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

CURRENT WORKFORCE

- Characteristics of the job

potential workforce

- Characteristics of the worker

JOB QUALITY

- 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 COURSE

- Time availability/care obligations
- Health / well being
- Skills / employability
- Unemployment / inactivity
- Motivation

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
Unpaid work throughout life stages

Source: Eurofound (2013), Working time and work life balance in a life course perspective
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 (flexitme, chose between schedules): yes but to lesser degree

Source: 6th EWCS
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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