: The Role of the Public Employment Service Organisation

The main mission of Public Employment Services is to offer easy access to the labour market at local, national and European level to all job-seekers, employers and companies, specializing in staff recruitment. To this end, PES provides comprehensive information on available jobs and job-seekers, and gives assistance in job searches and staff recruitment. Through their mission, PESs ensure that no jobseeker is marginalized by a lack of adequate assistance, and the PES works with employers to achieve the economic and social objectives of integrating workers into the labour market.

The analysis of the Case Studies, submitted by the five participating Partner Countries, leads to one common finding, the existing lack of awareness in the private sector considered as the major stumbling block that PES has to conquer in its strive towards a better Work-Life Balance in the private sector itself, resulting in the social and economic development of the different communities. Working towards a positive outcome, it is recommended that PES adopts a three-fold approach in its contribution, namely:

Informative

Advisory

Consultative

A. PES: An “informative agent”, towards a better Work-Life Balance in the private sector

In the analysis it results that Cyprus, Iceland, Malta and Slovenia, firmly agree that it is imperative that respective PESs embark on an “Information campaign” to improve employers’ knowledge and perceptions in this field. It also results, from the Swedish Case Study, that no requests for services or support were received by the Swedish PES to assist them in the implementation of effective Work-Life Balance measures at their workplace. In the other Case Studies, employers

are described as ‘the primary change actors in the field’ who ‘seem to recognize their own lack of knowledge about work-life measures’ and it is recommended that PES answers the expectations of employers and managers by playing ‘a more active role in the promotion and implementation of reconciliation measures’.

1. Promoting awareness

Through the implementation of an effective WLB strategy campaign, PES would reach out to inform private sector employers that work and non-work activities are compatible and their proper balance can render a happier workforce, in turn leading to potential growth within the enterprise. It is envisaged by participating Partner Countries that the organization of seminars, the promotion of good practice in Work-Life Reconciliation on PES promotion spaces, such as the website, publicity boards in PES offices, and employment fairs, are suggestions which should be taken into consideration. The introduction and organization of an annual “Work-Life Balance Week”, during which promotional activities are presented to help raise awareness of Work-Life Balance issues to the general public, was another suggestion that was put forth.

2. Adapting to change

The strategic objective of the “Informative campaign” has to seek to change the attitudes and perceptions of employers to WLB. The Slovenian Case Study recommends that such promotion should be targeted to overcome outdated stereotypes on optimal work organization, gender work and care roles. This campaign has to centre on how employers can adapt to change and offer flexible work practices in their respective companies.

a. Promoting the range of WLB Measures available

Drawing on experiences of WLB measures' implementation in specific companies and the public sector, PES would seek to publicise these achievements in the local media, thus strengthening the positive image that can be derived from the introduction of these measures. The endeavour by Public Employment Services to facilitate the exchange between employers, of positive experience in good work-family practices, is considered as the most successful strategy to induce organizational change. The initiative to reward companies that do well in offering WLB measures is also indicated as a viable incentive in the promotion of the range of WLB Measures. Furthermore, it is recommended that PES lead with good example and uphold exemplary WLB arrangements within their frame of operation.

B. PES: An “advisory agent”, towards a better Work-Life Balance in the private sector

The Case Study submitted by Cyprus points out that the main stumbling block for the employers in Cyprus was the inability and lack of knowledge of appropriate ways to introduce and apply the measures, and the costs incurred in the process. This challenge is also faced by other participating Partner Countries and to this end, it is recommended that PES' “Advisory” approach should move on the following lines.

1. The creation of innovative working arrangements with the support of specially trained work-life balance counsellors

Cyprus recommends that these counsellors help companies to develop and implement Work-Life Balance strategies that will meet employee needs and company goals. They are to be divided into two specializations: the Work-Life Balance counsellors for employees, analysing and determining which work-life policies would best assist them; and Work-Life Balance counsellors for employers, analyzing, determining and advising on the feasibility of projected measures to be taken. Specific action plans fitting the needs of both employees and employers, together with cost benefit analysis

indicating if the benefits from the application of measures outweigh their costs, are drawn up. Follow-up of proposed recommendations and their improvement are to be performed by the same counsellors in support of the company at stake.

The Slovenian Report highlights that PES should suggest some solutions for work-family problems that could be introduced in short-term period, as a solid motivational base for those solutions that need more long term organizational change. Furthermore, Cyprus advises that PES extends its support to employers by contributing to the development of a proper outcome appraisal system which evaluates the performance of employees, and ensures that their productivity is not decreasing. The drawing up of a “Strategy for Life Balance” policy, making managers responsible for the dissemination and implementation of measures was also suggested as a means of how employers can create a favourable workplace.

2. Improving skills

PES have to strive to engage employers to raise the skills level through training during workshops and empowerment sessions, both at Managerial and Employee-level, to attain full potentiality of workforce whilst supporting a healthy Work-Life Balance. From time to time, an assessment of the effectiveness and competence of WLB Training is advised and WLB Solutions are to be tested out, problems identified and solutions offered accordingly.

C. PES: A “consultative agent”, towards a better Work-Life Balance in the private sector

In the undertaking of the third approach, in its contribution towards a better Work-Life Balance in the private sector, Public Employment Services of respective participating Partner Countries have to analyse the findings of Case Studies in the Joint Trans-National Report to become aware of the necessities and requirements that were pointed out by employers, and then proceed to “Consult with higher authorities” on their viability for implementation.



12. Conclusion

In conclusion it is augured that this Joint Trans-National Report, a compilation of Research Findings by the participating Partner Countries of Cyprus, Iceland, Malta, Slovenia and Sweden, has met the objectives of the Project entitled: “Creating Innovative Working Arrangements through the Support of PES for a better Work-Life Reconciliation” and has managed to highlight the present situation prevailing in respective participating Partner Countries with regards to Work-Life Balance, give an insight of the challenges faced by employers in implementation and help assist the Public Employment Services Organisations, by way of recommendations, to augment and enhance Work-Life Balance in the Private Sector.

