

Reconciliation of professional and private life: exchange of good practices

European Commission

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
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Policies for reconciling work and private life aim at finding a satisfactory work/life balance while creating incentives and eliminating disincentives for women and men to enter and remain on the labour market. This involves a new approach to work (working-time patterns, work organisation, flexibility of the workplace) and support for the private needs of citizens throughout their life cycle (crèches, after-school activities, care for the elderly and other dependants or tax incentives).

Reconciling work and private life is key to the promotion of gender equality, as it appears that women are the most effected by the lack of work/life balance. The difficulty of reconciling work and private life hinders the full utilisation of the productive potential of the European labour force and creates obstacles and disincentives to enter and stay on the labour market. Therefore, the Roadmap for Equality between women and men, which follows the Framework Strategy for Gender Equality 2001-2005, identified enhancing reconciliation of work and private life as one of its priority areas.

Under the Fifth Community Programme on Gender Equality 2001-2006, the European Commission actively contributed to promoting the exchange of information and good practice on reconciliation through grants to co-finance transnational projects implemented by Member States, local authorities, NGOs, social partners and other relevant stakeholders.

These projects analysed different aspects of the reconciliation between work and private life issues. For example, some projects focused on the link between participation in employment and the recourse to part-time work by women and the number and age of children. Other projects highlighted that policies, which improve reconciliation of work and private life, should not be directed only at women. All these incentives, such as part-time work, flexibility of contracts, working time and location, availability of childcare facilities, etc. which in the past were focused on women, remain relevant. However, these projects show that reconciliation between work and private life can only be successful if the environment is equally supportive of a work/life balance for men.

All the projects have produced various outputs – publications, studies, toolkits, networks, websites and conferences. These underline the fact that achieving better reconciliation between work and private life is still a challenge and one vital aspect of broader issues, such as declining fertility rates in Europe and changes in family structures. The latter also has an important bearing on changes in the composition of the labour force, on new ways of organising work, on the distribution of sharing work between women and men and on the restructuring of social protection systems.

Much progress on these issues has already been made at EU and national levels, but there is still plenty to do. Furthermore, the challenges of globalisation, Europe's ageing population, the low birth rate and the impact on the sustainability of our social security systems are becoming increasingly pressing. The Roadmap for Equality between women and men takes all these new aspects into account by focusing efforts on six priority areas and identifying measures for each area that are to be implemented over the next few years, notably on the issues relating to reconciling work and private life.

However, the European Commission cannot achieve the objectives listed in the Roadmap by acting alone. This publication is aimed at illustrating and providing inspiration and reflection on what can be achieved through committed partnerships working together towards a common goal. It presents a compendium of projects on the theme of reconciliation between work and private life, which were co-financed by the European Commission in 2002 under the Fifth Community Programme on Gender Equality.

Each profile includes a short explanation of the objectives of the project and an overview of the methodology and the results presented. Useful contact information on the promoter and its international partners can also be found herein.

Each of these projects has made its own unique and important contribution to improve the reconciliation of work and private life in Europe.

Reconciliation of professional and private life:
exchange of good practices



Helping Europeans exercise their right to a balanced lifestyle

Project name

2RECONCILIATE – Towards an effective reconciliation between family and professional life

Duration

December 2002 – March 2004

International partners

Energy office of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (LAUX) (Greece),
Family and Child Care Center (FCCC), (Greece),
Federación de la mujer rural (Spain),
Istituto Ricerche Educative e-Formative (IREF) (Italy),
International Training Center for Women (The Netherlands)

European subsidy

EUR 267 265

Total budget

EUR 339 039

Target groups

Employers (representing the different existing sectors of activity in each territory - public entities, non governmental companies and organisations), union representatives, male and female population, children and the population in general.

Promoter

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Striking the right balance between work and home lives also enables people to take control of when and how they work. This balance can only be achieved once it is accepted and respected as a right that benefits individuals, businesses and society as a whole. Demographic studies highlight that reconciliation is set to become an increasingly important issue, with greater numbers of women entering the workforce and an increasingly large ageing population. In order to ensure that workers can exercise their right to balance their personal and professional lives, it will be necessary to break down the barriers that exist on two levels. Firstly, employers should be made aware that reconciliation measures could result in increased productivity, lower rates of absenteeism and a more satisfied and productive workforce. Secondly, men and women will need to overcome traditional gender stereotypes about their roles in and beyond the home.

The 2RECONCILIATE project aimed to do precisely this by bringing equal opportunities into the mainstream. The project looked at new working patterns in Greece, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands. 2RECONCILIATE was carried out by the Fernão Mendes Pinto Association with the help of five organisations across four Member States. The project focused especially on rural areas and devised activities to target employers, trade unions and children about different aspects of work/life balance. The project also strove to make men aware of the need to share domestic responsibilities and make women aware of their rights, obligations and their need to participate actively in equality initiatives.

2RECONCILIATE raised awareness through campaigns in the participating countries, identified and shared good practices (including new ways of working) and published information to educate children on the topic. As the project coordinators have stressed: "2RECONCILIATE works to identify good practices and new ways of working because balancing our work and home lives is a basic human right." All project activities were based on the cooperation of local, regional, national and international partners.

Getting the backing of employers and trade unions

As part of an effort to educate employers and employees about the practicalities and benefits of reconciliation, the project organised a series of awareness-raising campaigns. The

main reason behind the campaigns was to tackle the age-old preconceptions and promote a change of attitudes and working practices. The project identified a number of best practices that some employers had adopted to promote equal opportunities. The project participants then used these best practices to promote the benefits among other companies. In this manner, *2RECONCILIATE* promoted some new ways in which companies could work and the strategies they could adapt to help their staff strike the right balance between the family and home lives. Awareness-raising campaigns were also directed at trade union representatives in order to develop or improve their ability to negotiate between employers and unions in the five countries.

