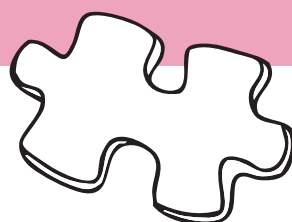


# 3. RECONCILING AT THE WORKPLACE, NOT A MATTER OF SIZE OR SECTOR

# RECONCILING AT THE WORKPLACE, NOT A MATTER OF SIZE OR SECTOR



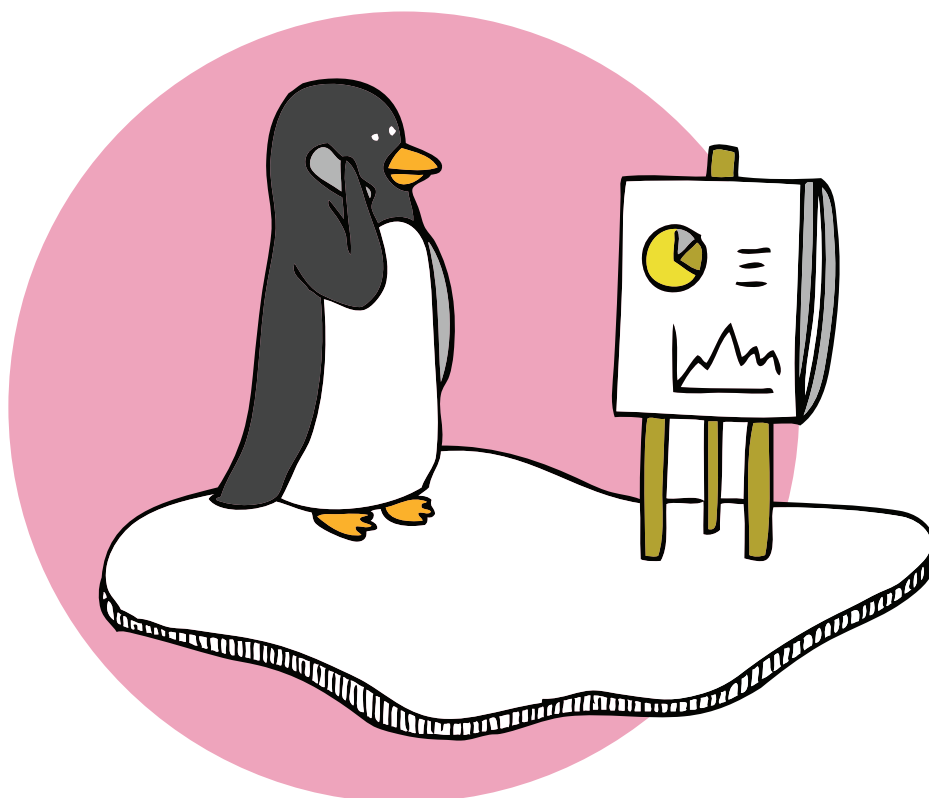
Reconciliation policies are still too often seen as being employee benefits only for young parents, especially young mothers and, therefore firstly considered to be policies for a minority only, and secondly policies only large corporations or public sector employers can put in place for only certain types of jobs, mainly managerial and white collar.

However, as described in the previous chapters, it is more appropriate to see reconciliation policies as a new way of doing business, of allowing businesses to access the untapped potential of women, allowing women and men to balance their work, family and private life, creating a more gender equal society and reducing the risk of poverty, especially in old age. Such workplace measures can have a positive impact, among which are reduced absenteeism and turnover, more motivated and engaged employees, enhanced productivity, improved attraction and retention of qualified workforce, swifter return from leaves, and an overall improvement of the wellbeing of staff, all of which will be positively reflected on the bottom line.

More women than men graduate tertiary education, and despite more and more women being managers and business owners, there are only 2,8%<sup>1</sup> women CEOs at publicly listed corporations in Europe. The glass ceiling is well and truly there for many women, and the lack of solid reconciliation policies and measures at the workplace during the time of transition into parenthood for women means that women drop out on the way to the top. Lack of maternity and paternity policies, lack of public and/or employer supported childcare and elder-care solutions, lack of flexible hours, and ever greater work-pressures are a great source of frustration, as well as the reason behind women staying put in lower levels of their career ladders.

