

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

As part of the EU-project WORKCARE SYNERGIES, two events organised by the team of the Vienna University of Economics and Business offer information and provide room for discussions:

1st workshop 2010

Premiere of the short film „Work-Life Balance: Our Children's Visions“

Presentations on the following topics:

- Work-Life Balance from the point of view of children
- Attitudes of Europeans towards employment in a life-course perspective and childcare
- The influence of working conditions on Work-Life Balance

2nd workshop 2011

For the workshop in spring 2011, the following topics are envisioned:

- Work in a life-course perspective and care
- Concluding recommendations to politics and the economy

The project

WORKCARE SYNERGIES is an EU-Project (*Support Action*) with the aim of disseminating and discussing research findings of previous EU Framework Programme projects in the field of work-care. As a central part of this project, dissemination events are organised by local key mediator teams in seven countries (Austria, UK, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Portugal).

For more information on the project and related events, please visit our website: www.workcaresynergies.eu

WORKCARE SYNERGIES centres on the idea of information transfer – to make existing research findings available to local agents and other interested parties.

Target groups and aims

Both workshops are addressed to local NGOs, policy makers, trade unions, labour representatives, regional organizations and services, companies and other local actors.

The events feature presentations of selected results, as well as discussions on the relevance of these findings in local contexts.

Key outcomes of the discussions will be communicated to EU bodies in the form of recommendations.

Definitions

What do we understand by Work-Life Balance?

„Work-Life Balance“ (WLB) almost resembles a magic formula promising reconciliation of work-life/work-family conflicts. But by simply adding these two spheres we do not arrive at a satisfactory solution, as Karin Jurczyk confirms:

„More than that, we can picture it as an ongoing effort to achieve the delicate balance between opposing forces. (...) Balance is a reflection of transformations at the very base of our present-day working conditions which occur in manifold dimensions (space, time, content of work, status, job security etc.), entailing the dissolution of employment structures which have hitherto been taken for granted.“ (cf. Karin Jurczyk¹ 2005, 110f).

At the same time, private life and family structures are also undergoing fundamental changes.

Work-Life Balance or Imbalance today?

Gainful employment and care work are generally treated as two distinct tasks in our society - the latter of these two is usually not remunerated but still widely presupposed. This applies to both childcare and childraising, as well as to care of the elderly. The reconciliation of the two spheres initially mentioned, however, remains within individual responsibility. Social support systems, such as kindergardens, boarding schools and institutions for professional care do presently not cover the existing demands. Slowly but surely, though, a turn of the tides can be noticed. Which are the social processes being put in motion nowadays?

For the WORKCARE SYNERGIES project, the Austrian team at the Vienna University of Economics and Business is preparing selected results taken from existing research for dissemination and discussion with local agents.

¹ "Viel eher trifft das Bild der Balance zu, bei dem es darum geht, ein prekäres Gleichgewicht zwischen unterschiedlichen Kräften immer wieder neu auszutarieren. (...) Balance reflektiert auf den tief greifenden Strukturwandel der Arbeitswelt, der in verschiedensten Dimensionen (Raum, Zeit, Arbeitsinhalt, Status, Beschäftigungssicherheit etc.) zu einer Auflösung bislang als selbstverständlich geltender Strukturen von Erwerbsarbeit führt." Karin Jurczyk (2005): Work-Life-Balance und geschlechtergerechte Arbeitsteilung. Alte Fragen neu gestellt, in: Seifert, Hartmut (Ed.): Flexible Zeiten in der Arbeitswelt, Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 102-123.

Definitions

Which factors influence Work-Life Balance?



Economy & politics and WLB The illustration above clearly visualizes the interdependence of the areas of politics, economy and culture, and their complex influence on WLB. In a previous event organised by our colleagues from the IHS (May 2010), treating the topic of 'Tensions between Work and Family Life', the salience of the political framework in the question of achieving a successful WLB has already been discussed. We now move on to focus on the attitudes towards work in a life-course perspective and childcare. Which effects do present working conditions in a changing world of work have on the subjective perception of WLB?

„With good reason, we should now especially consider the expansion of people's individual capabilities that enable them to lead a life they consider worth living. Public measures often help to expand these individual capabilities, but the direction of these very measures can in turn be influenced by public participatory actions.“ (Amartya Sen² 2005, 29).

But what exactly is it people value? What are their attitudes?

How do people in various European countries differ in this matter?