The project also published two books in Portuguese that contained the current legislation governing employment as well as highlighting some best practices in use. These publications were specifically targeted at companies and trades union members. Meetings were held in each partner country with companies and organisations promoting gender equality. One specific awareness-raising action was held in March 2003 in the local City Hall of Montemor-o-Velho (a rural Portuguese county), gathering 25 politicians to discuss a wide range of issues related to gender equality. Two debates for citizens on changing gender roles and sexist attitudes were also organised in Portugal and Greece.

Raising awareness among children

While re-educating employers and trades unionists is one way of getting the necessary backing to introduce work/life balance in the work place, there is also another way. Education plays a key role in combating traditional thinking, especially when it comes to the role of women in the family structure. Educating children and adolescents can therefore have a long-term impact that can influence the adoption of work/life balance practices. To this end, engaging pedagogical materials were developed for children and adolescents and distributed to organisations that work with schools or that train educators and other professionals.

Toolkits titled '*Um Passo para a Igualdade – educar as nossas crianças para a Igualdade de Oportunidades entre Homens e Mulheres*' (*A step towards equality- educating our children for equal opportunities between men and women*) were created in February 2004 and made available in Portuguese, Italian, Dutch,

Greek and Spanish. Almost 1 000 kits were disseminated in schools in the partner countries. In addition, awareness-raising sessions were organised in schools in Portugal. Pupils sent their relatives over 100 postcards with emblematic sentences about the reconciliation of family and professional activities.

Devising reconciliation strategies

In May 2004 each partner country produced a final comparative study. The study, which was titled *2RECONCILIATE: strategies for the reconciliation of family and professional life: case studies*, presented the geographical, demographic, and social situation of women in the five participating countries. It also covered the legislation, national action plans, positive measures in place regarding gender equality, as well as the specific role of the social partners in promoting work/life balance. The study was made available in Portuguese, Italian, Dutch, Greek and Spanish.

Thanks to the project's awareness-raising campaigns and research, new ways of working and new strategies to balance family and professional lives were introduced in companies and NGOs across the partner countries. And perhaps most importantly, *2RECONCILIATE* tackled the issue at its root – prejudices and discriminatory established norms – by developing new educational materials. The result is a step in the right direction for overcoming gender stereotypes and raising awareness among the general public.

Fathers take a more active role

Project name

Active Fathers

Duration

October 2002 – December 2003

International partners

Veneto Region (Italy),
Ministère de l'Égalité des Chances
(Luxembourg)

EU co-funding

EUR 284 930

Total budget

EUR 359 306

Target groups

Fathers and future fathers, employers,
trade unions, HR managers

Promoter

Ministère fédéral de l'Emploi et du
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Parental leave has been at the forefront of many policies on work/life balance, with many Member States extending the rights to leave or offering paternity leave for the first time. However, many men are still unaware of their rights or are even reluctant to take paternity leave. Active Fathers, a project led by Belgium's Federal Ministry of Labour in association with Luxembourg's Ministère de l'Égalité des Chances, and the Veneto Region in Italy, aims to raise awareness among new fathers as to their right to paternity leave. To this end, the project provides a comparative analysis of how the EU Parental Leave Directive has been implemented in three countries: Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy.

Most fathers today want to be present to share the first precious moments of their child's life, support the mother in her hours of greatest need and generally adapt to a new way of life. In July 2002 new legislation was introduced to make this possible, giving fathers 10 days parental leave after the birth or adoption of a child. Unfortunately, while some Member States have implemented the new legislation others still lag behind. As *Active Fathers* has highlighted that the reasons for this slow uptake need to be tackled head on.

Combating chauvinistic company cultures

Many young fathers have wholeheartedly embraced their right to paternity leave. However, still many more are reticent to take advantage of their new rights, bowing under the pressure of heavy workloads and deciding against taking time off. Their employers are partly responsible for their reticence. Acceptance and uptake of paternity rights calls for not only educating employers and employees about the new provisions but also changing attitudes about paternal rights, responsibilities and needs. Many companies, especially small and medium-sized ones, are not yet adequately informed of the procedures that need to be followed nor how paternity leave should be paid. Furthermore, chauvinistic company cultures and age-old conservative attitudes about the role of men in the family provide another explanation for the low uptake of paternity leave. Such attitudes pressurise men to conform to gender stereotypes, often preventing them from enjoying their full rights to paternity leave.

Breaking down the gender barrier

The gender issue is further compounded by various social policies that, despite being aimed at promoting a work/life balance, often contradict gender equality. Such social measures, of which women are the main beneficiaries, reinforce stereotypes concerning the parents' roles and therefore further support gender inequalities. For example, one key issue in determining whether the father takes paternity leave is the question of salary. Men tend to take parental leave if their partners have a maternity leave that matches their own salary or at least a significant part of it. Since men are still paid 15% more than women in most EU countries it is hardly surprising that the majority of those taking parental leave are women.

Getting Active

The *Active Fathers* project has worked hard to break down conservative attitudes in the workplace and keep fathers informed of their rights. Throughout the three participating countries the project has looked to increase the information available, improve communication and help benchmark national actions. Project activities have included the creation of information kits and campaigns about parental and paternal rights, conferences and training initiatives.

In Italy the project organised 200 hours of training on work/life balance to inform and sensitise students looking for a job and young working couples about parental and paternity leave rights.

In Belgium, *Active Fathers* organised free professional stage performances in Belgian companies to promote paternity leave and highlight its advantages. Through a series of satiric sketches comedians tackled the negative aspects perceived by employers (such as cost, disruption to work and stereotypes on the role of men in a family) and new fathers (from the administrative burdens of taking the leave to pressure from hierarchy or workload).

