

1. FAMILY POLICY: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND OBJECTIVES

1.2 Main objectives and policy drivers

iii) Is the issue of reconciliation of work and family life high on the policy agenda? What are the main policy goals?

Austria

To offer a freedom of choice for parents - whether they want to take care of their child/children of their own or they want somebody else (a family member, a day mother, a kindergarten ...) to take care of the child.
Re-entry of parents into the labour market.
Family friendly workplace environment (familienfreundliche Arbeitswelt).
Good quality child care facilities.
More participation of fathers concerning family life and duties.

Azerbaijan

The issue of reconciliation of work and family life is high on the policy agenda. As indicated above (see section 1.2) almost all state programs and national action plans, as well as legislative acts (see Family Code provisions) include policy decisions and regulations to ease combining of professional and family responsibilities, with special focus on women.

Belgium

La communauté flamande
Yes, beyond doubt. Apart from a better safeguard of equal opportunities, the ongoing reduction of the unemployment rate in Flanders in previous years especially urged the Flemish Government to act on this issue. Foremost, developing further the capacity of child care services is a primary concern, especially of the Minister responsible for Family Affairs. But additional to his initiatives other Ministers also act upon this issue (cf. Labour, Equal Opportunities, Youth & Sports).

La région wallonne
Oui: augmentation du nombre de structures d'accueil de l'enfance 0-3 ans, amélioration de l'encadrement des 0-6 ans. Soutien aux infrastructures d'accueil extra scolaire 6-12 ans. L'objectif est de permettre aux parents d'accéder à un emploi ou de maintenir l'activité professionnelle. Voir aussi réponse à la question précédente (point 3).

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mentioned, but not applicable.

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Bulgaria

The issue of reconciliation of work and family life takes an important place among the obligations and responsibilities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

One of the priority directions set out in the Updated Employment Strategy 2008-2015 includes actions aimed at providing flexicurity at approving an approach of work based on the 'lifecycle'. The promotion of an approach to work based on the 'lifecycle' also takes a key place in the National Employment Action Plan 2008 and ensures support upon returning to work after a period of giving birth to and raising a child. Employment for parents is supported through concrete measures and promotion programmes – the National Programme in Support of Motherhood, the Family Centres for Children Project, etc.

Croatia

There are some measures in National Population Policy related to the issue of reconciliation of work and family life, mainly related to labour market.

Main policy goals according to the National Population Strategy in this area are: "to ensure the possibility of full employment, ensure better reconciliation of work and family life, ensure gender equality, ensure conditions for easier entrance in and disentrance from labour market (especially for women), to stimulate implementation of flexible work arrangements".

Act on Maternity and Parental Benefits encourages greater flexibility of work which shall allow easier reconciliation of domestic and work obligation by a number of temporal and financial aids.

Cyprus

The issue of reconciliation of work and family life is very high on the policy agenda of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.

The main goals of the measures being promoted are to increase the participation of women in the labour market, to reduce gender inequality and to ensure adequate care of children and other dependent family members.

Within this framework, a National Action Plan (NAP) for Gender Equality was approved by the Government in 2007 (described under section 3.2. iii)) and a study was commissioned on the problem of the gender pay gap. Following the completion of the study, policy measures for reducing the pay gap were proposed and are to be implemented in consultation with public authorities, the social partners and stakeholders.

At the same time, measures have been taken for the expansion, promotion and improvement of care services for children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and other dependent family members (described under section 3.5.).

Czech Republic

The area of harmonization of professional and family life, where the conditions are created for the parents to provide child care and to realize their careers is an area which is one of the main priorities of the current government. Besides that, in order to uphold principles of freedom of choice, the state wants to promote and create conditions for those parents who decide to provide their own long-term parental child care.

The fundamental question in drafting and realization of conditions for the support of the families is to define the goals of family policies and the question of their identity, respectively intensity, their harmonization with the goals of other policies, especially with the employment policies and gender equality.

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Denmark

Yes, However the ministry of social welfare has increased its focus on socially vulnerable families considerably.

Estonia

The issue is relatively high. The main policy goal is to smooth the high lack of childcare possibilities. The main activities for achieving the goal are set in the Programme of the Coalition for 2007-2011:

- for the purpose of increasing the number of nursery school student places and contribution to payment of a minimum salary to nursery school teachers, which is equal to that of basic school teachers, create a national investment programme titled "Nursery school available to each and every child!";
- add a provision to the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act, according to which a local authority that fails to provide a parent requesting a nursery school student place with one, shall pay the parent the so-called poll tax of the nursery school child so that the parent can arrange the provision of the child with the nursery service and general education;
- in order to increase parents' options upon developing their children and combining work and family life and to make the return of parents to the labour market easier, develop flexible work and child care opportunities, support employment training of the parent staying at home with the child and calculate the time spent by a parent in the parental leave as part of the length of the unemployment insurance.

