



European Foundation
for the Improvement
of Living and Working
Conditions

The tripartite EU Agency providing
knowledge to assist in the development
of social and work-related policies

Men and women at work in Europe: some reflections on work-life balance

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In this presentation

- First reflections on women, men and work-life balance
- Link with sustainability of work over the life course
- Some findings of 6th EWCS
- Actors, instruments and institutions
 - Company practices
 - Maternity, parental and other leaves
- Some final reflections

Men and women at work & work-life balance

Evolution of working conditions

- Men and women on the labour market: more women at work (but maybe in different jobs...)
- Diversified work patterns over Europe: male breadwinner, modified male breadwinner, dual earners

Country matters : institutions / social infrastructure / preferences

- Times in the society (/city)
- Social protection systems & labour law eg part time, (parental) leave,...
- Social infrastructure, care facilities (public or private), school systems, including school hours and afterschool care: influence how people enter and stay on labour market
 - > changes in times of recession (in different ways)

Gender roles within the family: impact choices.

- Men and women work differently : flexibility for whom?
- Flexibility and predictability of working time

Needs and choices change over the life course of men and women.

transitions

Working time arrangements & work-life balance

- Working hours can facilitate the organisation of the private life
 - flexitime, predictability, emergency leave, part time, leave
- Working time flexibility:
 - not per se good or bad for either both employers / employees
 - choices matter
- Companies can make a difference -> not all working time arrangements are costly

Linked to sustainability of work over the life course

POLICIES, REGULATION, PRACTICES...

Public policies

Social partners

Companies

CURRENT WORKFORCE

characteristics of the **job**

JOB QUALITY

LIFE COURSE →

characteristics of the **worker**

potential workforce

Time availability/care obligations

Health / well being

Skills / employability

Unemployment / inactivity

Motivation

- Job quality in general (job design, organisation, limit exposure, deal with consequences)
- Sub-dimensions of job quality:
 - Remuneration
 - Prospects (progression, security...)
 - Intrinsic job quality : physical (health and safety) and Social environment (support) , skills and autonomy, work intensity,
 - **Working time**