A paternity booklet was also published in French and Dutch, including a self-evaluation for fathers and mothers to assess the time that each parent spent with their newborn child. This booklet can be downloaded at: <http://meta.fgov.be/pdf/pd/frm01.pdf>

Beyond disseminating relevant material and raising awareness, the project's comparative analysis of practices in the three participating countries has also provided a wealth of information that will benefit all project partners and target groups in the long term. By highlighting the disparities among the countries in their attitudes to paternity leave, *Active Fathers* has helped develop valuable frames of reference for future national initiatives. The project partners have been able to share, not only the diverse challenges they faced, but also their tried and tested methods for overcoming them.

Ultimately, the *Active Fathers* experience demonstrates that active paternity not only helps employees strike a work/life balance but that it can benefit employees and companies alike. As Françoise Goffinet, Adviser at the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men and Active Fathers Project Coordinator in Belgium, has pointed out, "Young fathers who are able to take advantage of their parental leave rights are more efficient and motivated at work." By challenging traditional prejudices, *Active Fathers* has taken an important step towards accepting and integrating paternity leave. Through transnational cooperation it has sparked renewed debate on the subject and provided a platform for dialogue, taking us a step closer to being accepted by employers and workers.

Lifting the weight of culture

Project name

Culture, Custom and Caring; men's and women's possibilities to parental leave

Duration

October 2002 – February 2004

International partners

Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management (Norway)

Ministerio de trabajo y asuntos sociales (Spain),

Ministry for Family Affairs (Germany),

EU co-funding

EUR 226 751

Total budget

EUR 292 177

Target groups

Parents with newborn and young children

Promoter

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While maternity leave has long been recognised and protected as a woman's right across the EU, paternity leave has not been treated in the same light. In some countries fathers are not even aware that they can take time off or they are reluctant believing that it is a woman's role to care for the child. The Culture, Custom and Caring project aimed to tackle such attitudes and raise awareness as to the current paternity rights.

The project, which was managed by the Icelandic Centre for Gender Equality and conducted in four countries, Spain, Germany, Norway and Iceland, carried out a study on the time constraints and the gender issue in modern families with young children. As the project coordinators at the Icelandic Centre for Gender Equality have stressed: "This project reveals the important relations between national legislation and cultural attitudes." It has contributed to the knowledge of how to coordinate work and family life by examining cultural traditions, attitudes and norms that encourage or prevent men from taking up their right to parental leave. Comparative analysis of the different parental systems in the four partner countries has provided valuable information for policy-makers and social service providers alike, helping them foresee the effects of their decisions on gender equality.

The project also provided a case study based on statistics, public documents and in-depth interviews with men in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The reason being that SMEs sometimes have fewer possibilities to adapt to individual needs, or in some cases attitudes within such companies prevent men from taking parental leave.

Cultural attitudes to parental leave

The research highlighted that the four partner countries have developed different goals in their parental leave strategies, based on different cultural attitudes. **Norway** was the first country in the world to push for mandatory leave for men in order to increase their part in childcare. Since 1993 Norwegians have enjoyed the right to four weeks parental leave, which is today widely accepted and normalised. Approximately 85% of men take their one-month paternity leave rights and about 14% of men take more than that. **In Iceland** paternity leave is the longest (three months) in Europe and can also be taken on a

part-time basis. Recent statistics reveal that 82% of fathers usually take the first two months, while 76% take the third month. However, Icelandic men work extremely long hours with the boundaries between work and family lives being blurred. Furthermore, Icelandic women tend to be the primary carers. **In Spain** only 2% of Spanish men take paternity leave, although many take some form of parental leave after the birth of a child. There is a lack of knowledge about rights and allowances reported by employers and employees alike. Furthermore, men's careers are given more priority in Spain than that of women, regardless of the spouse's position within the workforce. **In Germany** the system is based on the male breadwinner model. Only about 2% of German men take parental leave. However, for German couples who take parental leave along with part-time work, the solutions become a complicated puzzle to be individually negotiated with the employers. This sometimes puts the parents in a vulnerable situation with employers, who in some cases reveal explicit resistance. German couples, like Norwegians, tend to adopt egalitarian parental roles but this is often linked to their positions within the workforce or dependent on how career-orientated their female spouses are.

Structural trends

National legislation is clearly influenced by culture. The differences in the parental leave take-up may be caused in part by the cultural norms. To change the structures and create new opportunities and options for new parents, policy-makers must pay closer attention to these cultural norms.

In particular, the project team have highlighted two structural trends concerning the involvement of men in childcare and parental leave. On one hand, there is long paid parental leave rights for both parents, based on labour market participation. Norway and Iceland follow this path with specific, gender-targeted measures in the parental leave system that favour a higher use of paternity leave by fathers. On the other hand, there is a universal but gender-biased parental system in Germany and Spain, which is heavily influenced by traditional gender roles. These systems are characterised by strong cultural norms underpinning gender difference and a division of men and women rather than equal sharing.

The constraints of gender-biased systems

One of the lessons learnt in the *Culture, Custom and Caring* project is that flexibility within a universal but gender-biased system is potentially more difficult to achieve. In addition, the project's comparative review underlined that the diverging take-up rates of men and women's parental leave are also related to labour market situation and gender relations in general. For example, female employment rate is high in Norway and Iceland where less resistance to parental leave is encountered. In Germany and Spain, on the other hand, unemployment rates are considerably higher. The report is available at: http://caring.jafnretti.is/docs/CCC_FinalReport.pdf

Stimulating public discussion on parental leave issues

Thanks to an agreement made between the Icelandic State Broadcasting service and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), a TV documentary entitled '*Culture, Custom and Caring: Men's and Women's Possibilities to Parental Leave*' was distributed throughout Europe. This one-hour film promoted new attitudes that encourage men to increase their part in caring responsibilities and to increase their take-up of paternity leave, without decreasing women's rights to secure working conditions. Throughout the programme, statistics, interviews in German, Icelandic, Norwegian and Spanish and the current legislation on parental leave has increased the awareness of how parental leave differs between these four countries.

