

















WP 1 (IHS) - Work-Care Tensions

Project:

WORKCARE SYNERGIES was a support action with the aim of disseminating research findings of previous EU Framework Programme projects in the field of work and care. To do this, local information and discussion events were held in Austria, the UK, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Italy and Portugal.

Information- and Discussion Events of the Austrian IHS Team:

The Austrian Team at the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) - also Coordinator of the WORKCARESYNERGIES project - held a total of sixteen events in 2010 and 2011 where it presented selected research findings from EU Framework Programme projects related to work-care tensions and initiated their discussion in a local context. The team also produced three films on work-care tensions in Austria that were shown and discussed in various events and posted onto the project homepage. While the first two films deal with various sub-themes related to such tensions – mostly women’s and men’s different viewpoints, but also expert assessments of labour market and family developments -, the third film offers a complete picture of current tensions felt in Austria, and how mothers and fathers find solutions to deal with them. Which factors determine good reconciliation? How do modern parents share work and family responsibilities? Which strategies are successful?

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|  | 27.05.2010 | Vienna | Workcare Tensions - Workshop 1 (IHS) |
|  | 14.10.2010 | Vienna | Workcare Tensions - Workshop 2 (IHS) |
|  | 10.12.2010 | Vienna | Role of men in Work-Care Tensions (men's discussion, IHS) |
|  | 03.02.2011 | Vienna | Rolle der Männer im Spannungsfeld Beruf – Familie, Workshop 3 (IHS) |
|  | 29.03.2011 | Vienna | Diskussionsrunde Kindergarten, Workshop 5 (IHS) |
|  | 30.03.2011 | Vienna | Präsentation bei OeNB-Frühstück, Event 4 (IHS) |
|  | 10.05.2011 | Klagenfurt | Worklifebalance – Männer und Frauen zwischen Familie und Beruf (IHS) |
|  | 11.05.2011 | Vienna | Presentation of Local Discussion outcome (IHS) |
|  | 09.07.2011 | Budapest | Work-Care Tensions in EUROPE (presentation at CEU; IHS) |
|  | 01.09.2011 | Brussels | Presentation of WORKCARESYNERGIES project at ETUI (IHS) |
|  | 07.09.2011 | Geneva | Presentation of WCS project and Austrian project content at ESA 2011 (IHS) |
|  | 10.10.2011 | Innsbruck | Alles unter einen Hut! - Das Spannungsfeld Erwerb, Hausarbeit, Familie (IHS) |
|  | 11.10.2011 | Bregenz | Einstellungen zur partnerschaftlichen Arbeitsteilung im Ländervergleich (IHS) |
|  | 20.10.2011 | Vienna | Finale WORKCARESYNERGIES Diskussionsgruppe - Workshop Nr. 7 (IHS) |
|  | 10.11.2011 | Vienna | Concluding conference (public event for all partners; IHS) |
|  | 10.12.2011 | Vienna | Final film viewing and discussion event (IHS) |

Internet Links:

General information about the project, local dissemination themes, all events and their contents can be downloaded from the WORKCARESYNERGIES project homepage (www.workcaresynergies.eu).

Detailed information on events held by the Austrian Institute for Advanced Studies (i.e. working materials, films, power point presentations, summaries of events) can be found on the AT-IHS country page (<http://workcaresynergies.eu/work-care-tensions/>).

Participants:

Participants in these local information and discussion rounds in Austria were numerous local politicians, representatives of communities, the social partners (labour and trade unions, the Austrian Union Federation, the Federation of Austrian Industries), company representatives, local NGOs, regional organizations and services from the sectors of childcare, family services, parental education, women's networks, church, youth work, men's networks as well as other local actors and interested parties.

Content of the Events:

While the first two events in Vienna mostly evolved around the role of women in solving every day work-care tensions – which is still a fact in Austria –, the third event was particularly targeted to a male audience and the role of men in the work-care context. The fourth event then tried to link male and female viewpoints, and to discuss different approaches to and solutions for current work-care issue in Austria. The event was followed by two information and discussion rounds, one in a local kindergarten (in the suburbs of Vienna) and one in the Austrian National Bank (OENB). A publication of relevant research and discussion findings in a local policy paper (beziehungsweise, ÖIF) helped the project to gain more visibility. The project and its contents were next discussed in an IHS institution event (ARS), later as part of an international workshop in Budapest, in a presentation at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) in Brussels and at an international conference in Geneva (ESA 2011). After three more events in the Austrian federal counties (which were particularly demanded by local organizations that had heard about the events in Vienna) – one in Klagenfurt (Family Service/Citizen Service Klagenfurt, Carinthia), one in Innsbruck (Interfakultäre Plattform Geschlechterforschung, Tirol) und one in Bregenz (Department for Women, local labour union and local Austrian Union Federation, Vorarlberg) – we summarized all discussion outcomes in a final event in Vienna, where we tried to round up previous discussion outcomes and finalize important policy pointers. A final public information and discussion round with all consortium partners tried to present contents and

main findings of the dissemination events in all partner countries. A final film viewing and discussion round (with all people featuring in the film) concluded the dissemination efforts.