² „Die Aufmerksamkeit gilt vor allem der Erweiterung der „Verwirklichungschancen“ [=capabilities] der Menschen, genau das Leben führen zu können, das sie schätzen, und zwar mit guten Gründen. Die Verwirklichungschancen lassen sich durch öffentliche Maßnahmen vergrößern, doch lässt sich die Richtung solcher Maßnahmen durch wirksamen Einsatz partizipatorischer Verwirklichungschancen seitens der Öffentlichkeit ihrerseits beeinflussen.“ Sen, Amartya (2005) [1999]: Die Ökonomie für den Menschen. Wege zu mehr Gerechtigkeit und Solidarität in der Marktwirtschaft: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.

Attitudes towards employment in a life-course perspective and childcare

The topic **Attitudes towards employment in a life-course perspective and childcare in Europe**

Statistics reflect the day-to-day realities of those concerned: Reconciling and organising employment and family life represents a challenge. But a noticeable change in trends over the last decade shows that people's attitudes and goals in life are undergoing a transformation. Many would now prefer a freedom of choice and are pursuing "*possibilities for leading a life they consider worth living*".³ (cf. Amartya Sen 2005).

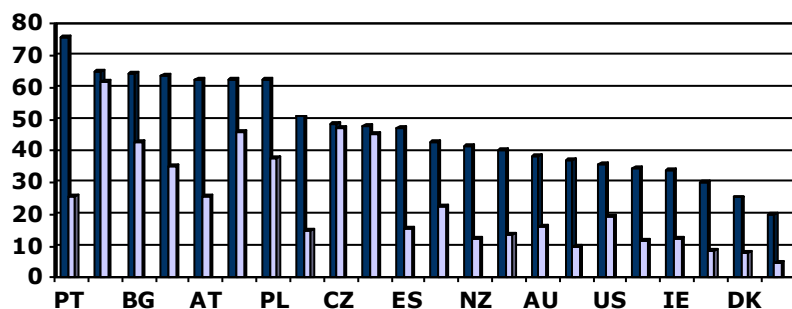
The project WORKCARE (2006-2009) is a 6th EU Framework Support Action focusing on social quality and new relations between work, care and wealth in Europe. With the aim of capturing social and individual backgrounds of work and care, as well as explaining the effects of employment and social policies, secondary data analyses of official statistics and international surveys were carried out. In addition, 111 qualitative interviews with parents were conducted.

Selected results **Gainful employment and childcare**

Concerns about the potentially negative effects the employment of mothers could have on family life and the development of their children have frequently been voiced. However, marked differences between countries can be observed here: In Austria (as well as Portugal and some Eastern European countries), the majority of the population is apprehensive for the well-being of children at pre-school age in the case of the mother being in employment, whereas this tendency is less pronounced in the Nordic countries (DK, SE, FI) and more liberal countries (AUS, GB, USA).

Illustration: Gender roles and childcare

Agreement in % (respondents aged 20 to 60 years)



■ 'Care attitude': A child at pre-school age is likely to suffer from an employment of its mother

□ 'Gender attitude': It is the task of the men to earn the living, and the task of the women to take care of household and family

■ Quelle: WORKCARE Projekt, Barbara Haas and Nadia Steiber, final conference, Brussels

³ „Möglichkeiten, das Leben zu führen, das sie für Wert halten, geführt zu werden“

Attitudes towards employment in a life-course perspective and childcare

Selected results The numbers in the illustration above clearly speak for a fundamental change of trends in the stereotypical gender roles since the beginning of this century. In all of the countries considered (with the exception of Russia), men do not figure solitarily in the role of the breadwinner anymore, and women are not the only ones considered responsible for household and family in more recent surveys. Thus, a trend towards gender equality regarding these tasks can be noticed: Traditionally differing expectations towards women and men are progressively aligning.

Austria at a tipping point?

Egalitarian	Traditional
Results of international trend analyses on value changes, on the basis of the International Social Survey Programme (module „Family and Changing Gender Roles“ 1988, 1993 and 2002) ⁴	
<p>In 2002, 85% of the women and 78% of the men in Austria were convinced that</p> <p><i>„both men and women should contribute to the household income.“</i>⁵</p> <p>In comparison to results from the late 1990s, a trend towards egalisation of the breadwinner role can clearly be observed.</p>	<p>In 2002, 62% of the women and 64% of the men in Austria were worried that</p> <p><i>„all in all, full-time employment of women has a negative effect on family life.“</i>⁶</p> <p>Hardly any differences can be noticed over time (in comparison with the results from the surveys conducted in 1988, 1993 and 2002).</p>
According to the European Social Survey (ESS 2004/05 and 2006/07)	
<p>The striking majority of the Austrian respondents (80%) are in favour of the statement</p> <p><i>„Women and men both have the same rights to employment if vacancies are scarce“</i>⁷ (2004/05).</p> <p>Agreement on equal rights to employment for both sexes reflects the European tendency.</p> <p>Remark: No comparable results for this question showing the trend since the 1980s available.</p>	<p>56% of the Austrian respondents oppose</p> <p><i>„full-time employment of women who have children under the age of three“</i>⁸ (2006/07).</p> <p>In comparison to this, the rejection of full-time employment of women with children at a young age is relatively low in other countries: Finland with 8%, Denmark with 12% and Sweden with 14%, but also the UK, France or Poland with results ranging from 25% to 29% clearly fall below the numbers for Austria.</p>

