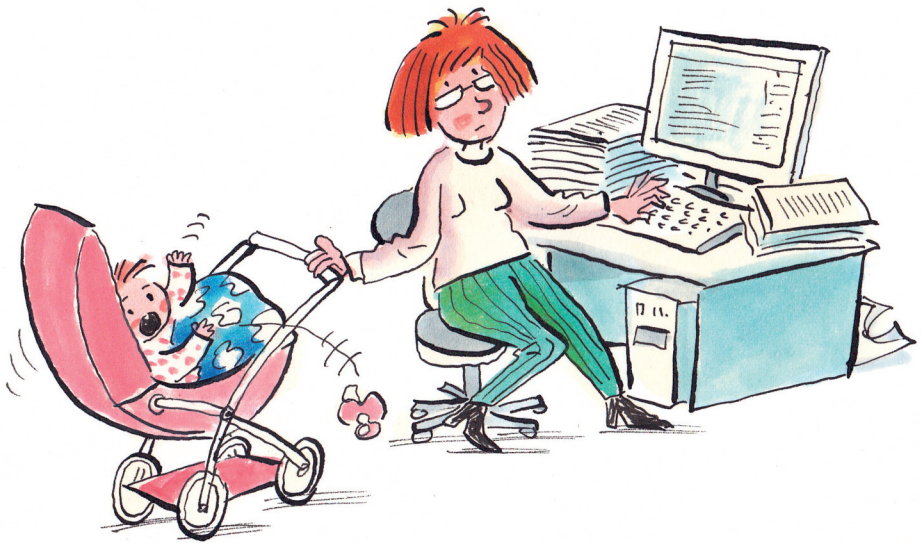


# Compatibility of work and family life





With kind support of the European Union

## **Publisher information**

**Editor:** European Centre for Workers' Questions, Königswinter  
[www.eza.org](http://www.eza.org)

**Author:** Michael Schwarz

**Layout:** HellaDesign, Emmendingen

**Illustrations:** © Klaus Puth, Mühlheim/Main, [www.klausputh.de](http://www.klausputh.de)

**Printing:** Druckerei Eberwein, Wachtberg-Villip

**As of:** March 2012

# CONTENTS

	FOREWORD	4
1	INTRODUCTION AND THE AIMS OF THE SEMINARS	6
2	METHOD	9
3	MAIN PART	10
3.1	THE ENVIRONMENT OF COMPATIBILITY	10
3.2	THE MAIN CONFLICT LINES OF COMPATIBILITY	11
3.3	COMPATIBILITY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE (STATUS QUO)	12
3.4	COMPATIBILITY – A HOLISTIC APPROACH	14
3.5	DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND COMPATIBILITY	17
3.6	COMPATIBILITY – ATTITUDE AND AWARENESS	18
3.7	COMPATIBILITY – INDEX AND STUDY FRAMEWORK	19
3.7.1	COMPATIBILITY POLICIES AT THE WORKPLACE	20
3.7.2	THE FAMILY-FRIENDLINESS OF MANAGERIAL STAFF AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF COMPATIBILITY MATTERS BY SUPERIORS	20
3.7.3	CORPORATE COMPATIBILITY CULTURE	21
3.7.4	THE INDIVIDUAL COMPONENT	21
3.7.5	THE IMPACT OF COMPATIBILITY MEASURES IN ORGANISATIONAL TERMS	22
3.7.6	THE IMPACT OF COMPATIBILITY MEASURES IN INDIVIDUAL TERMS	24
3.7.7	RESULTS OF THE STUDY FRAMEWORK (IFREI) IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT	25
3.8	NATIONAL CONTEXT AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SEMINARS	27
4	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION	36

## FOREWORD

With a scenario of advancing globalisation and world financial crises, competition in the world market, which is growing in importance for all national economies, is becoming tougher and tougher. Every social group involved directly or indirectly in this market – workers, employers and the state – knows from its own experience how quickly the market conditions, potential and risks for the societies involved in it and/or for their economic and social structures can change.

We are currently up against mass unemployment, the trend towards an increasing erosion of workers' rights (lower wages, greater flexibility, longer working hours, etc.) and cuts in national budgets, which affect families the most. The changes occurring have a huge impact on the balance of work and private life: for many workers it is harder than ever to reconcile the two. All in all the existing problems have a profound impact on workers' and employers' families as well as on their working conditions.

In the 2011 budget year under its education and training programme "European Social Dialogue" EZA co-ordinated projects on the issue of **"Compatibility of work and family life"**. In terms of the themes, this was linked with the EZA project co-ordination of 2008 on the issue of "Equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market". This dealt with various aspects of compatibility focusing on gender equality. The main focus of the 2011 seminars was on the challenges for young families with children, although in times of demographic change the question of compatibility is becoming increasingly important for the ever-growing number of people who look after an elderly relative.

First and foremost I would like to thank Michael Schwarz, who was in charge of the project co-ordination and was responsible for evaluating the results, and the member organisations involved. I also wish to thank my colleague

Matthias Homey, who co-ordinated the activities from the EZA Office. The European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion supported our activities with content and funding.

We hope that the results of the project co-ordination reach as large a group of people as possible, and that the problem-solving approaches elaborated on the issue of compatibility can help give individuals and the various workers' organisations in the EZA network guidance in tackling this issue.

We invite you to contact us with further suggestions of your own on this topic. Our contact details are on the back of the brochure.