Time for new policies

Project name

Daily Routine Arrangements:
from local practice to national policy

Duration

August 2002 – March 2004

International partners

Association française de l'excellence territoriale (AFET) (France),
Central Union for Child Welfare (CUCW) (Finland),
Politecnico Milano – Dipartimento di Architettura e Pianificazione (Italy)

EU co-funding

EUR 415 554

Total budget

EUR 530 469

Target groups

Special attention given to people with lower income and to migrants

Promoter

Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment,
Department for the Coordination of
Emancipation Policy, The Netherlands

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http://www.emancipatieweb.nl/uploads/1530/Newsletter_no_2_Conference_report.pdf

The lifestyles of men and women in the Netherlands have changed a great deal over the last twenty years. However, society still seems to be based on the traditional 'bread-winner' model, where the man works and the woman looks after the home and children. While this model has long since passed its sell-by date, the Netherlands still maintains a typical nine-to-five culture in which people are expected to work during the hours that shops are open – making life complicated for households where both partners work full time. New agreements and more flexibility are needed in order to match our changing life patterns and schedules. One European project set out to tackle these problems in the Netherlands and beyond by helping to turn successful local initiatives into national policies.

The *Daily Routine Arrangements* project was set up to increase access to the workforce, especially for women. In order to do so, the project aims to create 175 daily routine experiments to make the combination of labour and care easier and reinforce innovation in national policy measures for creating a better work/life balance in the Netherlands, Italy, France and Finland.

Over the past four years, *Daily Routine Arrangements* has set up and analysed the various European initiatives that were aimed at creating more flexible working hours, personnel policies based on life course thinking and extended opening hours. The project, which will run from 2002 to 2007, has also stressed the importance of maintaining better cooperation with schools as well as childcare and leisure centres. The Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, in collaboration with three international partners is responsible for coordinating this project.

Dragging society into the 21st century

Many Member States are still not geared towards the needs and preferences of people who try to combine work and family lives including caring for children and elderly relatives. People need services to be more flexible: this includes shop opening times, public transport, schools, childcare facilities, day care centres for the elderly. As the *Daily Routine Arrangements* project has stressed: "It is not just local, regional or national governments that are responsible for balancing work and

family life. EU citizens, employers, project developers, shop owners or service providers also have a responsibility." Daily routine arrangements touch on a number of existing policy areas including planning, public services, work/life balance policies and flexible working hours. Therefore solutions have to be all-encompassing if they are to meet the changing needs of the 21st century.

From local practice to national policy

The programmes within the *Daily Routine Arrangements* project have focused on local initiatives that allow for greater flexibility in opening the opening times of local services. As a result of the exchange of experiences between the four partner countries a number of best practices have come to light that will help ease daily routine arrangements. The publication '*Reconciliation of work and private life*', published in January 2004, sets out a number of the initiatives that have improved the welfare of employees and their children throughout the participating countries.

New solutions to manage rush hours

From 2002 to 2004, the project carried out 125 experiments in the participating countries that focused on ethnic minority groups, rural areas, small businesses in care and childcare, local-time initiatives, flexible working hours, personnel policies based on life course thinking and daily routines in planning. The approach from one country to the next varies considerably offering a range of best practices from which to choose.

In **Finland**, parents have had access to childcare regardless of whether they work away from home or not. In order to support this right, Finland introduced a personal tax reduction scheme for all sorts of home help, whether this is used for babysitting, shopping, cleaning or any other chores. If parents do not want to take advantage of childcare services they can arrange for home childcare up to the age of three or send them to a private nursery.

In **France**, Time and Mobility Agencies organise debates in which governments, businesses and local groups can come together to discuss issues and come up with joint solutions to counteract the problem of opening times and greater flexibility of public services.

In **Italy**, 'Mobility Managers' set up contracts between businesses and the Italian Government to bring public transport and opening hours in line with working hours.

In the **Netherlands**, Dutch schools work with sports clubs, which means that after school children can enjoy hobbies, sports and other activities, without their parents having to arrange for their transportation.

Tips for local, national and Community policy

The project experiences have enabled the partners to draw a number of important conclusions about reconciliation policies and practices. Above all, for initiatives to be successful they have to come from the men and women who are actually trying to combine work and private life in practice. What solutions do they want? What is preventing the solutions from being implemented? What programmes can be easily implemented and where is there a need for more legislation or changes in the law? In addition, such policies must also address the needs of employers and businesses as they play a central role in the success of initiatives.

The *Daily Routine Arrangements* project has demonstrated the diversity of the possible approaches to reconciliation in order to inspire discussion and international debate. It is expected that in the second phase of the project 50–55 additional experiments will be carried out to further build on these achievements. The book based on the project: '*Reconciliation of work and private life*', is available at: www.emancipatieweb.nl/uploads/1530/Reconciliation_of_work_and_privat_life.pdf

Auditing family-consciousness in Europe's enterprises

Project name

Famwork – Measures for the compatibility of work and family life based on a national coordination office model project

Duration

September 2002 – December 2003

International partners

Autonome Province Bozen (Italy),
Beruf & Familie gGmbH (Germany),
Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité (France),
Ministry of Social and Family Affairs (Hungary)

EU co-funding

EUR 237 145

Total budget

EUR 344 180

Target groups

Businesses and organisations

Promoter

Federal Ministry for Social Security,
Generations and Consumer Protection,
Austria

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All across Europe, the reconciliation of work and family life has become an important issue for women and men alike. While there has been a lot of progress, the work/life balance must now be approached in a wider context. In tackling the issue we must take into account not only deeply engrained gender stereotypes or discriminatory practices but also changes in the make-up of the working population, new ways of working and changes to social security systems. Given the complexity of the challenge, it will be necessary to demand commitment for change from individuals, governments and companies across Europe. In order to help businesses define family-friendly objectives and the methods to achieve them, the Famwork project has developed the Work and Family Audit. This audit system is a management tool that helps businesses and other organisations develop family-conscious staff policies.