⁴ Barbara Haas and Nadia Steiber (2009): Orientations to Work and Care. Workpackage 4, <http://www.workcare/abdn.ac.uk/>.

⁵ „der Mann und die Frau beide zum Haushaltseinkommen beitragen sollten“

⁶ „alles in allem: das Familienleben darunter leidet, wenn die Frau voll berufstätig ist“

⁷ „Frauen und Männer das gleiche Recht auf Arbeitsplätze haben, wenn diese knapp sind“

⁸ „volle Berufstätigkeit von Frauen mit Kindern unter drei Jahren“ Source: **WORKCARE** Project



Attitudes towards employment in a life-course perspective and childcare

Austria at a tipping point?

An increasing tendency towards equality is evident in peoples' attitudes towards gender roles, especially concerning integration into the workforce. Yet, at the same time, traditionalist ideas regarding the importance of motherly care for young children remain strong.

This shows how statements by individuals reflect the political, economic and cultural framework of a given society, and how they sometimes contradict the daily realities.

How do peoples' attitudes differ from their day-to-day realities then?

WLB for parents?

Part-timing of mothers – a strategy to achieve a positive WLB in households with children?

Throughout the past decade, the predominant strategy of female employment in Austria known as 'three-phase-model' has hardly changed. During the first or pre-parenting phase, both women and men show relatively equal numbers of employment. After the birth of the first child, however, the majority of the women enters the second phase of this model, interrupting their employment for a period of several years, in most cases. Statistics of dual households with children under the age of three show that 63% of the mothers in this situation are not in employment, following the male breadwinner model (full-time employment of only the male partner). Increasingly, when re-entering the job-market these women start working part-time: in 36% of dual households with children aged between 6 and 12, exactly this is the case (with part-time up to 30 hours/week). In about a third of these households, both partners are working full-time. The other 23% continue living the male breadwinner model. On the whole, fathers – both as compared to mothers, as well in comparison to childless men – show high rates of participation on the labour market and working hours above average.

In Nordic countries (SE, FI, DK), on the other hand, statistics show continually high rates of employment for both sexes, regardless of whether a child is present or not. Full-time employment (more than 30 hours/week) can be witnessed in 60% of both young, childless couples, as well as in parents of children under the age of three; this rate increases to 80% when children reach the age of 6 to 12 years⁹.

Reasons for part-timing in Europe

Full-time employment is predominant in *both* men and women among the working population of some Scandinavian countries (SE, FI, DK) and France, but also in some countries of South-Eastern Europe (IT, PT). The percentage of women in involuntary part-time employment for these countries lies between 18% and 51%, and therefore exceeds the rates for Austria (10%), the Netherlands (4%) or the UK (7%). In the latter three, part-

⁹ Steiber, Nadia und Barbara Haas (2010): Begrenzte Wahl – Gelegenheitsstrukturen und Erwerbsmuster in Paarhaushalten im europäischen Vergleich, in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 62(2): 247-276.

timing plays an important part in women's strategies for reconciling employment and family life. Only in rare cases, part-time is opted for by women all throughout Europe because of equivalent full-time employment being scarce, whereas in the case of men, this is more frequently the case.

Attitudes towards work in a life-course perspective and childcare

Reasons for part-timing in Europe

The table below illustrates the reasons for part-timing: In 2007, the majority of Austrian women (53%), but only a small part of the men (7%) listed family responsibilities as a reason for working part-time.

Reasons for part-timing in selected European countries and EU-15¹⁰

Category	Involuntary			Caring responsibilities within the family ²		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
EU-15	22,5	40,1 u	19,8	38,7	9,0 u	43,5
DK	17,2	16,1	17,5	13,0	:	15,8
DE	21,5	44,3 u	17,9	27,3	4,2 u	31,0
FR	32,8	47,2 u	30,9	45,4	11,4 u	49,8
IT	39,3	61,9	34,8	33,7	1,9 u	40,1
NL	5,0 u	10,8 u	4,0	59,8 u	28,8 u	64,8
AT	11,0	20,7	9,7	47,5	6,9 u	52,9
PT	49,4	46,6	50,5	7,1	:	9,4
SE	27,1	33,4	25,7	34,9	13,2	39,6
UK	10,0	34,1	6,8	62,7	18,6	68,6

Source: **WORKCARE** Project

Remarks: 'u' data not reliable or ambiguous; ':' no data available

1. Involuntary part-time: People who state that they are working part-time because they were unable to encounter full-time employment: 'Couldn't find a full-time job'.