*Roswitha Gottbehüt*  
*Secretary General EZA*

# 1 INTRODUCTION AND THE AIMS OF THE SEMINARS

The compatibility of family life and work or private life and professional life is an issue that is equally in the interest of workers, employers and policy-makers, and which if all the parties collaborate has the potential to develop sustainable problem-solving approaches and strategies and to influence each other in a goal-oriented way.

Some of the conclusions from the previous co-ordination on the subject of “Equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market” relevant to the project co-ordination 2011 were that women are still underprivileged with regard to employment rate, managerial positions and the wage gap, which has direct consequences for the compatibility arrangement between men and women and underlines the importance of the compatibility measures presented below. Furthermore, that an effective family policy can and must create the general conditions for compatibility, for instance to counter the trend of fathers of small children often working more than before because of social and family traditions. Finally, that training courses for compatibility in schools and companies are necessary to eliminate cultural hindrances that cement the separation in the labour market horizontally and vertically.

This year’s project co-ordination concentrated on identifying different dimensions and measures from the viewpoint of workers’ organisations that are required to implement compatibility in a social, corporate and private respect. Six member centres from five EU member states took part in the education and training events primarily to seek answers to the following questions:

The seminar run by the Danish trade union [Krifa](#) (Kristelig Fagbevægelse) in conjunction with [WOW](#) (World Organisation of Workers), which was held in Berlin from 7 - 8 April 2011 and addressed **“Compatibility of work and family life as the precondition for economic and social success within the EU”**, focused on the question of what a catalogue of elements of work-life balance could look like.

Whether better compatibility of work and family life can have an impact on the falling birth rates and thus represent an answer to the increasing ageing of our societies was discussed in the seminar by [CIFOTIE](#) (Centro Internacional de Formação dos Trabalhadores da Indústria e Energia), the international education and training centre of the Portuguese energy sector, held in Madeira from 14 - 17 April 2011 on the subject of **“The demographic challenge: time for new models of compatibility of work and family life”**.

**“New working time models in a society suffering from high unemployment, insecure working conditions and the breakdown of family ties”** was the title of the seminar run by the Catholic workers’ movement of Portugal [LOC/MTC](#) (Liga Operária Católica - Movimento de Trabalhadores Cristãos) from 9 - 12 June 2011 in Torres Novas. The main discussion point was whether a general reduction in weekly working hours could help reduce unemployment and improve the compatibility of work and family life.

The seminar held by the workers’ movement New Slovenia [ZD NSi](#) (Združenje delavcev Nove Slovenije) in Otočec from 30 September to 1 October 2011 addressed the issue of **“The influence of family life on the quality of work”** and tried to give answers to the question what influence family life has on professional life and what responsibility employers, workers, workers’ organisations and public bodies have for the compatibility of work and family life.

Whether it is possible to satisfy the compatibility interests of employers and workers in equal measure was the question discussed by the Catalan training centre CEEFT (Centre d'estudis europeu per a la formació dels treballadors) seminar on **"Working hours: Is it possible to reconcile the interests of employers and workers?"**, held in Barcelona from 27 - 30 October 2011.

**"Compatibility of work and family life as a target dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy"** was the seminar organised by the French trade union [CFTC](#) (Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens) from 15 - 18 November 2011 in Poitiers that tackled the issue of what place or value compatibility has within the Europe 2020 Strategy. It was also the last seminar of the co-ordinated projects.



## 2 METHOD

The aim of this publication is to edit the key input into and discussions of the six seminars by topics, and to present a structured synopsis of necessary and appropriate measures from the viewpoint of workers' organisations to achieve better compatibility of family, private and working life. To enable as complete and up-to-date a picture as possible of the current status of discussion and development on this issue, besides the seminar results reference is also made to relevant publications and documents of the European Commission.

The aim was also to point up measures and possible actions for the compatibility of work and family life and for the compatibility of work and private life, so as to avoid any less favourable treatment of childless couples and likewise to accommodate their claim to compatibility of the two spheres. At the same time, in the current social context compatibility equally encompasses the care of children and elderly people owing to demographic developments.

## 3 MAIN PART

### 3.1 THE ENVIRONMENT OF COMPATIBILITY

Three spheres are of key importance for the compatibility of work and family life. Firstly the individual, family sphere; secondly the semi-public, corporate sphere (employer); and thirdly the public, social sphere in which we as individuals live and which is defined by certain cultural characteristics and traditions and so exerts a major influence on the individual understanding of compatibility.

In the family sphere the division of labour between paid work and looking after children or old people has to be negotiated. Ideally a consensus can be reached by mutual agreement.

In the corporate sphere/on the company level it is important to develop compatibility provisions with and for the employees that cater for the company's specific requirements, are enshrined for instance in collective agreements, and can be scrutinised by audits.

On a social level the cornerstones for a compatibility policy must be provided by or specifically promoted by corresponding legislation, by supporting general conditions and by cultural traditions that do not run counter to such a policy.

### 3.2 THE MAIN CONFLICT LINES OF COMPATIBILITY

When one considers in this context the main conflict lines that can arise when attempting to harmonise private and professional life, all reasons for conflict can be attributed to the family, corporate and social sphere. According to a study carried out by the University of Navarra's International Center for Work and Family, the following eight reasons are in descending order the most common causes of conflict that preclude compatibility.

- The incompatibility of schedule between private and professional life
- The lack of compatibility policies in companies
- High pressure of work
- Family commitments
- Too few nurseries and care facilities
- Individual attempts at compatibility
- Household chores
- The lack of support from superiors and colleagues.