Famwork is managed by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection (BMSG), together with project partners representing national ministries, institutions and organisations from Germany, France, Italy and Hungary. It has helped initiate international dialogue on how reconciliation measures could be improved by implementing national coordination authorities in each country. In addition, the project has also relied on the Work and Family Audit, a tool based on the American 'family-friendly index' concept. Created by the Hertie Foundation, this tool was implemented by the German project partner Beruf & Familie GmbH. As a system of control, the audit supports investments that target human resource management decisions and provides support for greater commitment and openness to innovation on the part of a company's employees. It can be applied in small and medium-sized enterprises, non-profit organisations and the public sector.

The Work and Family Audit: how it works

The first objective of the audit is to check the company culture and develop staff policy measures to support work/family reconciliation. It guides the company through an internal process in which the objectives and measures needed for family-conscious staff policies are defined and put into practice. On the basis of a systematic list of criteria, the company's human resource policy is thoroughly examined in 10 fields

of action, which include working hours, work flows and work contents, information and communications policies, leadership, human resource development, the composition of salaries and wages and accompanying services for families. Based on this, shortcomings are identified, possible solutions worked out and strategies for development and change determined. After examination of the analysis by an external auditor, the company receives a basic Work and Family Audit certificate. After three years, auditors check whether the strategies have been implemented. If this is the case, and if the auditors' evaluation is positive, the company is awarded the Work and Family Audit certificate for another three years.

The proven benefits

In **Italy** the *Famwork* team adapted the Work & Family Audit to a rural region in the Autonomous Province of South Tyrol, testing small and medium-sized enterprises. The targeted companies largely benefited from new measures especially in terms of better performance and productivity, stress reduction, lower rates of absenteeism and an improved corporate image. The audit was not only conducive to the creation of further family-friendly measures but it also helped the companies compete for qualified staff. In **Austria**, the Work and Family Audit for the elderly care sub-project developed guidelines for applying the Work and Family Audit in in-patient as well as in mobile care for the elderly.

In **Hungary**, there is an annual competition, which started in 2000, for the most family-friendly business. Applicants are requested to describe, with regard to five pre-set criteria, the measures they have launched in order to improve the compatibility of work and family life. Awards are presented in four categories: large, medium and small-sized enterprises as well as institutions under public law. The award-winning companies are entitled to make use of the competition logo and all award-winners receive support so that they can offer holidays for staff members to spend with their families. Since 2000, the number of contestants each year has grown significantly, a testimony to the tremendous interest employers are taking in family-friendly measures. To support employers in introducing measures to improve the compatibility of work and family life, the Work and Family Audit was taken over by Hungarian stakeholders. The Hertie Foundation helped train the Hungarian

auditors and, in 2003, an audit council was established in the Ministry for Employment and Labour and auditing activities were launched.

In **France**, the project's international partnership has also allowed for work/family balance measures to be compared across the participating countries. Research of the current situation in France has revealed that, as opposed to Germany and Austria, there is no societal stigma on parents entrusting their under-three-year olds to state-run day-care facilities. On the contrary, these are often taken advantage of, particularly by highly-qualified parents. Alternatively, children of this particular age group are attended to by childminders. Following a law in 1994 that made the employment of childminders attractive through tax incentives, individual childcare was immensely promoted and new jobs were created. Consequently, the number of childminders rose from 130 000 to 300 000.

Sharing experiences

Famwork has fostered the sharing of these positive experiences to advance family/work balance measures and strategies in Europe as a whole. In particular, the Work and Family Audit has proven highly effective in many ways. It fits all industries and company sizes, can also be applied to public services, and can improve the work/life balance in the EU. More information about the project and its achievements are available at www.famwork.info

Ensuring long-term care for elderly women

Project name

GALCA – Gender analysis and long-term care assistance

Duration

November 2002 – December 2003

International partners

Economic and Social Research Institute, (Ireland), National Institute for Working Life (Sweden), PROJOB (the Netherlands), Videncenter for ligestilling (Denmark)

EU co-funding

EUR 379 005

Total budget

EUR 479 831

Target groups

Long-term care providers and receivers, policy-makers involved in reconciliation issues

Promoter

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Europe's ageing population presents a challenge for already over-stretched care services. The need for the long-term care of elderly people is increasing at a time when the number of carers, who have traditionally been women, continues to fall. By 2051 the demand for home-help care is expected to increase by a staggering 150%. Given such dramatic increases it is essential that we start investing now in finding solutions for providing long-term care.

The **Gender Analysis and Long-term Care Assistance (GALCA)** project, coordinated by the Giacomo Brodolini Foundation based in Italy, aimed to address these challenges by identifying the long-term care services currently available in Italy, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. The project set out to assess the basic structure of different long-term care models and develop best practices that could be adopted by the EU Member States. *GALCA* focused specifically on the gender dimension of long-term care in the cities of Modena, Dublin and Roskilde.

Care as a gender equality issue

What does care have to do with gender? As the findings of the *GALCA* project have demonstrated, quite a lot. Thanks to their longer life expectancy, women outnumber men when it comes to receiving care. They represent two-thirds of the elderly population, and 75–80% of elderly women live alone because they are widowed, divorced, or single (as opposed to only 40% of men). Since women have traditionally been the primary carers for elderly relatives, better care services could free up their time enabling them to go back to paid employment.