2. Caring responsibilities within the family: People who state that they are working part-time because they assume caring responsibilities for family members: 'Am caring for children or dependent adults'

Jane Lewis and Ania Plomien stress the fact that these numbers do not truly represent people's preferences. On the contrary, individual attitudes often are a reflection of institutional conditions and social norms: „Thus in countries where women are expected to work part-time and to care, the proportions reporting „voluntary“ part-time work are also high. Given the importance of cultural and institutional contexts, it may not be possible to treat such figures as the simple expression of preferences.” (Lewis & Plomien, 2009, 84)⁵.

¹⁰ Eurostat (2007), LFS-Series, yearly results, in: Lewis, Jane and Ana Plomien (2009): „Flexicurity“ as a policy strategy: the implications for gender equality.“ in: Boje, Thomas P. and Ejrnaes Anders: Workpackage 3: Labour Market and Social Policies, <http://www.workcare/abdn.ac.uk/>, 73-97, see Table 4, 85.

Attitudes towards work in a life-course perspective and childcare

Summary

Attitudes towards work in a life-course perspective and childcare

Gainful employment is a vital part of the lives of *both* men and women. However, doubts about its possibly negative consequences on the well-being of children and on family life remain. We can witness a stark contrast between tendencies towards egalisation on the level of individual attitudes and people's day-to-day realities. Rising numbers of female part-time employment can only in part be taken to represent a modernisation of the male breadwinner model and its consequences on the division of labour: even when women are working, they remain the ones who are responsible for the family, whereas men primarily dedicate their time to employment. Both women and men strive for flexibility to be available for their respective areas.

Against this backdrop, we now proceed to inquire about the role of working conditions in the new world of work, and their consequences on Work-Life Balance.

In influence of working conditions on WLB

- The topic** The employment market is constantly changing. Current transformations include growing female participation on the labour market, but also increasing workloads caused by rising demands for flexibilisation and by tendencies towards casualisation on the job market. The relation between work and family is increasingly being perceived as a conflict by both sexes, not least due to the rise in female employment.
- The Project** The aim of this international research project, which was part of the research network EQUALSOC (2005-2010, 6th EU Framework Action) was to examine the influence of working conditions on the compatibility and reconciliation of work and family by means of a quantitative comparative analysis of different countries on the basis of existing survey data (*European Social Survey 2004/05*).
- Selected Results** The research focused on factors relating to family and employment that might determine an individually perceived work-family conflict.
- The questions that led the research on this conflict included the following (each with the answering options never, almost never, rarely, sometimes, often, always):
- „How often do you feel that your job makes it impossible for you to spend as much time as you would like with your partner or family?“*
(time conflict)
- „How often do you feel too tired after work to enjoy what you usually like doing?“* (energy conflict)
- „How often do you worry about problems related to work outside your time at the workplace?“*
- „How often do you feel that your partner or family are fed up with the workload you have?“*
- The results have shown that women in dual-earner households run a significantly higher risk to experience energy conflicts, whereas men are more likely to experience time conflicts.

The influence of working conditions on WLB

In this table, a number of important factors that determine the risk of experiencing a work-family conflict, as well as those which could facilitate a WLB, are listed.

Factors

Main results based on the European Social Survey¹¹



Work-related factors that could facilitate balance:

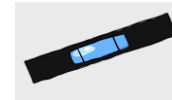
Less working hours in full-time or part-timing

Job autonomy [„In how far does your employer or management allow for autonomy regarding the daily organisation of work?"]