### 3.3 COMPATIBILITY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE (STATUS QUO)

Implementing and further developing policies and measures enabling better compatibility is of crucial importance to the future development of a society.

As **family life and professional life influence each other** and conflicts and stress at work in particular are carried over to a much greater extent into the family and private sphere than vice versa with family or private conflicts, poor working conditions or the incompatibility between the two spheres can result in an additional reduction in the remaining leisure time, which in the long term can also have an effect on the quality of leisure time and family support.

The **division of labour models**, which are of major importance in the context of the compatibility issue, have an impact on the personal wellbeing of each individual that is not to be underestimated. In Europe at present we can distinguish four predominant models of the division of labour between two people:

- Model 1 is the division of duties between the adults in a family as looking after children or the elderly full time and paid full-time work.
- Model 2 is the children or the elderly being looked after full time by another individual or by public institutions whilst the adults are gainfully employed full time.
- Model 3 is the adults' 50/50 division of labour between looking after children or the elderly and gainful employment.
- Model 4 is a mixture of models 1-3.

It is important here to differentiate between different groups of people: on the one hand those who are able to negotiate a division of labour between family and work amongst themselves by mutual agreement, and on the other hand those who have no leeway at all for action and decision and are thus reliant on support care services to avoid being in serious difficulties.

The **economic impact of** compatibility measures and policies is another key point of which people in general must be made more aware. What is usually understood first and foremost by flexible working time and work arrangements is the worker's obligation to be more flexible and adaptable to the particular workplace situation. In the context of compatibility, flexible working time arrangements mean the specific consideration of workers' needs by the employer to create added value for the company in the long run. The added value that can be generated by organising working hours on an individual basis is expressed by a good state of health of the workforce, less absenteeism through sickness or stress, a high degree of initiative, creativity, motivation and productivity from the employees, a good working atmosphere, good quality work results, a good internal and external image of the company, and considerable cost-cutting through low staff turnover.

At the same time companies and employers benefit to a considerable extent from workers with families, since many skills required in managerial positions and in management are skills that are developed and further developed within a family<sup>1</sup>. These include customer orientation, strong leadership, integrity, initiative, teamwork, communication skills, visionary thinking, personal development and ability to take decisions.

---

1 Cardona P./ Chinchilla, N./ Garcia, P.: "Las competencias directivas mas valoradas", IESE, WP 01/4.

### 3.4 COMPATIBILITY – A HOLISTIC APPROACH

In its new “[Strategy for equality between women and men \(2010 - 2015\)](#)”, the European Commission emphasises that “to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, women’s potential and talents need to be used more extensively”. So, ensuring better compatibility of work and family life is also an essential prerequisite for **greater involvement of women in the labour market**, without which in turn the 75% employment target of the “Europe 2020” Strategy cannot be achieved.

Promoting compatibility calls for many players to be included and thus a **holistic approach**. This was also discussed in detail in the seminars.

First of all families have to be incorporated in such an approach, as it is within families that decisions are taken on the distribution of tasks between men and women. On the other hand companies are extremely important in organising the work routine and for practicable compatibility, just as the social partners play an important role in negotiating measures and improving compatibility-related working conditions. Municipalities, local authorities and those responsible for family policies on the various political and social levels are key interlocutors with regard to implementing any policies and providing care facilities. What is required, therefore, is a package of measures that takes on board the entire reality of workers’ lives.

The fundamental requirement is compatibility-supporting legislation created by political decisions. This includes corresponding provisions relating to paid maternity leave, parental leave, parental allowance, child benefit and special leave. This will create the general conditions enabling families to make a free, individual decision. It is particularly with provisions on parental leave that can be taken both by fathers and mothers that there are huge differences between the individual member states in terms of time off and financing.<sup>2</sup>

Support services in care for children and the elderly are another vital dimension without which the balance between private and professional life is not possible.

Back-up economic provisions through individual company solutions, collective wage agreements that take compatibility into consideration and company agreements are important for harmonising the two spheres in the long term and being able to react appropriately to unforeseen family care bottlenecks.

Another important criterion of compatibility is that there are supporting social, cultural and family traditions as well as a culture of understanding at the workplace for individual decisions with regard to the care of children and elderly people. In this respect it is also important to create awareness in order to overcome social and cultural traditions that preclude equality of the sexes and the implementation of a work-life balance.

A problem in this context, however, is when statutorily guaranteed rights are actually claimed, as in some companies and particularly in managerial

- 
- 2 Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010, also known as the Parental Leave Directive, stipulates minimum provisions on the European level for parental leave. The directive enshrines an individual right to parental leave of at least four months in the event of birth or adoption. The provisions on parental leave vary between an income-related calculation basis for usually 12 to 14 months (Germany, Bulgaria) and a flat-rate option in which a low monthly amount is paid out over a longer period of up to 36 months (Austria). Moreover, the different provisions can be subdivided into different models. Karin Wall's classification, which identifies seven different models, can be applied here:
    1. The 'one year leave' gender equality orientated model (Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Slovenia).
    2. The parental choice orientated policy model (Finland, France, Norway).
    3. The 'long leave' mother home-centred policy model (Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany (prior to recent reform), Hungary).
    4. The short leave part-time mother policy model (Ireland, Netherlands, United Kingdom).
    5. The short leave male breadwinner model (Greece, Italy, Spain).
    6. The early return to full-time work leave policy model (Portugal).