Even in some sectors like academia, which is seen as being one of the most flexible workplaces, with professors and researchers having a high degree of flexibility and control over their schedules, women still do not seem to make it to the top. In 2010, on average throughout the EU-27, 15.5%<sup>2</sup> of institutions in the Higher Education Sector were headed by women, and just 10% of universities had a female rector.

1. ILO publication "Women in Business and Management: Gaining momentum" 2015
2. [https://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document\\_library/pdf\\_06/she-figures-2012\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/she-figures-2012_en.pdf)



There are some overly male dominated sectors, and some mainly women dominated sectors, and what can be observed, is that the sectors with mainly women employees and workers are those that have a larger degree of flexible and part-time work, typically health-care, education, social work and related areas. The reasons behind women orienting towards these sectors are multiple, but one aspect is the relatively easier reconciliation of work and family life responsibilities and time-management in these sectors.

In these past years, the European Commission has repeatedly underlined the need for innovation in work organisation but also in provision of affordable care for both children and other dependents. However, most of the workplace practices and policies implemented so far in EU countries typically address leave arrangements as well as flexible or reduced working hours. A survey conducted in 2009 in six EU countries (Germany, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Sweden and Poland.)

revealed that the proportion of companies offering flexible working hours ranged between 45.8% and 72.7%. Conversely, a much smaller proportion of companies offered childcare (between 1.1% and 3.8%), granted support in finding, organizing or financing childcare (between 2% and 18.3%) and offered their employees special family or household services (between 0% and 5.1%).

Reconciliation policies are not a “one-solution-fits-all” type of policies and adapted instruments must be elaborated and used to fulfil the specific needs of the workers and of the company, according to its size and sector, or developed to favour specifically self-employed and entrepreneurs.

This has a specific importance since more than 99% of all European businesses are, in fact, SMEs and they provide two out of three of the private sector jobs. Of those, nine out of ten SMEs are actually micro enterprises with less than 10 employees, each providing work for two persons, in average.

In this chapter, we will analyse and present how work life balance can be challenging but also approachable in both companies and public institutions of all sizes and sectors, including those where employees are not working in an office or by women entrepreneurs or self-employed.

Less than half of the European workforce has flexibility in working hours (Eurofound EQLS 2012) **43%**

## LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Directive 91/383/EEC supplementing the measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of workers with a fixed-duration employment relationship or a temporary employment relationship.

Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC - Annex : Framework agreement on part-time work.

Directive 2003/88/EC of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time.

Directive 2010/41/EU of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC.

### Communication

2006/0033 final: *Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme: Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning.*

Communication 2008/394 final: *Think Small First: A "Small Business Act" for Europe.*

Communication 2010/0491 final: *Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015.*

Communication 2012/795 final: *Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan: Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe.*

## POLICY POINTERS

### RECONCILIATION AT THE COMPANY LEVEL, THE WORKING CULTURE

Enterprises face work life balance challenges for various reasons: bigger companies inherited a fordist managerial culture, bound to presence at work and are not able to transform diversity into organisational and managerial tools. On the other hand, smaller companies do not have resources nor competences to make use of adequate organisational tools. It is therefore crucial for bigger companies to become the focus of a shift in working culture, competences and knowledge, in order to drive the change also to SMEs, thanks to already developed tools, simple practices and fiscal benefits.

From this, when starting reconciliation programmes or initiatives within companies, a few challenges can arise, in particular: changing the culture of personnel valorisation within enterprises, enhance knowledge about the advantages arising from promotion of worker's wellbeing and promote knowledge about long absences and maternity management tools and measures for services organisation, functional and organisational flexibility.