Comparable data in long-term care assistance

Until now there has been a lack of data on the current and future demands on care services across the EU. *GALCA* recognised the need for comparative analysis and carried out gender-specific studies in this area. Supported by a team of international researchers and academics from Denmark, Sweden, Ireland and Italy, *GALCA* explored the demand for, and cost of, long-term care services in Denmark, Ireland and Italy. Following this the team concentrated on financial models and best practices for the long-term care of the elderly in these countries. Surveys in Denmark, Ireland and Italy highlighted the number of elderly people receiving care as well as the different levels of care they received; they explored the types of professional and voluntary services on offer as well as the number of hours of care per week that is provided by family, friends or professionals.

Care services for elderly women

Based on this data, *GALCA* was able to create model guidelines for providing and financing long-term care in the five countries that participated in the project. The results of the project have paved the way for future policy development and have pinpointed some of the tough decisions that EU Member States will face in the future. The project recommended the need for improvement in four key areas: providing more choice in the services available (delivery of meals, more home-help care and so on); increasing the numbers of care homes for elderly people; encouraging the use of information and communication technology in care services (for example, tele-care services); and promoting the needs of carers (free legal advice, social help desks, medical and psychological support).

Some of the best practices identified include:

- 'Smart Homes' — which is an initiative in the Netherlands that consists of specifically designed cooperative housing for elderly people where a large range of services is provided within the building.
- ICT centres for the elderly — which is an employment-friendly initiative set up in the Netherlands and Ireland and tailored specifically to help the elderly get to grips with new information technology. These schemes give them more autonomy in their everyday lives and improve communication across generations.
- Access to social and cultural activities — this includes offering transport to libraries, shops and doctors. Such an initiative can help elderly people from ethnic minorities get more involved in community activities as has been done successfully in the Nordic countries.
- Service vouchers — an initiative used in Italy, this acts as a coupons system for the elderly where they can choose the care provider and therefore have more control over the quality of service they receive.

GALCA's extensive research also favoured the use of well-balanced private/public care system for elderly people. The reason being is that a state-funded system would not be sustainable for European welfare states.

Sharing experience

The *GALCA* project has published the results of the research on its website: (www.fondazionebrodolini.it/GALCA). These results are also freely available on a CD-Rom entitled '*GALCA Project, Gender Analyses and Long-term Care Assistance*'

and contains all the documentation related to the project. A print version of the final report entitled '*GALCA Project, Gender Analyses and Long-term Care Assistance*', which includes the catalogue of best practices, can be requested from progetti@fondazionebrodolini.it. The country reports for Denmark, Ireland, Sweden and Italy are also available online. All information is published in English.

Domestic service and care: reconciliation or contradiction?

Project name

Homework and caretaking: strategies of reconciliation and conditions of employment in different family units. Gender, class and ethnic inequalities

Duration

December 2002 – May 2004

International partners

Hamburg University (Germany),
Institute for Feminist Research of the Complutense University (Instituto de Investigaciones Feministas) (Spain),
The Bradford Youth Development MAIZ (Austria), Partnership (United Kingdom)

EU co-funding

EUR 246 316

Total budget

EUR 314 641

Target groups

Households that resort to neighbourhood services, migrant women working in domestic services and/or care-taking

Promoter

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Although men are now encouraged to share the burdens of housework and childcare or care for elderly relatives, this has not yet filtered through to all sectors of society. The most successful at sharing such tasks are those families where both partners are working full time. But in families where women have more unstable, precarious or informal working patterns the burden of such tasks usually falls on their shoulders. Public services are often overstretched in offering the necessary domestic and care services that would enable these women to go back to work. Often it is immigrant women in Europe who are employed to bridge the gaps in such services, particularly in middle or upper-class homes. The Homework and Caretaking project takes a look at the situation in four European countries.

The *Homework and Caretaking* project, which is run by the Spanish Red Cross, analysed domestic and care work in homes: where domestic duties are 'outsourced'; and where a member of the family is paid to provide these services in other homes. The project relied upon the input of its four partners in Spain, Germany, the UK and Austria. All of the participating organisations share a concern for the disadvantaged position of women in Europe and, more particularly, for the unstable situation of many immigrant women working in the domestic and care services sector. The sector is notorious for its lack of regulations, insecure working conditions, low salaries and class and ethnic inequalities.

The contradiction

The significant rise in domestic services throughout the European Union in recent years has lifted the burdens of domestic duties from the shoulders of many women. More families are paying others to do their housework or take on care duties as a way to balance their work and home lives. Relying on a second person, usually a woman, to take on such tasks eases family conflict about the division of time. However, not everyone can afford to do this. It would seem that the increase in domestic services is actually a mere transfer of the domestic and care tasks from one group of women to another, thus reinforcing certain inequalities.

Rather than providing a way to balance work and family life, paid domestic work is being transferred to other women, most notably the immigrant population. To make matters worse,

female immigrant workers are often living in precarious situations where their own family lives are suffering due to stringent policies that hinder family reunification. But it is not just female immigrant workers that encounter difficulties. A significant number of women working in the domestic service and care sectors experience difficulties in balancing their family and professional lives and, yet, often cannot afford to take advantage of work/life balance policies.

reports for Spain, the UK, Austria and Germany on migrant women and work/life balance are now available online in Spanish, English and German at:
<http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias/homework.pdf>

Reconciling domestic services

In response to these issues, the *Homework and Caretaking* project interviewed domestic and care workers across the four participating countries, each with different socio-economic and welfare state models. This international analysis has served as a basis to improve the social assessment of domestic and care work.