As a best practice equality models between men and women can be seen such as the tripartite model in Iceland (time/ social protection/income) which gives three months paternal leave, three months maternal leave and three months negotiated between each other.

positions statutory provisions like parental leave or special leave for family reasons are not tolerated at all or only gradually tolerated by both management and fellow workers. Claiming one's rights can actually result in less favourable treatment when one goes back to work.



### 3.5 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND COMPATIBILITY

An increasingly important aspect relating to compatibility is the **demographic shift**. Falling birth rates and greater life expectancy of its citizens pose a considerable demographic challenge for the EU in future, one it must overcome. In the long term this development will have a negative impact on public finances, on the sustainability of the social security systems, on economic growth and the competitiveness of the individual countries.

Political strategies, particularly a **modern social policy** that makes allowance for the different compatibility issues, must support families in every relevant sphere. At the same time enough care facilities both for children and for the elderly must be created or family members given the option of domestic care through individual working time arrangements. Because of greater professional demands, later entry into the labour market, increasing professional instability, longer weekly working hours and the average decrease in salaries, targeted support for families is absolutely imperative. It is the task of a modern social and family policy on the level of the member states and on a European level to address the different realities and strata within society on a specific basis.

To counter the continual weakening and the trend towards an erosion of family structures, the workers' organisations and the social partners in particular are required to view the family as an important institution for social cohesion and as a fundamental factor of social development, and to demand family-friendly legislation on a European and national level.

### 3.6 COMPATIBILITY – ATTITUDE AND AWARENESS

The view of and attitude towards motherhood, bringing up children and caring for elderly relatives has to be totally overhauled in European societies. This relates to the mentality of the individual, awareness in the corporate world and the attitude of society as a whole to these issues. Thus in the 21st century, despite handed-down perceptions of roles, these duties are no longer to be fulfilled by women and mothers alone. Instead, besides men and fathers, society as a whole bears a major responsibility for these duties, as they are of crucial importance for its further development in the future. The question of how a family-friendly environment can be created on the level of society as a whole can only be answered by measures on three different levels and by three different players. As explained in 3.4, the *sine qua non* is compatibility-supporting measures on a national level. A second important condition is that there are family-relevant and family-responsible policies. Thirdly, it is important that managers and leaders from business, culture, society and the church propagate and support compatibility.

Another thing that is required is the realisation that despite the right attitude, the right awareness and compatibility-supporting structures and provisions in the different spheres, the compatibility of work and family life demands a great deal more of women than of men.

### 3.7 COMPATIBILITY – INDEX AND STUDY FRAMEWORK

In this context the **International Center for Work and Family** of the University of Navarra<sup>3</sup>, whose head Prof. Dr. Nuria Chinchilla was a speaker at the CIFOTIE seminar, drew up an **index** measuring the family-friendliness of companies and the work environment by means of different questions. The results are subdivided into four categories. Firstly, a work environment which systematically encourages and supports compatibility (A), secondly a work environment which supports compatibility to some extent (B), thirdly a work environment which makes compatibility difficult to some extent (C), and fourthly a work environment which systematically makes compatibility difficult (D). By using this index, one's own work environment can be better classified and assessed, and requisite compatibility measures can be better identified.

As a complement to the index there is a **Study Framework (IFREI)** which examines the existing compatibility policies at the workplace (3.7.1), the family-friendliness of the managerial staff (3.7.2), the compatibility culture in the company (3.7.3) and the individual compatibility strategies (3.7.4), and evaluates the impact of these measures in organisational (3.7.5) and individual (3.7.6) terms.

---

3 Center for Work and Family, IESE Business School, University of Navarra.

### 3.7.1 COMPATIBILITY POLICIES AT THE WORKPLACE

**Compatibility policies at the workplace** assesses flexibility in terms of time and space, the professional support through advice services, the existing services such as information on company work-life balance provisions and seminars and workshops on work-life balance and the existing support services for employees with a family such as company crèches, a childcare allowance or the acceptance and existence of parental leave provisions that can be extended beyond the statutory minimum period.

In terms of the impact of compatibility policies at the workplace, the study framework produces the following results: in an individual respect family-friendly company policies have a positive impact, as responsibility can be taken in both the professional and the family sphere, commuting time is reduced and there is a tendency for productivity to rise. On a corporate level, the advantage of family-friendly provisions is that many firms' customer service is open longer due to flexitime provisions, worker absenteeism decreases and greater commitment is evident. In a social respect, family-friendly provisions result in environmental pollution being reduced due to less commuting time, healthcare costs being reduced because of a decrease in stress and illnesses, and the educational level rising on a national level as many parents have more time to spend on educating their children.

### 3.7.2 THE FAMILY-FRIENDLINESS OF MANAGERIAL STAFF

Family-friendly superiors or **superiors that act in a family-responsible manner** react to their employees' needs. In addition they support the implementation of family-responsible practices, are receptive to work-life balance issues and respect workers' personal decisions.

The family-friendliness of managerial staff is studied using four indicators. Firstly, the understanding shown by superiors. This form of support includes dialogue and the development of joint approaches to problem-solving. Secondly, managerial staff using various mechanisms, such as making time available to overcome compatibility conflicts. Thirdly, the management of different compatibility measures. This includes for instance consulting employees about the introduction of compatibility measures. Fourthly, the superiors themselves setting an example as role models.