Alongside the internal factors, some policy measures and legislation can also work against the cultural change, increasing challenges instead of supporting positive developments. For example, new measures should encompass an analysis of needs of companies, considering them as a partner, in order to individuate innovative tools able to produce mutual advantages (win-win situation) such as: training, new managerial mainstreaming indications, development of technological organisation tools and fiscal benefits.

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT: CAREER OR RECONCILIATION CHOICE?

In Europe, 34% of entrepreneurs are women. However, much more could be done to promote this untapped resource of growth at EU and national level. All women wishing to start a business must be supported to do so. On the other hand, self-employment and entrepreneurship should not be the last resort, the only option available, for women to be able to reconcile their work and family life.

Being a freelance, a self-employed or an entrepreneur can, indeed, be riskier and penalize women, especially mothers. Mothers with small children, as a consequence, tend to avoid to undertake this career path, being afraid and aware of the reduction of social protection, job security and lack of company pensions. However, a new trend has arisen in the US with more than 7 million Mompreneurs (women who become entrepreneurs after having children to be able to combine work and family responsibilities) and has arrived in Europe. In the UK, a survey by the Office for National Statistics in 2009 showed that women were nearly five times more likely to cite family as their reason for becoming self-employed.

## WORKPLACE CULTURE EFFECTS WORKERS AND COMPANIES BUT ALSO THEIR COMMUNITIES

An unsupportive working culture and the lack of internal policies and practices to favour reconciliation have a negative impact on all stakeholders involved in the productive process, from the worker to the employer, including the community they live in.

### Effect on citizens and families:

- Women's resignation or reduction of work hours (where possible) after family events like childbirth, or a difficult return into the job market after periods spent caring for a disabled or dependent family member;
- Disinvestment on a professional career by women, especially working mothers or carers;
- Gender pay gap and subsequent gender pension gap;
- Demographic decrease and postponed family formation;
- Increase of expenditures for children and dependents' care caused by lack of flexible working arrangements and/or service provision (with a consequent lower purchasing power for families). Workers are therefore trapped in a situation where they cannot afford dropping out of the labour market but a big share of their income is paid to ensure their possibility to work;
- Increase of stress, burnout and other work related diseases with a significant impact on productivity and increased social security costs.

### Effect on companies:

- Low productivity for workplaces that are not objective-oriented;
- Increase in absenteeism;
- Loss of crucial resources and competences;
- Less effective investments (since the enterprise could make

a better use of existing resources in order to meet worker's needs);

- limited well-being and engagement of the workforce;
- limited ability to find innovative organisational solutions due also to the complexity and rigidity of labour laws and employment policies and high rate of bureaucracy for introducing changes.

### Effect on the community:

- Higher expenditures for sickness absence from work which could be reduced by improving the well-being of employees at work;
- More expensive services and lack of correspondence between services and needs since
  - » services are requested by those who cannot benefit from flexibility,
  - » employees' working hours are often not compatible with services opening hours.
- Less prosperity and general well-being.

## A RECONCILIATION-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT MUST BE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL TO BE EFFECTIVE

In order to create a reconciliation friendly environment, all stakeholders (workers, employers, families and public authorities) must be involved in shaping legislative and practical initiatives. Effective change will happen if a multi-dimensional approach is used, particularly around four axis:

### Cultural

It is vital to raise awareness, promote and, where necessary subsidise, measures for the dissemination of a new cultural and organisational paradigm that foresees the convergence of interests of both companies and workers. This can be done only by operating with a multi-level and multi-stakeholders' approach. A fundamental component is awareness of the existence of a "reconciliation environment" and the advantages of a "reconciliation economy". This must start in university where future managers are trained and be present in employment and training services. Public policies are also key as they would be a major trigger towards a real "reconciliation economy", on the model of the "green economy": re-adjusting public policies in order to move towards a model based on a win-win (employers-employee) principle instead of the current dichotomy between employers' and workers' interests.