Special Themes discussed in local events:

In the events, we discussed (a) the still quite divergent roles of Austrian men and women, as well as (b) the higher labour market participation of women with children as opposed to the Austrian tradition of caring for small children in one's own home, (c) How to combine (child)care responsibilities and job or career throughout different family phases?, (d) long (female) parental leaves versus life-course concepts of work (with individual social security rights) as well as (e) the (new) role of fathers.

In our Austrian discussion rounds and workshops, we present selected research findings from the following EU Framework Programme projects:

1. WORKCARE (2006-2009), a project on the social quality and changing relationships between work, care and welfare in Europe.
http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/232_en.html;
<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/socsci/research/nec/workcare/>
2. HWF (2000-2003), a project on households, work and flexibility.
http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/057_en.html;
<http://www.hwf.at>
3. MULTILINKS (2008-2011), a project on how demographic changes shape intergenerational solidarity, well-being and social integration.
http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/417_en.html;
<http://www.multilinks-project.eu/info/workpackages>;
<http://multilinks-project.eu/info/papers>
4. MOCHO (2001-2004), a project on the rationale of motherhood choices, the influence of employment conditions and public policies.
http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/075_en.html
5. IFAC (2006-2008), a project on empowering young women through learning for technical professions and science. <http://www.ifac-project.eu/>;
http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP6_PROJ&ACTION=D&DOC=1&CAT=PROJ&QUERY=012467c16d03:55ec:05ce7a3e&RCN=81260
6. Meta-Analysis of Gender and Science Research (2008-), a project studying segregation in research careers. <http://www.genderandscience.org/web/index.php>;
Austrian country report: http://www.genderandscience.org/doc/CReport_Austria.pdf
7. Family Platform, (2010-2011), www.FamilyPlatform.eu

Independent of the EU projects and research findings that were presented in the various local events, the following **main discussion points** kept being repeated in all discussion rounds – stating their high relevance for family policy:

- Job (and family) flexibility as problem solver for work-care tensions
- Similarities and Differences in work-care tensions in European countries
- Childcare responsibilities, job and household: sharing by partners, family networks, the role of grandparents and especially grandmothers
- External childcare facilities (and after school care or full-day schools) as problem solver
- Female Roles, role models, education and career – what has changed in the last years?
- Male Role models, especially behaviour as fathers
- (family-related) income differences (i.e. gender wage gaps) and their effect on the social security of families and esp. old age security of women/mothers
- Influence of working hours and working conditions on everyday family life
- Influence of (various types of) jobs on families
- Gender budgeting (i.e. anticipation of effects of measures/decisions on women and men)
- Fathers with work-family tensions – who do they see the situation?
- Short documentary films on how experts, the social partners, men and women in Austria deal with work-care tensions: How do they see their situation? What are the main challenges?
- Family policy and everyday life in families - a slow process of change
- Discussion of research findings and own (local) experiences

Summary of local Discussion Rounds

The vivid discussions that usually followed our presentation of research findings, facts and film viewings in our local dissemination events quickly showed that the attainment or lack of reconciliation of work and family life was not only determined by job flexibility and the sharing of household and (child)care responsibilities within the family. A large variety of other factors also has strong influence on the actual situation, by limiting or increasing parent's decision and action spaces. Such factors are prevailing traditions, new role models, local and societal attitudes, social networks and structures, external childcare facilities, schools and learning support but also the parent's education, job offers, working time, etc.

Not unexpectedly, the views of those affected differ significantly. Men often have clearly other (more traditional) perceptions of the situation than women; quite frequently, fathers feel less concerned or do not see a problem at all. Location and level of parental education, but also the existence of family-supportive measures (by companies, local communities, counties or the state) increase or decrease the chances of reconciliation for fathers and mothers. It has also been shown that parents' (original) agreements on how to handle the work-care situation – who works and who cares to what extent in what family situation – as well as mother's and father's attitudes and expectations about their partner's involvement need repeated discussion and adjustment.

Legal regulations and both state and local help are important elements of family support. In many cases, they are the basis for work-family reconciliation, reduce poverty and ensure social participation and security (especially for children and women). Since families nowadays exist in many and changing forms and varieties, such support has to be provided in multiple and flexible ways, so that families can profit (most) from selecting arrangements best fitted to them and their choice of life style. Yet, it is also important to inform them about the (sometimes negative) long term effects of choices they take – e.g. the effect of long term female parental leave and later (precarious and other forms of) part time employment on future income, career opportunities and low old age security.