Finland

The main goal is to make possible for families (both parents) to participate on labour market and same time to have and take care of family and children (both parents).

France

Yes. The purpose is to afford women access to the labour market with the possibility of pursuing a career, and to involve each partner in family life with, for example, a better division of daily tasks.
Study is proceeding on support to parents in having their children cared for. The recommendations should be operational by 2012. Moreover, as an example of the action in hand, over 30 enterprises last May signed the "parenting charter" with the Ministry of Labour, Social Relations, Family Affairs and Solidarity and the State Secretariat responsible for family affairs. In particular, the enterprises undertake to create a favourable environment for working parents including pregnant women, to abide by non-discrimination between men and women, and to enhance the representation of parental concerns in the enterprise.

Germany

The reconciliation of work and family life has a high priority (cf. answer to 1.2.i). One of the main aims is to create the framework conditions for men and women to be able to realize their life plans and to be able to reconcile their careers, families and children.



Greece

As it was already mentioned, it is high in our country's agenda the need for reconciliation of work and family life, which is achieved through policies of promoting the employment, extending of structures of care and promoting equal treatment. There are a number of policies having as a core the disengagement of woman from the family obligations and her inclusion in the labour market. In this way we improve family income and fight unemployment, poverty and the trend observed in the reduction of births rate, because of financial problems.

Hungary

Yes, it is. Since the female employment rate is lower than the EU average, the possible ways of better reconciliation of work and family life are under examination.

Iceland

Yes, the issue of work and family life is high on the policy agenda. The government's policy agenda declares measures to reduce the gender wage gap by half during the present term. The Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave No. 95/2000 ensures both parents equal right to parental leave, three months each and a joint right to additional three months. The aim of this Act to ensure a child's access to both parents and to enable both women and men to reconcile work and family life. The duration of the parental leave is to be extended gradually. There is also a prohibition on the termination of employment due to family responsibilities (Act No. 27/2000).

In 2008 the act of equal position and equal rights of women and men (no. 10/2008). The aim of the act was to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities of women and men, thus equalising the position of the sexes in all areas of social life. The act requires companies with more than 25 employees to set themselves gender equality targets and to mainstream gender equality measures in their management of human resources, subject to review every three years.

The government made an official plan for gender equality in 2004, for the duration of four years. The main object is gender equality in the labour market and in public sector. The role of equal opportunities officers was to be defined. The effectiveness of the implementation of the plan was to be evaluated.

Ireland

The main policy goals are as follows:

- to support parents in their decision to work and/or to care for their children,
- to encourage higher labour force participation rates, especially of older people and women,
- improve access to family friendly, flexible working arrangements,
- develop a more productive and competitive economy,
- contribute to tackling child poverty by supporting parents in more vulnerable families into education, training and employment,
- to realise the potential benefits that family friendly working arrangements offer from both an equality and competitiveness perspective,
- to contribute to the needs of business as well as meeting the needs of employees with family responsibilities,
- to encourage a partnership approach to meeting the needs of both the organisation and the employees.

Italy

MATERNITY PROTECTION AND RECONCILIATION OF WORK AND FAMILY LIFE

Italy has been promoting the issue of work-life balance with a variety of tools, all aiming at increasing women participation in the labour market and stressing the importance of equal sharing of responsibilities and equality between women and men. Since 2000, thanks to a comprehensive legislation on maternity and work-life balance, a more family friendly culture and global strategy has been launched, both at national and local level.

The strategy is essentially based on 3 main pillars: a) parental leave; b) work organisation; c) child care and other dependent services. Furthermore, family allowances complete the legal and financial framework.

First, legislation on parental leave pays particular attention to promoting a higher involvement of men in family responsibilities, by entitling fathers with paternity leave, and, what is more important, by introducing a parental leave scheme that provides the couple with a longer paid period. As regards this, there is still a gap between women and men in taking parental leave.

Secondly, as far as work-life balance is concerned, legislation provides also for financial support to private experimental projects aimed at turning enterprises into family friendly workplaces, by helping them implement flexible working time arrangements (such as part time, job sharing and tele-work), and also special services for employees with particular needs because of their role as family caregivers (e.g. child care or elderly care services).

Simultaneously, financial support is also given to local authorities to develop plans for a better articulation of city times, that means more flexibility in the availability of public services for family needs.