### Economic

The second axis is a series of reforms in taxation that could support and give incentives to move towards a "reconciliation economy". For example, supporting a differentiated fiscal system that rewards companies with a lower social impact on their environment, including families and communities, or those who hire women, parents with young children, carers, youngsters and over50s. More than de-taxation, there are other ways that can work towards a reduction of the cost of labour and more reconciliation possibilities, for example: give employees the possibility to make use of flexible work arrangements such as telework, co-working, home-work, short-week, smart working, telecommuting,..). It is important, however, that trade unions and employees representatives are involved in this process, to ensure that flexibility is beneficial to all stakeholders and prevent from degenerating into a culture of availability of the employee.

Working in retail, manufacturing or in any other position that requires presence at the workplace, must not prevent workers from accessing flexible working arrangements. While distance-working tools may not be accessible, this should not prevent companies to design specific needs-related solutions (partnerships with service providers for child or dependent care, including non-office opening hours for those working on shifts, possibility to arrange within the unit/team for emergency leaves..). Planning is also a key element and includes also scheduling of working shifts in advance, allowing workers to organise themselves and their families, as a day-by-day change in planned working hours is detrimental to the worker's well-being, creates a negative spiral of uncertainty and may result in higher costs for last-minute care arrangements, which will be particularly harmful for low-income workers.

### Organisational

New and digital managerial tools for public and private entities that would support a change towards a more reconciliation-friendly organisation of working places are emerging but are not yet known and promoted enough. Maternity and Flexibility Management tools, digital tools for the access to territorial services or for measuring the impact of the new tools that already in place can support human resources departments or employees' representatives to develop tailored and needs based tools.

### Legislative

The legislative pillar is key to keep the system coherent and should design a labour market reflecting the needs of the society, offering flexible and secure solutions to workers and employers. A reconciliation friendly environment goes beyond labour law and must include legal provisions for leave schemes accessible and available for all workers, taxation or fiscal incentives (e.g. de-taxing care services where a personal contribution is required), recognize and promote reconciliation-friendly companies.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Legislative

- “Reconciliation economy” on the model of the “green economy”: develop and/or promote a social impact indicator, rewarding those companies with low social impact. Tools for assessment and rewarding mechanisms must be easily accessible (bureaucracy) and appealing. They can include, for example, tax-reductions and incentives, or specific requirements that are included in public procurement and tendering processes.
- The revised Working Time Directive should support a better reconciliation of work, family and private life by granting rights to request specific working time arrangements to fit their outside-of-work responsibilities (e.g. flextime, telework).
- Include in legislation (where it is not the case) the possibility for company-level collective agreements to design specific reconciliation measures, that can be translated in secure and needs-based solutions within each company, making sure that these measures are applicable to all workers or, where not possible, to design specific measures for non-office workers.

## Empowerment

- Support, promote and award the creation of networks of companies, that come together in order to pool resources and better respond to the needs of their employees and invest in the community through the creation or support to existing services, particularly for care services.
- Support women who wish to become self-employed and entrepreneurs by developing or supporting existing programmes in schools and in employment services, and to stay in self-employment and entrepreneurship by adapting legislation in order to provide them with the same access to leave schemes as employed women in terms of social security payments.



# EXAMPLES

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## GERMANY /AUSTRIA /ITALY AUDIT FOR COMPANIES

The audit "BerufundFamilie" is a management tool to support companies to create a family-friendly working environment. Before getting a certificate an auditor first identifies company needs through discussions with management and employees, leading to the establishment of a company plan, with goals to be achieved in a set period. After three years, an external auditor assesses achievements and, if the assessment is positive, the company receives the certificate for another three years. After the success of the audit in Germany the berufundfamilie gGmbH created a European work and family audit, which can be accessed also in Austria and in Italy. The Italian implementation has been selected by the EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality as Good Practice in the Field of Reconciling Work and Family Life.