Time autonomy [„I can decide myself when to start and when to finish work"]

Job security [agreement to the question about job-security]

Good promotion prospects [„My promotion prospects are good"]



Work-related factors that could impede balance:

Long working hours

Antisocial working hours [Working in the evening/during the night, and/or at weekends]

Difficulties in planning working hours/ coordinating them with a partner [short-notice overtime]

High working pressure [„In my job, I have to be hard-working"]

Worries about job security [no/little agreement to the question about job-security]

Health/safety risks [„I face health/safety risks at work"]

High professional status/good qualifications and high income [because of responsibilities a certain job involves and a certain 'job culture', e.g. the need to work long hours in order to secure promotion prospects or finish projects to deadlines, signal effect of hard work]

Source: **EQUALSOC** Network of Excellence

¹¹ Special editions of the Springer Journal *Social Indicators Research*, 2009 Vol. 93(3), In this edition: 1) Gallie, D./Russell, H. 'Work-Family Conflict and Working Conditions in Western Europe'. 2) Steiber, N. 'Reported Levels of Time-Based and Strain-Based Conflict Between Work and Family Roles in Europe: A Multilevel Approach'. 3) McGinnity, F./Calvert, E. 'Work-Life Conflict and Social Inequality in Europe'. 4) Kasearu, K. 'The Effect of Union Type on Work-Life Conflict in Five European Countries.'

The influence of working conditions on WLB

Conflict and politics

Work-Family Conflicts and the role of politics?

Which type of family policy could help improve the Work-Life Balance of parents in employment? Opinions on this vary, as do survey results: On one hand, there is evidence that a short, well-paid parental leave with incentives for fathers, paired with a range of high-quality caring facilities for children and care-recipients further female employment and have a stimulating effect on birth rates. On the other hand, however, statistics show that in countries that figure as prototypes of this policy, the degree to which a conflict between work and family is subjectively experienced by parents is particularly high. In Sweden, for example, where policies enhance continuous full-time employment of all adults at employable age, the rates of a perceived conflict are the highest. This could be interpreted as a hint that parents there are having major difficulties in achieving a satisfactory Work-Life Balance.

What are the reasons behind this? Two main arguments could be listed as an explanation here: Firstly, in an egalitarian gender culture it is expected from both men and women to be financially independent and have a successful career. To achieve this, they enter full-time employment and strive for an equal division of caring responsibilities in the household, for children, and for family members dependent on care. The resulting overall workload creates in a subjectively perceived comparatively low WLB.

Second, the analyses conducted as part of the EU-project *Households, Work and Flexibility* have shown that a perceived overload could also be attributed to the large amount of voluntary activities people in Nordic countries pursue in addition to work and private life. In Sweden and Denmark, as compared to the UK and the Netherlands, it is especially those in full-time employment who dedicate large amounts of time to civil service. Men in full-time employment from Scandinavian countries are involved to an even greater degree than women, especially in the areas of sports, culture and interest groups (cf. Thomas Boje, 2007, 385f)¹².

The Project

How are working conditions changing in times of economic restructuring?

WORKS (=Work Organisation and Restructuring in the Knowledge Society) is an international research project (integrated project: 2005 – 2009, 6th EU Framework Programme) with the aim of examining the consequences of processes of restructuring in our knowledge society and in a globalised world of work. Research was conducted on the basis of secondary analyses of official statistics and international surveys, comprehensive qualitative case studies in selected organisations, and interviews with employees from various careers and areas of employment.

¹² Thomas Boje (2007): Welfare and work. The gendered organisation of work and care in different European Countries, in: *European Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 373-395.

The influence of working conditions on WLB

Selected results

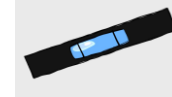
Conclusions regarding WLB, based on quantitative secondary analyses and qualitative case studies¹³



Work-related factors which could facilitate balance:

New content of work: social and communicative skills Professional skills alone are not sufficient anymore, everyday competences and communication styles (conflict management within the family, soft skills) have become salient as additional qualifications. When a positive WLB is achieved, these skills might be acquired and might become crucial for coping with various demands at the workplace

Autonomous time-keeping and control over working hours through output-orientation allows for flexibility to reconcile professional, private and social needs



Working conditions which could impede balance:

High level of intensity and time pressure at work (ability to adjust quickly)

Loss of control over the content of work processes, increasingly standardised routines and heteronomy (see table page 13)

Lack of autonomy in decisions on working hours: Large amounts of overtime and varying working hours

Lack of challenges: employees (especially those on temporary contracts and in occasional jobs) feel over-qualified for their tasks

Project-based, autonomous tasks: Long working hours become necessary („culture of being present“)

Increased fluctuation and demand for mobility

Improvement of the employment situation through a job move („people need to move in order to improve“)

Worries about job and income security because of temporary contracts and occasional jobs

Insecurity regarding plans for private life (decision to have a child)

Health/safety risks becoming more common: previously primarily workers concerned, now also affecting employees and managers (blue and white collar workers)

High professional status/good qualifications and high income no longer guarantee for continually improving working conditions or better WLB

¹³ In the course of the WORKS project, analyses of surveys about restructuring processes in companies, seen from the perspective of the employees, as well as numerous case studies and interviews were conducted (European Labour Force Survey, European Community Household Survey, European Working Conditions Survey).