It soon becomes obvious that the worlds of work and family life seem to function according to very different rules and regulations – which makes a satisfying reconciliation of both rather difficult. In both areas persons are expected to show increasing flexibility and dedication: For work, this is expressed the common occurrence of long working days, regular overtime, high expectations of labour mobility, permanent availability, frequent changes of job (within and between companies), long commuting times, erratic working hours, etc; family life (but also leisure time), on the other hand, are characterized by high expectations of “fun”, the need to fulfil important childrens' needs and wishes, yet small core families and working parents, restricting opening hours and closing days of childcare facilities, long school holidays, ... and (not least) the currently common and strong propensity to consume which seems to be an important driving force in everybody's life.

Reconciliation of work and family yet seems to be possible if all involved actors contribute: the state by financial and care support as well as the public communication of modern role models, employers with family-friendly work time arrangements, qualified part time and parental leave offers for both men and women, (child)care facilities by offering work-related opening hours and flexible uptake of care, local key players and mediators by supporting modern role models and new (non traditional) initiatives, families themselves through

intergenerational support within the family itself. In this context it is important to note that higher female employment results in less grandmothers being available for family support – thus the provision of more external services (e.g. childcare, after school care, old age care) becomes a necessary precondition for reconciliation. It also seems important to re-discuss changing expectations and situations within the household and throughout family phases: A (more) equal sharing of work, household and care responsibilities will allow for (better) social inclusion and social security of both partners – men and women, fathers and mothers.

While experts contributed research-related findings from their and other EU projects and local service providers and employers reported their experiences, the social partners and various political actors informed about past and current local projects, steps of implementation, barriers and support as well as their plans for future initiatives in terms of family-related policy measures. The presented research findings, together with the local experts' and politicians' experiences and opinions resulted in most vivid discussions that led the participants to the following main conclusions:

Interrelations between Labour Market and Family:

- Workers (men and women!) need support to attain work-care reconciliation. Yet, with women (still mostly) responsible for family and household needs, it is them that need support most – especially flexible work and leave arrangements, childcare and wage compensation. Yet, in the long run, governments should promote more equal sharing of work, household and childcare tasks between the partners – the only way to ensure equal social inclusion, participation and (old age) security for men and women, mothers and fathers. Therefore, regulations for temporary absences of not only women but also fathers/men from the labour market should be introduced and promoted.
- Reconciliation of family and work requires flexibility on all sides, employers and employees, state and local communities as well as families. If all work together (instead of compete) a WIN-WIN situation can be realized.
- The provision and financial support of public, affordable, widely available, work-hour-oriented childcare facilities (but also old age care support) is important for a better attainment of work-care reconciliation by parents.
- A high female activity rate has positive effects for a country's economy, especially when labour is scarce. Reconciliation (for both men and women) can be supported by qualified part time arrangements, flexible but secure employment forms as well as time-wise compromises (flexi-time, time banks, yearly hours) that allow employers to profit from well motivated, long-term employees.

- Existing governmental regulations on reconciliation (e.g. parental leave, caring leave for sick children) should be reinforced in everyday life to allow men and women better reconciliation: Can men take leave? Can parents work part-time or flexi-time? It seems that although bigger firms with more employees can easily offer flexible solutions and comply to regulations, smaller firms with fewer employees (and those with more traditional supervisors) find it harder to be flexible.

Role Models and Sharing of Tasks within Families:

- In general, young men and women seem to follow new, modern role models, women have changed their labour market behaviour and mothers and fathers seem to have new expectations concerning job and family. Yet, in every-day life, it is still mothers (in Austria and other EU countries) that bear the main responsibility to combine work and family duties. Why? Family life, especially once children have arrived, seems to be governed by traditional rules and expectations, with gendered income situations furthering such behaviour (“man earns more, woman stays at home”). The equal sharing of tasks observed in young couples/partnerships quickly disappears and traditional role models resurface.
- Nevertheless, balancing work and family tasks has also become an issue for men, who often struggle to find their “new” place within the family but also in working life and especially in front of their (male) colleagues. The public promotion of new male (and female) role models can support such new-orientation (e.g. in TV-spots, public campaigns, movies) but may also hinder family-friendly orientations: What role models do the media actually communicate? How do successful men and women look like? How do they combine work and family life, especially children (if any)?
- Work and care related decisions in families (especially prior to having children) are taken jointly – although within the relevant social, societal and financial conditions of the young couple/partners. With childcare responsibilities, traditional role models resurface – and we generally observe a (strong) retraditionalisation of family life, where women tend to the household and children and men go out to work. Higher education and more qualified jobs tend to reduce but not eliminate the effect.
- The previously wide-spread availability of intergenerational support – especially by grandmothers (but also younger women looking after older and frail relatives) - cannot be taken as granted any more. With a higher share of women on the labour market, such services can no longer be provided nor expected. Therefore, the availability of public childcare services has to be improved, and partners have to take over their share of family-related responsibilities.