Life events and life-course policies / care infrastructure

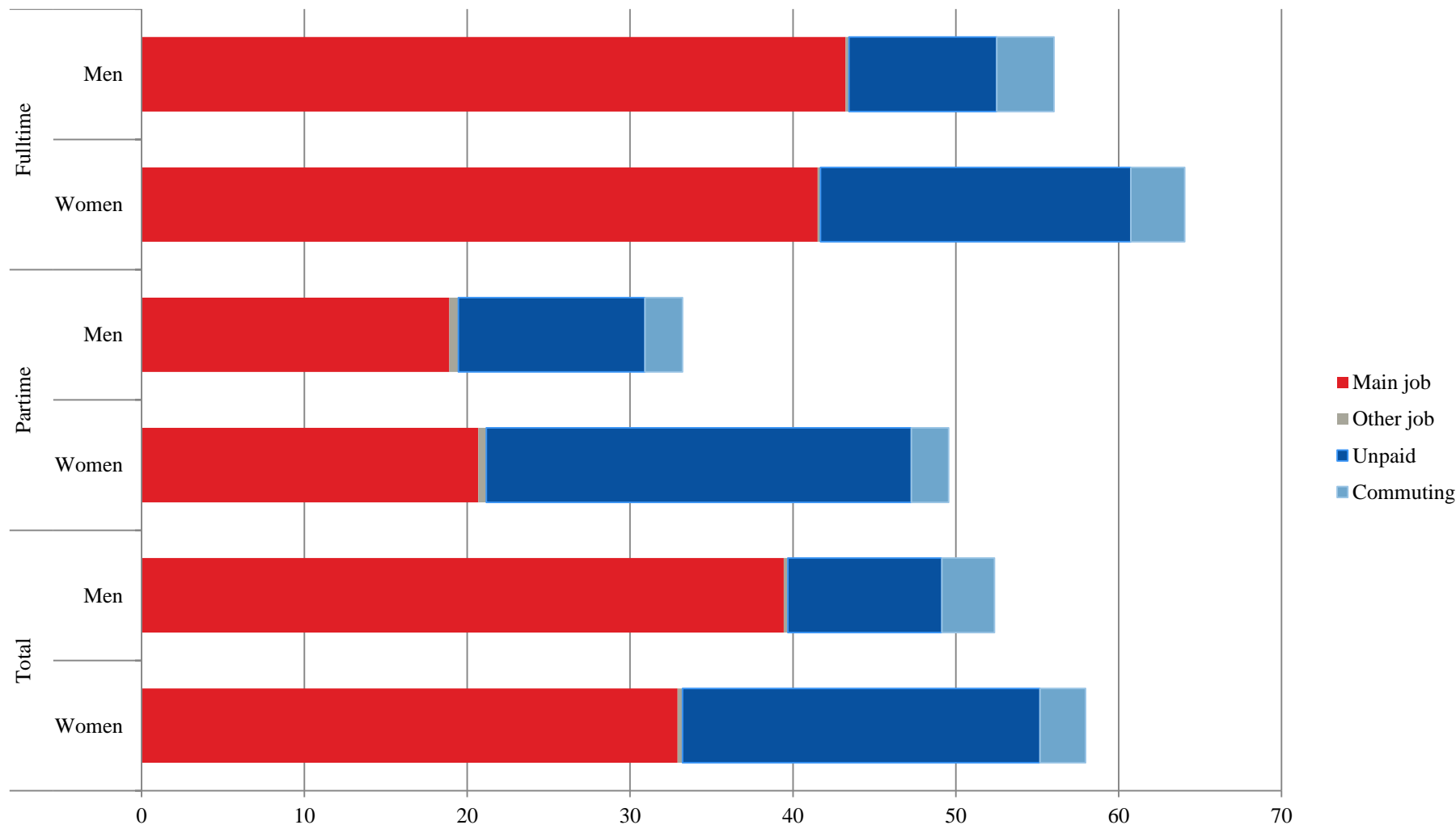
Inclusion policies: people with reduced physical and mental health capacity / health promotion

Lifelong learning, skills development

Active labour market policies / lifelong guidance / job matching

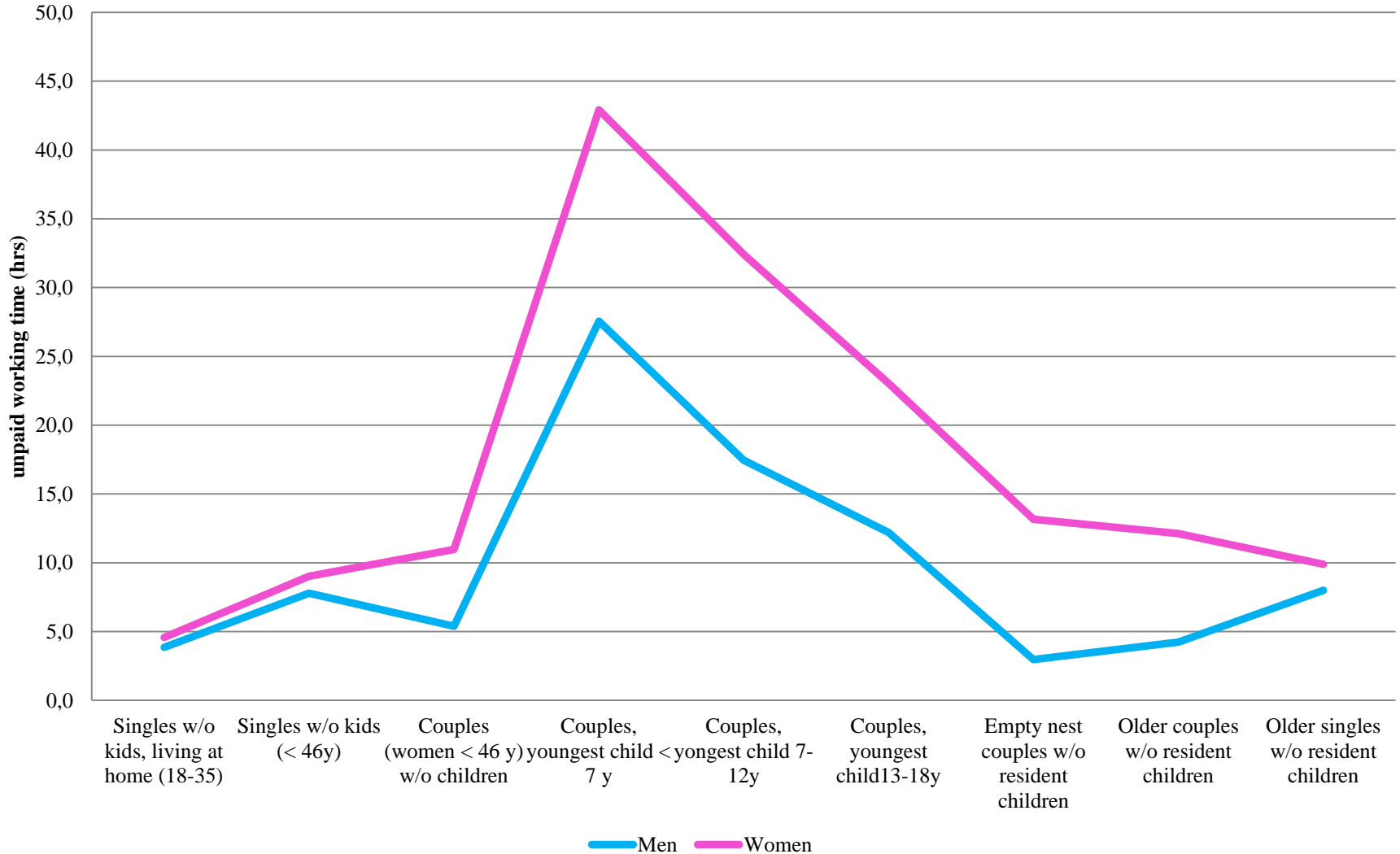
Meaningful work / the functions of work itself