### **3.7.3 CORPORATE COMPATIBILITY CULTURE**

The compatibility culture within a company enables workers to strike a balance between professional and private life, since flexitime is encouraged, work done is appreciated and work is not valued more highly than the family or private life. Moreover, there is a greater acceptance of the personal decision women and men make to take parental leave. This does not impair their career prospects. An attempt is also made to reconcile working hours with workload using the staff available.

### **3.7.4 THE INDIVIDUAL COMPONENT**

The individual component plays a key role, encompassing not only various coping strategies and approaches but also personal preferences and transition models.

Each person resorts to different **coping strategies** to tackle challenges and to enable him/her to accomplish family and professional tasks. This can be firstly planning and prioritising the tasks or work to be done, and secondly seeking and requesting emotional and material support from family and

friends. It is evident that the majority of those surveyed plan their tasks, and people without children in particular resort more to support measures than people who have children.

There is close interaction between the spheres of work and family. However, there are very different approaches in subjective dealings. The **segmentation approach** separates the work sphere from the family sphere whilst the **integration approach** tries to combine the two spheres. Whereas the segmentation approach shows no points of contact between the two spheres, the integration approach tries to combine the two spheres in terms of time and place - through telework and working from home or by taking care of family matters during working hours. There is no value judgement per se as to which approach is better, yet the workers' personal preference in putting successful compatibility policies into practice in companies plays an important part, as does the question of the right approach for the corporate situation. Most of those surveyed are of the opinion that it is not such a good idea to integrate the professional into the private or vice versa.

### 3.7.5 THE IMPACT OF COMPATIBILITY MEASURES IN ORGANISATIONAL TERMS

The compatibility policies at the workplace, the family-friendliness of managerial staff, the compatibility culture in the company and the individual component have different impacts in organisational terms that are assessed by the following four criteria: employees' attitude to staff turnover, corporate loyalty, the organisational support available, the attachment and commitment of staff.

Unwanted **staff turnover** has a negative impact on the morale and motivation of the other employees and on company targets due to lower productivity, decreasing expertise and a deteriorating work environment. In addition

it incurs considerable direct costs such as recruitment costs for the jobs to be filled, training costs for new workers and deputising costs for the transition phase. In this respect it is evident that a work environment that systematically encourages and supports compatibility (A) has the lowest staff turnover rates whereas a work environment that systematically makes compatibility difficult (D) has the highest staff turnover rates.

The **loyalty** of the workers can be increased by considering suggestions for improving the work process and the work organisation and by appreciating and promoting mutual support.

The company's **organisational support** relates to support services in the context of problem-solving, personal wellbeing and work satisfaction as well as respect for personal opinion. In this respect it is clear that a work environment that systematically encourages and supports compatibility (A) offers the most organisational support, whereas a work environment that systematically makes compatibility difficult (D) offers the least organisational support.

Workers' **attachment and commitment to their company** or their organisation can be differentiated as follows: firstly, the attachment to the company can be characterised by the *lack of alternatives* and by the costs incurred in changing job. This means the attachment is very weak and the person leaves the company if there are other and better alternatives. Secondly, the attachment can be characterised by the individual possibilities in terms of *personal and professional development opportunities*. In this case the attachment is stronger because of the subjective opportunities available. Thirdly, the attachment can be characterised by an *emotional dimension* accompanied by a moral obligation to the company, and this is the strongest form of attachment because the person wants to contribute to the prosperity of the company out of personal conviction.

Here it is evident that:

1. The stronger the attachment due to lack of alternatives, the lower the quality of attachment to the company
2. The more family-friendly the work environment, the more the personal development opportunities and the organisational support are used
3. The more family-friendly the work environment, the stronger the emotional attachment to the company.

### 3.7.6 THE IMPACT OF COMPATIBILITY MEASURES IN INDIVIDUAL TERMS

The impact of the compatibility measures described above in individual terms is assessed by the general state of workers' health, the mutual enhancement of professional and private life, and satisfaction with the existing work-life balance.

The general **state of health** relates to the wellbeing of individuals, since a poor state of health can entail direct consequences for the company, such as increasing absenteeism, a decrease in productivity, an increase in sickness-related losses and a drop in motivation.

There is a mutual **enhancement of professional and private life** when professionally acquired skills and abilities can be transferred into the family sphere or private sphere, and vice versa when experiences from the family and private environment are transferred into the professional sphere. For example, assuming family responsibility can help the development of interpersonal skills and a greater degree of understanding, which is beneficial on a professional level. The ability to resolve conflicts at home can strengthen self-confidence with regard to one's abilities at work, and multitasking in



the private sphere can improve multitasking skills on the professional level. This assessment is shared by everyone surveyed from the four different work environments (A, B, C, D). In the global<sup>4</sup> IFREI study, 47% of the men surveyed and 53% of the women surveyed rate their family experiences as beneficial for their professional routine, whereas only 4% of the men surveyed and 3% of the women surveyed are convinced the opposite is true.

**Satisfaction with the existing work-life balance** is directly dependent on personal management of the family commitments and work commitments. This includes the personal division between the two spheres and the personal satisfaction a person can derive from this division. In this respect personal satisfaction is directly related with the possibilities of organising one's work and working hours. If the company provisions allow for a certain degree of flexibility, generally speaking professional and family matters can be reconciled. In the IFREI study 27% of the men surveyed and 29% of the women surveyed were satisfied with their work-life balance.