Thirdly, faced with a low supply of childcare services, Italy has concentrated its efforts to provide available, affordable and high quality child care services (v. infra, Special Plan for early childhood services).

- Positive action. Italy has continued to promote measures to help parents reconcile work and family life and to favour the participation of women in the labour market, also through initiatives at the local level.

Based on art. 9 of the Law no. 53/2000, as amended by the Finance Act 2007, the Fund for family policies allocated 40 million Euros to positive action plans aimed at experimenting forms of flexibility of working hours, part-time work, teleworking, replacement, training and assistance for people who go back to work after a period of leave.

- Maternal leave for precarious workers. The Finance Act 2007 extended to people on a short-term contract the right to receive maternity pay – also in case of adoption or foster care – as well as a daily sickness benefit to be paid by the National Social Security Institute (INPS).

- Parental leave for adoptive parents. The Finance Act 2008 equalized the treatment of adoptive and foster parents to the one of biological parents with respect to maternal and parental leave, regardless of the age of the adopted or foster child. Through the legislative decree implementing the Directive 2006/54/EC, adopted on the first reading by the Council of Ministers on 27 February 2008, adoptive parents were fully equalized to biological parents also with respect to the prohibition to dismiss them when the adoption begins.

- Reconciliation of work and family life. The legislative decree implementing the Directive 2006/54/EC reformed art. 9 of the Law no. 53/2000 with the aim to meet citizens' needs more effectively. In particular, the reform increased the number of parties eligible for funding and of reconciliation needs for which projects can be presented. The law also provides for actions for the promotion of innovative services, to be carried out also through the collaboration of local bodies and private subjects, in the framework of the creation of a local network for the reconciliation of work and family life. The Department also organized some seminars to study and analyze best practices at a national and European level, as well as to compare the different implementation models and the most advanced policies for the reconciliation of work and family life.

- Reorganization of parental leave and the right to part-time work. The same legislative decree gave women who are on mandatory maternal leave the right to participate in public competitions, courses and internal selection procedures, provided that their conditions allow them to do so. If pregnant women are not able to participate in courses and selection procedures, their public or private employers must in any case guarantee their right to professional advancement and to retraining and avoid any kind of discrimination. Furthermore, women on leave must be guaranteed all the improvements in working conditions obtained by other workers during their period of leave. The reform also introduced the possibility for working mothers and fathers to use their parental leave on an hourly basis and not only for entire days.

A bill adopted by the Council of Ministers on 16 November 2007 had already mandated the Government to reorganize legislation on maternal and parental leave, in order to better meet the practical needs of all the categories of workers, both employees (including fixed-term contracts, etc.) and self-employed. The objective is to guarantee better parenthood support and equal opportunities

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between men and women. The bill also established that parents with children under age are entitled to work part-time for at least a year.

Latvia

The issue of reconciliation of work and family life is high on the policy agenda. The Ministry of Welfare has included it into its programme for Implementing Gender Equality 2007-2009, in which a set of activities is planned to promote it. The objective of the policy is to improve the opportunities of reconciliation of work and family life for both women and men and to promote the interest of employees in creating the opportunities for reconciliation of work and family life.

In order to encourage implementation of gender mainstreaming within the area of family life and child care, as also improve the balance between private and working life on 1 January 2008 the new social insurance benefit – Parent's benefit, which has replaced earning related Child raising benefit for socially insured persons who are raising children under 1 year of age, was introduced. With the introducing of parent's benefit socially insured persons, who are raising children under 1 year of age, receives previous work incomes (net working wage) in full amount. This in turn could promote that fathers more actively will participate in family life and child care (taking into account that monthly working wage is higher for males). As a result of introducing the parent's benefit females, possible, more actively will participate in the labour market, in turn, males will have the greater opportunity to care for a child.

Also the Action plan for the implementation of the conception "National Family Policy" for the year 2004 – 2013 includes the objectives to improve the employment facilities of the family members and to improve childcare system for preschool and primary school children. The Action plan also includes the objective to provide financial support for families. The aim of the state family policy is to create such conditions that are favourable for the family, among other things, to promote the facility for both parents to get involved in the labour market. At the same time the state family policy's aim is to promote the possibility for the child to grow up in such an environment which is favourable for the child's development. One of essential preconditions for that is to provide an opportunity for the parents to take care of the child personally (to be able to use the leave for child care).

Lithuania

In 2007-2008 reconciliation of work and family life is high on the policy agenda (Lithuania selected topic of reconciliation of work and family life as one of 2 topics to be supported by the EU initiative EQUAL) and the main policy goals within gender equality policies are promotion of flexible work forms and family friendly enterprises, implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender equality planning at the workplace. From 2009 in the plans of a new Government, family issues will be more directed to the implementation of the Concept of Family Policy which was approved by the Parliament of Republic of Lithuania in 2008.