The project then made recommendations and proposals at European level to improve regulation of the sector. The recommendations targeted national governments, public authorities, NGOs, the business sector and private employers.

The alternatives promoted by the project focused on increasing the negotiating power of women – particularly immigrant domestic employees – in the areas of working rights and citizenship. Extending labour rights and forcing changes in domestic service legislation was another basic objective. The project also aimed to outline the personal dimensions of female immigrants' lives with the slogan '*One is not just work, one is a person*'.

On the basis of these policy recommendations, a public awareness campaign was created. The campaign pushed one of the project's central tenets: primarily that: "the increasing demand of domestic care brings into question not only the issue of sharing the burden of domestic tasks in the home, but also about recognising the female immigrants working in this area".

A DVD on the value of housework and caretaking was produced to encourage social debate on the various possibilities for balancing work and family life.

The international report entitled: "*Homes, caretaking, frontiers... Immigrant women, rights and conciliation*" and the national

Care for gender equality

Project name

I.C.A.R.E. – Integrazione Cura
Apprendimento Realizzazione Empowerment-

Duration

November 2002 – February 2004

National partners

Ad Vertere s.r.l, Consorzio Solidarietà
Sardegna, Department, Progetto Donna
Più, Quartu Sant' Elena City Council,
Province of Rome Social Affairs, Unione
Nazionale Cooperative Italiane (UNCI)
Venezia,

International partners

Christliches Jugenddorfwerk Deutschlands
e. V. (CJD) Dortmund (Germany),
Fratz Graz (Austria),
Kek Dni Nea Magnisias (Greece),
Københavns KvindeDaghøjskole (KKDH)
(Denmark)

EU co-funding

EUR 290 388

Total budget

EUR 368 487

Target group

Parents

Promoter

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Having affordable and accessible quality childcare is extremely important for working parents, particularly for women as they are usually the main carers. When access to childcare is limited, women are often obliged to reduce their working time or even to leave the labour market altogether.

The *I.C.A.R.E.* transnational workgroup, which brings together partners from Italy, Germany, Austria, Greece, and Denmark, developed standards and benchmarks to evaluate the relationship between childcare staff preparation, quality of childcare and child development in early childhood education. The project committed itself to investigating policies and practices that improve the quality of childcare, especially for children from lower-income families. It also sought to develop assistance and education services to support families, particularly for children up to the age of six. In addition, *I.C.A.R.E.* studies aimed to improve the status of care and educational work, promote the participation of men in these areas and coordinate working hours and the opening hours of essential services so that they can better meet the needs of working parents.

Improving the quality of childcare

The *I.C.A.R.E.* project began with empirical comparative research on legislation, policies and strategies for the reconciliation of work and family as well as on professional qualifications in the childcare sector in the different partner countries. Selected success stories are gathered in a booklet called 'Childcare quality. Just a matter of corn and salt'.

The results of this research were significant. Although less than 10% of the childcare facilities in Italy, Denmark, Greece, Germany and Austria have been categorised 'inadequate' or 'poor', most childcare settings were characterised as only 'fair' or 'minimal'. This demonstrates the need for systematic efforts to improve a substantial portion of childcare in the EU. National studies indicated that there are several contextual factors that impact quality childcare, including guidance, funding, licensing and sponsorship.

The research also aimed to get across the message that quality childcare is essential to the well-being of children. Evidence demonstrated a strong link between process quality, structural and caregiver characteristics and health and safety practices. Better-trained caregivers give higher quality care. In terms of

children's everyday experiences, children also appear happier and more cognitively engaged in settings in which caregivers are interacting with them positively and child/adult ratios are lower. The research also analysed the argument for public intervention to improve the quality of childcare, especially for children from lower-income families.

Discussing the work/life balance

In order to provide further insight into reconciliation demands and challenges, *I.C.A.R.E.* recognised the need to gather real life experiences and feedback from all segments of the labour market. To this end, focus group discussions on balancing work and family commitments were held with small businesses, freelance workers, medium and large corporate representatives and public sector workers in the province of Rome. Prevailing issues such as enterprise bargaining, part-time and casual employment, paid maternity leave and elderly care were also discussed.

As a result of these focus groups, a report headed 'Just a matter of time?' was published examining the critical issues raised. It also contained policy recommendations that explored a number of reconciliation options in the workplace. This report was drafted as a tool to shape the government's policy and to assist the government in its pursuit of sustainable work/life balance for all.

Piloting quality

I.C.A.R.E. piloted four European subprojects on the needs of mothers and infants. The projects involved young mothers and infants in Copenhagen (Denmark), parental role support in Dortmund (Germany), children and space in Graz (Austria) and single mothers in Greece. These four specific initiatives were carried out to involve and engage the different stakeholders in the process of determining what makes for quality childcare. Based on these pilots, *I.C.A.R.E.* drafted a quality-indicators statement and published a dedicated booklet, 'What policies for changing families?'

Sharing project results

In order to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the project results, a website and European workshops were used to help share ideas, documents and intermediate results and to stimulate discussion among partners and other actors involved in the project. European conferences also provided an

opportunity to disseminate methodologies, approaches, tools and models developed in the framework of the project.

Finally, the *I.C.A.R.E.* project developed and disseminated a 'Resources pack', a handbook offering a list of helpful websites, e-mail addresses for experts and international organisations involved in gender budgeting projects as well as an overview of literature (publications, papers, toolkits, statistics) on gender mainstreaming, balancing work and family commitments and local governance.

As one project participant has noted, 'I.C.A.R.E. raised awareness of the necessity to promote more intensively the efforts and initiatives on reconciliation', be it by taking example from other local realities or by publicising the availability of services in each specific region. Through research, collaboration and dialogue *I.C.A.R.E.* offered invaluable insight into one of the most crucial aspects of work/life reconciliation: the quality of the services and education available for our children.