- On the other hand, men do not have the same undisturbed life-long working careers as before. Will they (fathers, grandfathers, sons) be able to use breaks in a family-relevant way? Which policies could support such family-supportive behaviour?
- A good coverage of working-time related, high quality but affordable external childcare is an important factor facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life. Yet it should be noted that the political discussion is sometimes wrongly limited to early child care; good all-day schools or after school services as well as learning support will also help parents to balance work and family tasks.
- The discussion (in Austria) also stressed that although the child's welfare should be central to all reconciliation efforts, fighting the still existing "bad mother" (Rabenmutter) image (in German speaking countries) was important too.

Interesting points raised in the men's discussion round:

- While (most) men see their identity dominantly determined by their jobs, relation to colleagues and status within their firm, they assume that women are interested in family life first, with job and career coming second only. For them, the sharing and division of domestic tasks between partners is therefore often a(n unwanted) re-definition of their social identity and responsibilities – to be avoided if possible.
- In many families, traditional divisions of tasks are still cemented. With changing role models and higher expectations about male involvement in household and caring tasks, (many) men show a marked fear of professional/male recognition failure due to such involvement. On the other hand, they see women as reluctant to give up their dominant position within families (manageress of household and children).
- Although men generally experience women as strongly family-oriented, they have divergent attitudes towards working women. While many approve of female labour market participation in general ("second income"), most try to justify the division of paid and unpaid work by tradition or income differentials ("man earns living, women takes care of household and children"). Some also raise the issue of family well-being ("mother's presence at home is good/important for family life").
- Men's and women's self-assessment of actual participation in household and child-rearing differs significantly and often becomes the starting point for discussions. Men see themselves as "much more involved than their fathers" - though statistics still show significantly higher female involvement (time spent on household and child care).
- Although young people in general express a wish to found families and have children, a change of heart seems observable once they grow older: Is the (planned) childlessness of young couples/partners what they see as their optimal family situation?

- It is important not to underestimate the impact of modern media on the younger generation: How do their role models (e.g. on TV, YouTube or in commercials) influence their real life decisions? What is currently seen as “cool”? And why seems family life connected to being “rather un-cool and stressful”?
- Men also mentioned different attitudes of female and male managers on reconciliation: Are women the tougher bosses, because they themselves have renounced much and are under considerable pressure to perform? Men see themselves as more reconciling, giving their female colleagues more freedom to combine work and family life.
- In any case, it seems important to separate ideology and real problem solving - which was an issue in the discussion too.

Some additional final conclusions from all local discussions:

- Local actors are interested to learn about EU research results if they help them to better evaluate local decisions, prove their point or support local implementation issues. In this context, the preparation and transformation of academic findings for "everyday use" by local non-researchers plays an important role.
- Grandmothers play an important role in childcare and family support (in Austria), often enabling mothers to go out to work. Changing female employment patterns – and thus increasingly working grandmothers - limit this main source of flexible family help. The result is a growing reliance on and need for the effective provision of affordable external (public) support services as well as higher partners' engagement in daily household and childcare tasks. This applies not only to the children's toddler phase (kindergarden) but also later, when caring for school children – especially if school hours do not match working hours and children need help with their homework.
- Initiatives to reconcile family and work (e.g. father's leave, qualified part time, flexible parental leave) have to be supported by all sides, employers and employees, the state and local communities, schools and care facilities but also the families (and partners) themselves. Only then will it be possible to create a satisfactory and profitable (WIN-WIN) situation for all stakeholders.
- The local implementation of new initiatives (e.g. father's leave, early childcare) must be continually monitored, supervised and re-adjusted to local needs. Some innovative measures were reported to fail, not because they were not reinforced by legal rules but because their implementation did not fit local business needs or was somehow socially not acceptable. Media work and the use of local key players as role models may facilitate the transformation process.

- Income disparities tend to perpetuate traditional role models: When children are born, partners usually revert to the male breadwinner and female caretaker model – because father's income is usually higher and mothers are thought of as the natural carers. This allocation of paid and unpaid work continues (to a certain extent) throughout most females' lives - with all its negative impacts on women's careers, incomes and social security, especially in old age. Attention should be drawn to the fact that behavioural patterns observed within families are subject to intergenerational transfer, thus influencing future parents' expectations of how to construct and later manage work and family life.
- Unattainable reconciliation (or the expectation of such) results in declining fertility rates - less children planned and even less realized. This should raise a discussion about the value of children and families in society, as well as a reconsideration of associated (often unfriendly) public attitudes.
- It is necessary to adapt government and corporate policies and support, but also the partner's decisions on their sharing of work and family responsibilities, to account for changing family needs, situations and expectations with the aim of making a life with children "rewarding" rather than "exhausting and financially impossible".