Luxembourg

Yes, see above i) and ii).

Malta

Yes, this has been also high on the govt. agenda. The family policy further strengthens the government agenda.

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Moldova

The problems related to work and family life still follow to be placed in the priorities and family support objectives.

Monaco

L'offre en places de crèches permet de satisfaire les besoins de la population résidente.
La part du prix de journée à charge des parents est proportionnelle aux revenus.

Netherlands

The theme as a whole is the subject of intense political concern, primarily – but not exclusively – from the perspective of creating better work opportunities and financial independence for women. A recent parliamentary initiative advocated paid leave for new fathers.

Norway

This has been high on the agenda for a long time. A recent focus has been on the employees' right to more flexible working arrangements. Another recent focus has been the right for part time employees to extend their working hours if they wish so.

Portugal

Yes, the issue of work and family reconciliation is high on the policy agenda, with the expansion in service provision emerging as a major goal. Over the last three years a significant financial investment has been made in service provision in order to increase coverage rates for crèches and preschools. According to official figures, 14.652 places for children up to 3 years old have already been created. At present the main policy goals are the creation of another 3.850 places in crèches (0-3 years old) in order to achieve the 33% coverage rate established as the "Barcelona compromise", as well as the expansion in preschools, in particular to increase coverage rates in the metropolitan areas (Lisbon and Oporto), aiming to achieve a 100% coverage rate for five year olds within two years (at present coverage rates for preschool children aged 3-6 is 56% in the metropolitan areas and 77% at a national level).

As previously mentioned, this investment in services is based on two major strategies: the increase in the number of places and the extension of opening-hours. Both strategies aim to support full-time dual earner couples with children as the main 'reconciliation' policy model.

Increasing gender equality in work/life balance is another goal on the reconciliation policy agenda. The 1999 law on paternity and maternity (also introduced by a PS government) increased the gender sharing of leave by establishing 5 (instead of 2) days paternity leave, by introducing a fully-compensated 15-day Daddy leave and by entitling either parent to the two-hour reduction in work during the first year after the child's birth. More changes in the leave system, with a view to increasing leave and promoting the involvement of fathers in leave, were recently announced by the government in May 2008. The new proposal still in discussion (see answer to question 3.3 iii) establishes strong linkages between changes in the leave system and the introduction of more gender equality.

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Romania

The need of promoting the principle of reconciliation the family life with professional life is a major challenge also for Romanian Government. Taking into consideration the importance of taking care about child, a lot of woman are more interested about part time jobs, but this jobs are not well paid.

In order to avoid this barriers, are introduced regulations regarding creation, organization and functioning the different type of services for education, caring during the day for all children until the child graduate the primary school. The services provide care and early education for children between 3 months – 3 years old and after school/kindergarten activities for children until theirs graduate the primary school. These activities can be organized in day centres, at home or in special community services open in the neighbourhoods.

Russian Federation

The reconciliation of family life and work is recognized at political level as one of the main objectives of population and family policies. As shown above, special chapters of main political documents in these spheres are devoted to this issue.

The main sectors of activities to meet the laid down objectives are:

- Indisputable fulfilment of legal norms set by the labour laws concerning workers with family obligations.
- Guaranties for mother employment after giving birth.
- Development of child care services for children under 6.

Serbia

As for conciliation of the family and working life, pursuant to Art. 18 of the Labour Law, direct and indirect discrimination of the persons seeking employment is forbidden, as well as of employees, on the basis of sex, disability, nationality, marital status, family obligations, social origin, etc. Discrimination is banned in relation to the conditions of employment and recruitment, conditions of work and all the rights arising from employment, education, training and specialization, professional advancement, termination of the employment. Pursuant to Art. 187 of the Labour Law it is provided that during pregnancy, maternity leave, leave from work for care of child and leave from work for special care of child the termination of employment is forbidden. Main purpose of such a policy is the achievement of equality in relation to the opportunities and treatment of the worker with family responsibilities. Also, by means of amendments to the Labour Law to secure greater rights for the women workers in the period of pregnancy and motherhood, as well as rights to the parents with seriously sick child in relation to leave from work an overall protection of parents after the expiry of maternity leave and leave from work for child care. Also, the aim is to improved response to the needs of the child, and to achieve balance between care for a child and professional engagement.

Slovakia

The issue of reconciliation of work and family life represents one of the priority agenda of the Government of the SR which in 2006 adopted the material "Measures for the Reconciliation of Work and Family Life".