WORKS (2008): Newsletter 4, April 2008; Newsletter 5, August 2009; WORKS European Policy Brief (2009); Krings, Bettina-Johanna, Nierling, Linda, Pedaci, Marcello and Piersanti, Mariangela (2009): Working time, gender and work-life balance; Flecker, Jörg, Ursula Holtgrewe, Annika Schönauer and Stavros Gavroglou (2009): Value chain restructuring and company strategies to reach flexibility, in: <http://www.worksproject.be> [last accessed June 2010]. Source: **WORKS Project**



The influence of working conditions on WLB

Selected results

Changes in work intensity 1995-2005 (European Working Conditions Surveys)¹⁴

Agreement in %	EU-15 1995	EU-15 2000	EU-15 2005	Acceding countries 2005	EU-27 2005
<i>Does your job involve...</i>					
<i>...short repetitive tasks of less than 10 minutes?</i>	36	46	40	34	38
<i>...working at very high speed?</i>	53	55	61	53	59
<i>...working to tight deadlines?</i>	55	59	62	57	61

Source: **WORKS** Project

Internationalisation and value chains

The results from the WORKS-projects clearly reveal that the internationalisation of companies and company networks, as well as the restructuring of value chains could have a negative effect on Work-Life Balance. Changes in time structure, for example, illustrate this point: the necessity of communicating with business partners or customers in other time zones may require extending working hours into the evening or night, or earlier starting times in the morning. Competition between branches in different countries could manifest itself in flexibilisation, hours of work including weekends and geographic mobility.

In addition, an acceleration of business processes and consequently intensified and extended working hours have been noted in the case of several industries. What is more, the working conditions in supplying companies and businesses offering outsourcing services have been found to be markedly worse than in the core companies. This could also be attributed to the high demands for flexibility and time pressure which are being shifted to those lower in the value chain.

On the whole, the chances of achieving a positive Work-Life Balance suffer from the phenomena described above, in particular in branches like software engineering, fashion design or the textile and clothing industries.

¹⁴ Nathalie Greenan, Ekaterina Kalugina and Emmanuelle Walkowiak (2008): The transformation of work? D.9.2. Trends in work organisation, 22; in: <http://www.worksproject.be>; [last accessed August 19, 2010] (see Table 2.2.: Intensity of Work, measuring synthetic indicators; The formulation of this question is the same for 1995, 2000, 2001 and 2005 but the modalities are not identical. In 2000, 2001 and 2005 the answers are only yes or no, in 1995 all of the time, almost all of the time, around 3/4 of the time, around half of the time, around 1/4 of the time, almost never and never. The percentage in 1995 concerns all modalities except 'never' and 'almost never'.)

The influence of working conditions on WLB

Gender

Changing working conditions from a gender perspective

Research results confirm that salient gender differences in relation to education levels and profession exist. Traditional gender roles in both professional and private life are perpetuated especially in sectors that demand comparatively low qualifications and range at lower levels of the income spectrum. Here, it is primarily the women who are attributed the role of housekeeping and making extra earnings, whereas men remain in the position of the breadwinner.

Tendencies towards a professionalisation of caregiving and nursing – tasks which mostly take place within the home and are not financially remunerated – can be witnessed in a number of countries, though. Still, jobs in this sector are underpaid and predominantly taken by women. Often, these jobs do not pay sufficiently to earn a living ('Working Poor'), which applies even more to the case of part-time workers than to people in full-time jobs.

On the other hand, new opportunities for women are opening up in the service industries, in knowledge work and in areas requiring high qualifications. Chances for a better job position, a higher income and improved possibilities for continued education, of climbing the career ladder and gaining social prestige increase. In many cases, however, this comes at the cost of renouncing on having (more) children and conforming to a 'male' lifestyle. A high level of involvement in the workplace and long working hours increase the intensity of employment and consequently necessitate cutbacks on private life for the benefit of the job.

The cards for achieving a successful WLB are stacked against women, people with lower levels of education, migratory backgrounds and from rural areas. Regardless of this, the risk of suffering psychical and physical stress at the workplace can not be limited to a certain group of people. This in turn shows that insecurities and health risks are becoming generalised. It could be concluded that a good education or achievement in the job no longer guarantee a successful WLB.

The influence of working conditions on WLB

Summary

The influence of working conditions?

Flexibilisation – friend or foe of Work-Life Balance?

Often, flexitime is praised for offering chances on a better Work-Life Balance. But it has to be borne in mind that the possibilities for self-determination on the part of the employees are limited: in the end, flexibility has to bow to the demands of the company.