### **3.7.7 RESULTS OF THE STUDY FRAMEWORK (IFREI) IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

The global study involved a total of 1,202 participants in Europe, and was restricted to Italy, Spain and Portugal. As under the project co-ordination three of the six seminars were organised in Portugal and Spain, the following results are particularly relevant to the southern EU member states, especially for the implementation of effective compatibility policies, as these are often hampered by specific structural and cultural features. The results

---

4 The countries covered by the study are Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand, China and the Philippines.

obtained relating to family-friendly compatibility policies are illustrated below in bullet-point form. The picture that emerges is as follows:

- 83% can leave the workplace in the event of family emergencies.
- 58% can make use of flexible holiday arrangements.
- 48% can work flexitime.
- 38% have professional and personal advice services available to them.
- 31% have the option of telework.
- 30% can be released or given leave of absence to take care of family members.
- 29% have access to information on compatibility benefits.
- 27% have a reduced working week.
- 26% work part time.
- 24% can attend seminars on the issue of compatibility.
- 19% can do job-sharing.
- 17% have information from their employer on day-care, schools and care for the elderly.
- 16% of the women can extend parental leave beyond the statutory limit.
- 13% of the men can extend parental leave beyond the statutory limit.
- 13% can resort to care facilities at the workplace.
- 9% receive child benefit.

### 3.8 NATIONAL CONTEXT AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SEMINARS

The Danish trade union **Krifa** seminar drew various conclusions, presented below.

1. Traditional and cultural perceptions of the labour market will have to change, especially with regard to the “typically” male and female professions.

Technical professions still are a male domain, whereas jobs in the care and welfare sector are primarily done by women. In many countries talks have begun on a female quota. This quota would guarantee that there were more women on boards of directors and in executive positions, which is still not the case in many companies. The example of Germany shows that it is still a man’s world, as only 2.2 per cent of managerial posts in German industry and trade are occupied by women.

In this context we must consider that despite differing provisions in the individual member states regarding parental allowance and parental leave, only 10 per cent of fathers claim their right to parental leave. On the contrary, the tendency observed is for fathers to work more hours than beforehand on average to make up for any financial losses.

2. There ought to be scope for tailored agreements on working conditions. That is why social innovation will acquire considerable importance, as labour relations have changed and will continue to change.

The average European levels (EU 27) of gainful employment in 2009 were 70.7% for men and 58.6% for women. Most women work part time, whilst

most men have a full-time job. The trend, however, for both men and women is for more part-time jobs and more flexible working conditions due to an erosion of normal terms and conditions of employment. Whereas men work 55 hours a week on average, women work about 68 hours a week if you take household chores into consideration.

Although part-time work often helps create a better work-life balance, it does not solve every problem of compatibility of work and family life. This is demonstrated by the example of the Netherlands, the international pioneer in part-time work. In the Netherlands the majority of men and women work part time (about 30 hours a week). So from a participatory angle the main approach to solving the compatibility problem would seem to be part-time work. However, in view of the ageing of the population it is necessary to raise the number of hours of part-time workers in order to be able to carry on financing the pension systems for instance.

### 3. In compatibility policies more consideration must be given to demographic developments.

Apart from the possibility of benefitting from a semi-retirement scheme, this includes the increasing leave entitlement for elderly workers, the introduction of a professional group-specific retirement age, the company setting up its own demographics fund into which the employer pays a fixed amount per year for each employee, as regulated for instance in the collective agreement of the German Mining, Chemistry and Energy industrial trade union (IGBCE), and setting up an exchange of experience between elderly and young workers.

### 4. The quality of work and employment must be improved.

Besides establishing more flexible working hours, limiting overtime, a company agreement on health protection, unpaid release from work in personal

or family emergencies, having an officer for work-life balance questions in larger companies, this also includes granting paid leave when children are sick and family members are in need of care. These points are extremely important, especially in many southern European countries. Companies could be supported by financial grants from the governments to release workers because of family reasons or emergencies. Making telework options available can likewise improve compatibility, although it does create the problem of blurring the private and professional sphere. Another important aspect in this context is the psychosocial risks, such as stress at work, since 50 to 60 per cent of absenteeism is caused by stress. It is also possible to improve workers' health and the quality of work by providing healthy food and fitness facilities.

Considering the annual growth trend the "Joint Employment Report Europe 2011" concludes that because of a lack of care facilities there is a high level of involuntary part-time work among women, that the reintegration of women in the labour market is often difficult because of a family-hostile work environment, and that the Europe 2020 Strategy focuses solely on raising the employment rate instead of increasing the qualitative dimension that includes a better work-life balance.

These conclusions can be supplemented by findings from the Portuguese seminars run by **CIFOTIE** and **LOC/MTC**.

5. It is important to understand how the individual age groups envisage support for compatibility in a specific national context.

This was the motive for CIFOTIE to decide to conduct a comparative study of the compatibility of work and family provisions practised in the various regions of the country and to initiate a discussion process with the regional government of Madeira addressing the compatibility situation of families in Madeira.

A basic requirement for putting better compatibility into practice in the Portuguese context is fair pay and a family-friendly tax system, as well as the realisation that a flexible work organisation depends on the management skills, particularly on an executive level, and the understanding of work colleagues. It was further emphasised that the employer gains advantages from family-friendly policies, which need to be highlighted, such as a lower sickness rate and a lower staff turnover rate. The benefits of a family-friendly certification for companies were also mentioned.

6. It is important to draw the attention of the policy-makers, employers and business associations to the human dimension of work and to change existing mentalities.