Results 6th EWCS: Paid and unpaid working time



Source: 6th EWCS

Unpaid work throughout life stages



Source: Eurofound (2013), *Working time and work life balance in a life course perspective*

Work-life balance

- One worker out of five (19%) reports a bad fit between work and private life
 - Men (20%) report more problems than women (16%)
 - but comparing women and men working **same hours**:
women report more problems than men
 - Having children is an important factor
- Factors predicting good or bad work-life balance
 - Negative: long working hours + asocial hours
 - Also working outside working hours to meet work demands
 - Positive : Being able to take time off at short notice
 - Telework, working time regularity
 - Having some say over working time (flexitime, chose between schedules):
yes but to lesser degree

Company practices can make a difference

- Practical measures
 - Flexibility in working hours; part-time work, longer care leave
- Minimising financial disadvantages
 - Payment during emergency leave; minimising income loss associated with working time reduction; paid leave or ‘topping up’ of social benefit payments
- Care related support
 - Information; counselling; care brokerage; practical daily life support
- Other measures
 - Awareness raising; promotion of positive attitudes; addressing carers health and wellbeing

Eurofound (2011) *Company initiatives for workers with care responsibilities*

Maternity, parental and other leaves

- Differences between countries
 - Not every leave is the same:
 - Main factors to consider:
 - Right to leave
 - Duration of leave
 - Remuneration (replacement rates)
- Many decisions are taken at the kitchen table
- Take-up of leaves
- Other dependents' leave

Sources: Eurofound (2015) Maternity leave in the EU: duration and allowances

Eurofound (2015) Promoting uptake of parental and paternity leave among fathers in the EU

Some final reflections

- Increase in female employment: yes but ...
 - Gender effects vary across life stages, by country, by job quality
 - Continued gender segregation and uneven sharing of paid work and unpaid (care) work between men and women
 - Changing time needs throughout working life
 - Care responsibilities for children, grandchildren, other dependants
 - Transitions
- It is the combination of different actions and instruments
 - Social system and labour law + social infrastructure
 - Company practices can facilitate work-life balance (not all costly)
 - Household decisions (and working time preferences)
 - ... and take up ...
- Linked with sustainability of work throughout the life course for men and women

Thank you for your attention

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