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## SPAIN EFR FAMILY FRIENDLY CERTIFICATION

It is a private management tool to assess how family-friendly internal policies are in any type of organisations from SMEs, large companies, to NGOs or public authorities. It includes a set of 30 indicators regarding the quality of employment, temporal and physical flexibility, gender equality etc. It has been developed as an ISO norm with Spanish Standardisation body AENOR and is recognized by the Spanish Ministry of Social affairs and by the UN as a best practice. More than 400 organisations in 20 countries have already been certified. An external evaluator assesses how the organisation performs in relation to these indicators and if it is positive, it receives the certification.




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## FRANCE NATIONAL FUND FOR FAMILY ALLOWANCE (CNAF)

The CNAF has contributed to several studies on the non-standard hours/days of work in the prospect of gender equality at work, namely on the basis of four experimentations (2005) of non-standard hours childcare provisions (before and after usual open hours of traditional childcare services).

In 2010, the "Pays Bassin d'Arcachon-Val de l'Eyre" (a French local community), in association with the local CAF (Caisse Allocation Familiale/local Fund for Family Allowance) among others, launched an experimentation in 13 municipalities to organize the provision of non-standard hour childcare facilities.




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## FRANCE PARENT-FRIENDLY CHARTER FOR SMALL AND LARGE COMPANIES

"Parent-friendly charter for small and large companies - Charte de la parentalité en entreprise". It was launched in 2008 with the objective to encourage companies to propose their employees who are parents a working environment which is better adapted to their family responsibilities. 500 companies have already signed it. An Observatory on parenthood in companies was also set up with the companies who have signed the charter.



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## **BELGIUM CHARTER FOR A FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMPANY OF THE GEZINSBOND (FLEMISH FAMILY ORGANISATIONS NETWORK)**

When a company subscribes to this Charter it has to subscribe not only to the value of gender equality but also apply the principle that every family friendly measure that the company offers, must be open to men and women workers equally. Further on, the company promises to give the opportunity to a person that worked part-time for family reasons, to invest in an ambitious career path after that period.



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## **GERMANY THE GERMAN STATE “RHEINLAND- PFALZ”**

The German state “Rheinland-Pfalz”, called the “LANDESWETTBEWERB FIRMA & FAMILIE” (held in 2012/2013). This was a competition for SME having family friendly measures. It appeared to be a good method to find some “hidden champions” of reconciliation within SMEs. In Germany most of the good examples come from large-scale enterprises. A brochure with the winning examples and best practices has been published in August 2014.



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## **ITALY NETWORK OF ENTERPRISES**

Various enterprises unite to share investments and welfare solutions. For example “Valore D” organizes workshops for over 50 enterprises working on Parental&Leave Management, FlexiManagement and Smart Working, Welfare Benefit. The “Giunca” network is a formal agreement signed by around 10 companies of different sizes but in the same area (Varese province). The companies share training, safety and welfare initiatives (care services, campus, credit products with low rates, purchase of school books) and manage at the same time to provide employees with services and save money since, thanks to the high number of employees, it can obtain good prices and good services for all the workers. The welfare and work-life balance shared program can be profitable also for micro and small enterprises.



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## **FINLAND THE FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE**

Family-friendly practices at the workplace consist in a series of attitudes and actions. The Finnish Family Federation developed an on-line self-assessment tool for companies and workplaces to find out how family-friendly their workplace is. A family-friendly workplace means that employers offer different policies and services to employees who take care of family members, such as parents or parents-to-be, or those who take care of their spouse or another member of their family.

The Family-friendly workplace test is available in Finnish and English.



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## DATABASES AND RESOURCES FOR MORE EXAMPLES OF RECONCILIATION IN COMPANIES

There are a number of collections and selections of practices aimed at providing workers with a reconciliation friendly working environments which have been compiled by European Institutions, NGOs, research centres...

Each of them may have a specific target but could be a resourceful tool for companies or policy makers that wish to trigger change in their company or constituency. The list is not exhaustive.

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## EU LEVEL EIGE

Good practices on reconciling work and family life.



## EUROFOUND

“Company initiatives for workers with care responsibilities for disabled children or adults”



## SOCIAL PARTNERS

“Gender Equality toolkit: 100 initiatives by social partners and in the workplace across Europe”