Results from EQUALSOC and WORKS have shown that the reconciliation of family and work can be facilitated by allowing for autonomous organisation of working time and work processes.

Models of working time that offer flexibility but that are at the same time determined by the employer often backfire. Long, antisocial working hours and extra hours on short-notice trigger time and energy conflicts to the detriment of WLB.

Job security

Job security plays a crucial part, as well, in conflicts between work and private life: Insecurity about employment prompts stress and leads to a lack of time.

Knowledge work – executive positions

Excellent qualifications, a good job in an executive position, high quality of work and high income do not avert the risk of a work-life conflict – on the contrary: The risk progressively increases with advancements on the career ladder.

General conclusions

New world of work?

Work-Life Balance in the new world of work?

Work-Life Balance has often been limited to referring only to the compatibility of work and family – even in the studies presented here, this is the case. In fact, however, this term should be understood in a much wider sense, implying also the balance between employment and private life, as well as the emotional, psychical and physical well-being of those concerned.

Research corroborates that in all countries of Europe, without exception, traditional gender ideologies are outdated. Men do not want to be confined to the role of the breadwinner anymore, women refuse to remain at hearth and home and in the position of the caregiver. The attitudes have changed fundamentally, but these demands and wishes are still difficult to put into practice in everyday family life. In most countries throughout Europe, it is still the women – and not the so-called 'new men' or 'new fathers' – who manage the household, raise the children, and care for the sick and for older family members, doing work which remains uncompensated. As a consequence, Work-Life Balance has an entirely different meaning for women and men, but also for people with and without children.

There is a rising need to integrate all individuals at employable age in the employment market, even if this period of life is constantly being shortened due to prolonged times spent in education. It has become indispensable to stimulate employment of the largest number of employable individuals possible, even if – or maybe, exactly because – this period is becoming shorter.

To improve WLB, a number of transformations in different areas of society are called for. The following ideas merely represent a few starting points for discussion:

Firstly, the amount of transfer payments to families (e.g. family subsidy, attendance allowance) has to be increased, and policies that implant adequate support measures and additional infrastructures of facilities and services have become necessary. Trust in the quality of these institutions needs to be build, and high quality services for childcare, all-day schools, new school systems, services for childcare during holiday times, adjustment of opening hours to the needs of people in employment, as well as innovative solutions for multi-generational facilities offering childcare and care of the elderly are required.

Secondly, politics and economy jointly need to find ways of minimising the strains our economised society exercises on individuals. Time pressure, increased intensity of work processes and requirements for mobility have to be decreased for the benefit of autonomy and self-determination of working times, contracts that provide security, and more planning security. Work-Life Balance has to become a priority and should be considered of equal importance as economic cost-benefit calculations.

General conclusions

New world of work?

Work-Life Balance in the new world of work?

Thirdly, both our society as a whole, as well as individuals have to take action. The chances and possibilities for a transformation of gender relations – a crucial factor here – are illustrated by the following quotation:

„(...) we must conclude that true gender equality will not come about unless, somehow, men can be made to embrace a more feminine life course.“ (Gosta Esping-Andersen, 2002¹⁵, 95).

This merely points out one possibility, however. Without doubt, it cannot be left in the hands of individuals alone to bring about this change. As the results of the EU projects presented above have shown, institutional frameworks vary substantially across countries, and come to bear on WLB in different, complex ways. Jointly, politics, economy and society are required to search for ways of initiating transformations that facilitate a better Work-Life Balance.

Which measures should be taken, then? What can be learned from other countries? These are the main questions that will be tackled in the current and upcoming events (Spring 2011).

¹⁵ Esping-Andersen, Gosta (2002): A new gender contract, in: Esping-Andersen, G.; Gallie, D.; Hemerijck, A. and Myles, J. (eds.): Why we need a new welfare state, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 68-95.

Further reading

Research results The following publications are selected results of various EU framework projects on the topic of WORK-LIFE BALANCE:

WORKCARE (2006-2009), project on ‘Transformations of relationships between work, childcare and welfare in Europe’.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/232_en.html;

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/socsci/research/nec/workcare/>

HWF – Households, Work and Flexibility (2000-2003), see www.hwf.at;

http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/057_en.html

EQUALSOC - Economic Change, Quality of Life and Social Cohesion (2005-2010): a network of excellence supported by the 6th Framework Action, see:

www.equalsoc.org

WORKS (2005-2009), an 'integrated project' on changes in employment in a knowledge society, see: <http://www.worksproject.be/>

Publications

Selected publications by members of the WORK-LIFE BALANCE team at the Vienna University of Economics and Business:

Steiber, Nadia and Barbara Haas (2010): State of the Art? Advances in Explaining Women’s Employment Patterns, in: European University Institute Florence, Max Weber Programme, EUI Working Paper MWP 2010/08.