A human being cannot develop without the family and other persons. On the other hand, the family needs a society that understands and accepts it and looks after it. The collective obligation of everyone to create better compatibility of professional and family life is extremely important, given the increasing requirements and problems in the labour markets, as the risk of social exclusion has increased owing to longer working hours, unemployment, low pay and insecure jobs. That is why it is important to mobilise the European workers' organisations, to reinforce the human dimension of work and to focus on the review of the Working Time Directive to enable a stronger representation of workers' rights to be enshrined in the directive.

These conclusions can be further supplemented by other findings from the Slovenian seminar organised by **ZD NSi**.

7. Tax breaks for families and an adequate care infrastructure make for better compatibility, especially for young families and families on a low income.

More tax breaks for families are required in order to bring about better compatibility. In addition, measures to increase the chances of young parents in the employment market must be taken to enable a combination of parenting and work. These measures must be accompanied by appropriate initiatives in housing policy, education and vocational training, healthcare and in social security.

8. The state family policy must be reviewed with regard to gearing its impact to compatibility aspects, particularly in the context of the continuing economic and debt crisis.

The state should review all its family policy measures with a view to increasing the effectiveness of social security systems. State provisions should make every effort to support companies' and employers' initiatives for creating family-friendlier jobs or for balancing the demands of private and professional life, and create opportunities for developing suitable solutions and putting them into practice. Contradictions in the family policy must be resolved.

In the next few years the balance between family life and work will be largely determined by the further course of the global economic crisis. As the economic upturn is slow and many states are in debt, the living standard of young families in particular will be put under severe pressure, and society will have to give them special assistance, which is another reason for extensive reform of the family policy.

In this respect it is very important to further develop the social security systems, especially in the current crisis context, as these guarantee a minimum of security for all workers and their families.

9. “Family-friendliness” is a dimension of corporate social responsibility and helps increase the economic efficiency and competitiveness of the particular company.

This relates to the reduction in staff turnover costs and the increase in productivity and motivation of the workers. However, the state and the private sector in Slovenia are not sufficiently aware of the advantages of a family-friendly organisation of the world of work and regrettably refrain from wholehearted backing of measures to balance the requirements of family life and work. Yet a growing number of companies are currently considering a fundamental amendment to the relevant provisions in favour of workers, their families and society as a whole.

The seminar-goers agreed that family-friendly companies make a major contribution to creating good quality work. Better compatibility of work and family life increases worker loyalty and productivity, reduces stress-related days lost and sickness, cuts costs incurred by staff turnover, makes the company more competitive and improves the company’s image. This catalogue of economic benefits makes it clear that a family-friendly organisation of the world of work is also absolutely imperative for economic reasons. Ultimately, family-friendliness and socially responsible entrepreneurship guarantee long-term economic success.

These conclusions can be supplemented further by other results from the seminar organised by the French trade union **CFTC** and the Catalan workers’ organisation **CEEFT**.

10. The review of Directive 2003/88/EC on certain aspects of the organisation of working hours (Working Time Directive) must strengthen compatibility as planned and must not worsen workers’ occupational health and safety.



The compatibility of professional and family life is to be strengthened by the new Article 2b in Directive 2003/88/EC. The article provides for the member states “encouraging” the social partners to produce family-friendly working time provisions, employers having to inform workers in good time of changes in the rhythm of work, and workers being allowed to make applications to the employer to change working hours and the rhythm of work. The “employers are obliged to examine these requests taking into account employers’ and workers’ needs for flexibility.” But the European Commission rejects the workers’ claim to specific working hours and rhythms of work, referring to interference with entrepreneurial freedom and freedom of contract as well as the huge costs incurred by an adverse effect on the operational processes. As the workers’ organisations see it, and as demanded in the LOC seminar, this view must be counteracted.

A further negative development of relevance to compatibility is the fact that under the new directive inactive time during on-call duty is not regarded as working time, unless provided for otherwise in national legislation or by the social partners. So it does not fall under the prescribed maximum working hours, but it is not allowed to be credited to the prescribed minimum rest periods (addendum in Art. 2 of Directive 2003/88/EC). The upshot of this is a de facto extension of working time, which can only be countered in the member states by a different definition for special types of on-call duty in a collective agreement.

Because of a compromise in the adoption of the directive, during a transition period it was permitted to deviate from the weekly maximum working hours provided for in the directive by an amendment on an individual contract basis in favour of the worker and to agree longer working hours with him. Thus under certain conditions the member states can opt out of the maximum working time regulation. This option should actually run out three years after the implementation of the directive, with the member states now

being able to make applications for an extension of the time limit (amendment in Art. 22 of Directive 2003/88/EC). In general it is to be noted that non-observance of the maximum working time regulation is primarily in the employer's interest, and the argument that there are benefits for the worker is untenable in the opinion of workers' organisations.

Moreover, the calculation period for the weekly maximum working time (basically 48, not more than 55 hours a week) can be extended in every sector under certain conditions by a collective agreement or act of law from four months to twelve months (amendment in Art. 19 of directive 2003/88/EC). In addition the statutory reference period for working time accounts is to be extended from six to twelve months; up until now it has only been possible for the parties to the collective agreement to extend the reference period. This sector-specific decision is now to be quashed.

#### 11. The Europe 2020 Strategy must attach more importance to compatibility.

The Europe 2020 Strategy refers only in one sub-paragraph to the issue of compatibility. According to the strategy it is to be promoted by suitable measures in the respective member states. The issue of compatibility must, however, be given more importance in the strategy, as good compatibility provisions and policies on a social, corporate and individual level decide on participation in the labour market, level of training and the viability of a society.