The main intent of the policy followed by the Government of the SR in this area is to support working parents in carrying out work that allows them relative economic independence, strengthen the motivation of parents to have and properly raise their children in order to create a parental strategy of survival for those who face unfavourable conditions in the labour market and to support the provision of care for persons dependent on the care carried out by working persons so that such possibility of care is available to all

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working persons, with special emphasis on the availability to low-income families.

Considering the implementation of such intent, support in the near future will be particularly directed towards young families with children and towards families caring for dependent relatives. Specifically, it concerns support of the increase in the flexibility of the labour market, support of educational activities aiming at the reintegration of women into the labour market, support of a better approach by employers towards working parents as well as the development of information services concerning the existing network of services related to care of children and persons dependent on the care of working persons, support of the increase of availability, flexibility and equality of the system of public social services to families in order to create their competitiveness and increase their quality. Such measures will be accompanied by the growth of employment in the area of social economy.

Creating conditions for the possibility of reconciliation of the work and family life of parents represents one of the reasons for preparing the draft law on child care allowance by which the government plans to introduce a financial benefit for parents who provide for the care of a child under three years of age, or under six years of age if concerning a child with a long-term unfavourable health condition, who at the same time wish to carry out gainful activity. The purpose of such benefit is to financially contribute to the parents' expenses related to the provision of care for their child by a legal person or by a physical person during the time when the parent carries out gainful activity and cannot therefore care for the child in person.

In the interest of increasing flexible forms of work organisation, an amendment of the Labour Code established the definition of teleworking as well as its technical possibilities.

Slovenia

In September 2006 the Institute for Economic Research, as a coordinator of a "Young mothers/family-friendly employment" development partnership, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs started a pilot project for Family-Friendly Company certificate, which should in 2007/2008 become a permanent project under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs granted basic certificates to the first 32 Slovenian companies for three years. In this period the recipients of the basic certificate must introduce the chosen measures for improving working conditions.

Spain

Certainly, reconciliation of work and family life is high on the policy agenda. It is considered to be of need to introduce structural changes, policies that may regulate the usage of the time in accordance with reality of daily family life and work timetables, to encourage co-responsibility for domestic and education tasks.

The Spanish Government faces the challenge of reconciling life and work within the frame work of gender equality and children's rights.

Increasing women's participation in the labour market is one of the main goals of the reconciliation policy, as is broadening the offer of quality services for children up to three years old and other dependants.

Sweden

Yes, see above i) and ii).

Switzerland

La conciliation entre la vie professionnelle et familiale bénéficie d'une attention prioritaire. Il s'agit d'abord de créer les conditions qui permettent cette conciliation et de faciliter l'activité professionnelle des parents. Les jeunes femmes actives ne doivent plus être contraintes de choisir entre carrière professionnelle et maternité.

Deux mesures principales ont été réalisées au cours de ces dernières années:

- La première consiste en la mise en œuvre d'un programme d'impulsion accordant des aides financières à l'accueil extra-familial pour enfants. Le but principal de ce programme est de stimuler la création de places d'accueil collectif de jour et d'accueil parascolaire.
- La seconde mesure est constituée par l'acceptation par le peuple et les cantons de nouveaux articles constitutionnels sur l'éducation. Ces articles visent l'harmonisation de l'instruction publique concernant la scolarité obligatoire, l'âge d'entrée à l'école, la durée et les objectifs des niveaux d'enseignement et la reconnaissance des diplômes. Si les cantons, qui sont compétents en la matière, n'arrivent pas à s'entendre, la Confédération pourra alors édicter les prescriptions nécessaires.

Une troisième mesure liée à l'imposition de la famille, ayant pour but d'atténuer la discrimination dont sont victimes les couples mariés à deux revenus par rapport aux couples non mariés à deux revenus, est entrée en vigueur le 1er janvier 2008.

Turkey

For the issue of the reconciliation of work and family life is not of high importance but again preventive effective measures are being taken for the reconciliation by Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Examples regarding this are time maternity, paternity and parental leave.

Ukraine

The issue of reconciliation of work and family life is not high on the policy agenda. Any person from family may to have 3 years leave when a child is born. After this time all issues are family problems. Most of employers don't sign agreement with men or women for part day job.

United Kingdom

There is a focus on enabling mothers to work as a means of reducing poverty. A right to request flexible working has been introduced. Access to childcare is also seen as important to enable this, as well as a way of promoting child development. From April 2008, local authorities will have a duty to secure sufficient childcare to enable parents to work, or to undertake education and training leading to work.