Steiber, Nadia and Barbara Haas (2010): Begrenzte Wahl – Gelegenheitsstrukturen und Erwerbsmuster in Paarhaushalten im europäischen Vergleich, in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 62(2): 247-276.

Haas, Barbara and Margit Hartel (2010): Towards the Universal Care Course Model: Care Policies and Employment Patterns in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden, in: *European Societies*, 12(2): 139-162.

Haas, Barbara (2010): Family-Work-Life-Balance: Österreich, die Niederlande und Schweden im Vergleich, in: *Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend (BMWFJ)*, 5. Österreichischer Familienbericht 2009, Band I: Familie und Beruf, Kapitel 16, 715-744, Vienna.

<http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Familie/Familienforschung/>

Steiber, Nadia and Barbara Haas (2009): Ideals or compromises? The attitude-behaviour relationship in mothers' employment. *Socio-Economic Review* 7(4): 639-668.

Haas, Barbara (2009): Geschlechtergerechte Arbeitsteilung – theoretisch ja, praktisch nein! Eine Bilanz für österreichische Paarhaushalte mit Kindern, in: Appelt, Erna (ed.): Anthology „Gleichstellung in Österreich – eine kritische Bilanz“, *StudienVerlag*, Innsbruck, Vienna, Bozen, 135-148.

Steiber, Nadia (2009): Reported Levels of Time-Based and Strain-Based Conflict between Work and Family Roles in Europe: A Multilevel Approach, *Social Indicators Research* 93(3): 469-488.

Scherer, Stefani and Nadia Steiber (2007): Work and Family in Conflict? The Impact of Work Demands on Family Life in Six European Countries, in: Galie, Duncan (ed.) *Employment Systems and the Quality of Working Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Overview of the project WORKCARE SYNERGIES

Project	WORKCARE SYNERGIES - Dissemination of Synthesized Framework Programme Research Findings
Coordinator	Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), Austria
Consortium	University of Aberdeen (UNIABDN), Scotland, UK Roskilde University (UNIRUC), Denmark Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Wien), Austria TARKI Social Research Institute (TARKI), Hungary University of Warsaw (UWAR), Poland University of Florence (UNIFI), Italy CIES-ISCTE (CIES-ISCTE), Portugal University of Brighton (UoB), UK
European Commission	Marc Goffart, DG Research
Duration	January 2010 – December 2011
Budget	600 000 €
Funding Scheme	Seventh Framework Programme Theme 8, Socio-economic sciences and humanities (SSH), 8.1 Measures to support dissemination of research results
Website	www.workcaresynergies.eu
Further Information	Further information about local dissemination events and materials, the underlying FP research projects, newsletters, short films, policy briefs, etc. can be accessed our project website.
Contact (Coordinator)	Michaela Gstrein, gstrein@ihs.ac.at Liliana Mateeva, mateeva@ihs.ac.at
Local Contact	Barbara Haas, Barbara.Haas@wu.ac.at (project coordinator WU Team) Nadia Steiber, Nadia.Steiber@wu.ac.at (assistant project coordinator)

WU Wien
Institute for Sociology and Social Research



Film



Illustrations

Water level: Melissa Madan

Project members

Project team:

Mag. Dr. Barbara Haas (project coordinator, sociologist, Institute for Sociology and Social Research, Vienna University of Economics and Business)

Mag. Dr. Nadia Steiber (assistant project coordinator, sociologist, Marie Curie fellow, European University Institute, Florence)

Dr. Margarethe Engelhardt-Krajanek (journalist, Ö1)

Mag. Anita Gritsch (translator, sociologist)

Film: Dr. Edith Bachkönig & team

Advisory Board:

Dipl.-SP/SA (FH) Doris Boland-Skiera (registered mediator)

Univ.-Doz. Dr. Jörg Flecker (scientific coordinator of FORBA - Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt, Vienna)

Mag. Sybille Pirklbauer (political scientist, Arbeiterkammer Vienna – official representation of employees, department for women and families)

Dr. Wolfgang Tritremmel (Industriellenvereinigung – Federation of Austrian Industries, head of the department for work and social affairs)

Mag. Dr. Alexandra Werba (Austrian Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection)

Univ.-Ass. Mag. Dr. Ulrike Zartler (sociologist, Department of Sociology, University of Vienna)

Administration

Hanne Esterwitsch, Ursula Németh and Katharina Oberfellner