#### 12. Compatibility contradicts the logic of the markets.

The concept of compatibility, in particular flexitime in favour of the workers, minimum wages and provisions on paternity leave for men and women, contradicts the logic of labour markets, which focus their demand on flexible

individuals without considering their personal commitments and requirements. The relaxing of work-free Sundays, for instance, is a major problem in this respect. Many shops are now open on Sundays in Southern and Central Europe, and there is likewise a noticeable trend to Sunday shopping in Western Europe. The problem is that in many families and relationships Sunday is the only day on which no family members go to work. The systematic easing of this regulation is eroding the central basis for compatibility, or in countries where there are hardly any compatibility policies the only protected space for private and family matters has been taken away.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Based on the member centres' initial questions explained in 1. we can derive the following recommendations for discussion and action for trade unions and worker organisations:

1. It should be clear that work-life balance never means a balance between private and professional life; instead it merely represents a reflection of personal values and priority decisions at a certain point in time. That is why the best, individual work-life balance will alter over time, as it will never come to a global or across-the-board equilibrium. Instead, a balanced solution must always be found that is tailored to personal requirements.
2. In their collective bargaining, trade unions and workers' organisations should press for further framework agreements on making working hours flexible and introducing telework to achieve a better work-life balance. This includes, for instance, provisions on flexitime, annual working hours, free breaks, compatibility-related leave and flexible weekly working hours. Examples of good practice ought to be made accessible to a wider public.
3. Trade unions and workers' organisations should encourage companies to introduce a family-friendly and demographically robust staff policy out of consideration for the workforce's care and assistance commitments, so as to be able to cope with the needs of an ageing workforce and the needs of a workforce with proportionally increasing care responsibilities.

4. Trade unions and workers' organisations should impress on those responsible in municipalities and local authorities that accessible, local, quality care facilities for children and the elderly are manifestly improved, to enable families to choose according to their needs.
5. In direct negotiations with employers, trade unions and workers' organisations should accentuate the benefits of a family-friendly company policy, like higher worker productivity and cost savings for companies through long-term staff loyalty and less sickness-related absenteeism, as well as draw up and implement joint compatibility and family strategies. Moreover, they should emphasise that social innovation (overhauling the organisation of companies and industrial relations) will become increasingly important in companies in the future. Only in that way will it be possible to bring about a win-win situation both for the company and for the workers and to be competitive in the long run and sufficiently innovative and attractive.
6. Trade unions and workers' organisations should take concrete measures in their own organisations to ensure that family-friendliness and the compatibility of the professional and private dimension are guaranteed, so as to be able to use the qualities and skills of men and women to the benefit of the organisations.
7. Trade unions and workers' organisations should oblige employers to promote family-friendly corporate policies, so as to avoid stress and conflicts (harassment and bullying), which are often the result of incompatibility. Measures such as bearing the costs of psychological advice sessions for workers to cope with stress for a defined period, as practised by the Danish trade union Krifa, are innovative and worthwhile.

8. Finally, trade unions and workers' organisations should intensify their lobbying in the political sphere to underline the importance of the issue of compatibility for the future social and economic development of Europe. Without goal-oriented compatibility policies, in the long term social cohesion in European societies will be eroded, with unforeseeable consequences.

## Further literature:

Prof. Nuria Chinchilla, Prof. Mireia Las Heras: IESE Family-Responsible Environment (Fre) Index for the World and Italy, IESE Business School, University of Navarra, International Center for Work and Family, accessed on 16.02.2012 from

[http://blogs.elis.org/peopleandmanagement/files/2011/11/IndagineIFREI\\_italy\\_2010.pdf](http://blogs.elis.org/peopleandmanagement/files/2011/11/IndagineIFREI_italy_2010.pdf)

Cardona P., Chinchilla, N., Garcia, P.: "Las competencias directivas mas valoradas", IESE, WP 01/4.

International Center for Work and Family, accessed on 16.02.2012 from

<http://www.iese.edu/en/Research/CentersandChairs/Centers/ICWF/Home/Home.asp>.

Prof. Peter Moss, Dr. Karin Wall: International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2007, accessed on 17.02.2012 from

[http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Annual\\_reviews/2007\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Annual_reviews/2007_annual_report.pdf)

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 to implement the revised Framework Agreement on Parental Leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and to supersede Directive 96/34/EC accessed on 18.02.2012 from

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:068:0013:0020:DE:PDF>

Charter of the rights of the family, accessed on 16.02.2012 from

[http://www.ecwm-network.eu/mm/Charta\\_Familienrechte\\_EBCA.pdf](http://www.ecwm-network.eu/mm/Charta_Familienrechte_EBCA.pdf)

Charter for family-friendly working hours, accessed on 18.02.2012 from [http://www.erfolgsfaktor-familie.de/data/downloads/webseiten/Charta\\_%20Initiative\\_Familienbewusste\\_Arbeitszeiten.pdf#61937#false#|# \[Familienbewusste%20Arbeitszeiten\]%20-%20Charta\\_%20Initiative\\_Familienbewusste\\_Arbeitszeiten.pdf#61937#false](http://www.erfolgsfaktor-familie.de/data/downloads/webseiten/Charta_%20Initiative_Familienbewusste_Arbeitszeiten.pdf#61937#false#|# [Familienbewusste%20Arbeitszeiten]%20-%20Charta_%20Initiative_Familienbewusste_Arbeitszeiten.pdf#61937#false)