Helping women scientists up the ladder

Project name

MOBISC – Equal pay, career progression and the socio-legal valuation of care

Duration

December 2002 – June 2004

National partners

Centre for the Study of Law and Policy in Europe (CSLPE), University of Leeds

International partners

Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social (CESIS) (Portugal), PERIPJERIE (Austria), Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) (Greece), University of Bari (Italy)

EU co-funding

EUR 338 470

Total budget

EUR 430 965

Target groups

Policy-makers at EU and national level, women's organisations, employers and social partners, the research community, mobile men and women in the EU and those considering moving

Promoter

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Department of Trade and Industry, UK

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Despite the fact that an increasing number of women are entering the labour market each year, differences between female and male representation – as well as between their earnings – are still evident in certain sectors. On average, a man in the EU will earn 15% more than his female counterpart, and this gap is not closing with time. In the UK the gender pay gap of full-time academics was 4% wider in 2002-03 than it was in 1995-96. In order to understand the obstacles that women in European scientific labour markets are encountering, the Mobility and Progression in Science Careers Study (MOBISC) project set out to research the factors shaping the career progression and representation of highly-skilled women in this sector. The project focused on careers in both medical and physical sciences and examined the impact that care responsibilities – as a form of unpaid work – are having on men and women scientists.

MOBISC began by considering the tension between family-friendly policies developed to help recruit and retain highly-skilled women on the one hand and the general link between career progression and mobility on the other. The project's central study looked at both social and legal aspects, combining a legal and policy analysis at EU and national levels and an analysis of statistical data. Managed by the Women and Equality Unit of the British Department of Trade and Industry, the project gathered partners from the UK, Greece, Portugal, Italy and Austria.

Stumbling up the ladder

The past decades have seen a significant increase in the numbers of women studying and working in the sciences, a domain traditionally occupied by men. Unfortunately, feminisation has not necessarily proven an indicator of progress towards equality. The degree of feminisation in both the academic and industrial sectors has begun to show an overall decline, especially in disciplines such as physics and engineering and in the industrial sector. Although more than half the research in Europe is carried out by the private sector, only 18% of industrial researchers are women and their opportunities to progress to senior level positions are minimal. The most notable level of gender inequality is visible in positions of seniority. In 1999, only 11% of professors in Europe were female. It is clear that women fail to progress in science careers at the same rate as their male peers.

The pay gap: key factors

Research has also shown an emerging pay gap. The reasons for it are complex and interconnected. One key factor is thought to be differences in educational levels and work experience. Historical differences in the levels of qualifications held by men and women have been reflected in their salaries. In addition, women are still more likely than men to have breaks from paid work to care for children and other dependants. These breaks impact their level of work experience, which in turn lowers their pay rates.

Another factor is the fact that, on average, women spend less time commuting than men, perhaps because of the time constraints they face when they are balancing work and care responsibilities. This can affect women's pay in two ways: it gives them a smaller pool of jobs to choose from and increases competition for the jobs available, leading to lower wages for those jobs. In addition, women's employment tends to be highly concentrated in certain occupations – 60% of working women are represented in just 10 occupations. And these female dominated occupations are often the lowest paid.

Juggling work and family life on temporary contracts

The *MOBISC* study also noted that women in the scientific labour markets are more likely to be employed on temporary contracts than their male colleagues. If temporary contracts provide a useful way for researchers to move between sectors, research groups and countries, they also imply a lack of security and of a defined and predictable career trajectory. This can be a setback for researchers with partners and children. It is also a major issue affecting the retention of scientists. The work of the Research Careers Initiative in the UK and the Project Centre for the Advancement of Women at the University of Vienna in Austria has provided interesting examples of projects designed to consider and structure new routes to career progression.

The relationship between excellence, networks and progression

Some countries, such as the UK, have adopted more transparent and apparently objective approaches designed to assess and reward research performance. However, academic networks and connections remain critical to career progression in science in all countries. The issue of time – and particularly family/personal responsibilities – is of critical relevance to the ability to access and to build networks, both in terms of working abroad and attending international conferences.

MOBISC research thus placed great emphasis on the issue of time and the extent to which the use of time is gendered. The persistence of gender differences in the proportion of time spent on forms of unpaid work in the home restricts the ability of many women scientists with families to devote an equal amount of time to their research. Most scientists work between 60 and 80 hours per week, including weekend and holiday work. Scientists with children are less able or willing to commit extended hours to their research. Because they are less likely to work overtime and at weekends, they will also be less likely to gain a distinctive competitive advantage over those who work overtime.

As the project has demonstrated, “the development of family responsibilities has a clear impact on the retention and progression of women in science careers”. The nature of science careers poses serious challenges to scientists wishing to reconcile their professional and personal lives. Firmly entrenched cultural, political and economic norms still heavily influence the practical impact of family-friendly employment policies.

MOBISC research has provided significant insight into the career progression of highly-skilled scientists. These project findings and others are gathered in the book *'Mobility and Career Progression in the European Union: a Case Study of Science Careers'*, published in 2005 by Professor Ackers of the University of Leeds. The *MOBISC* results were also compiled in 18 thematic papers, made available on the *MOBISC* website and presented at a conference in Lisbon in June 2004.

A new era for human resource management

Project name

New Hera

Duration

October 2002 – December 2003

International partners

Arcidona (Italy), GISA (Germany),
The County Administrative Board of
Stockholm (Sweden), The government of
Åland (Finland)

National partners

Ayuntamiento de A Coruña,
Ayuntamiento de Gijón,
Diputación Provincial de Córdoba,
Instituto de la Mujer de la Junta de
Comunidades de Castilla La Mancha,
Instituto Asturiano de la Mujer

EU co-funding

EUR 386 397

Total budget

EUR 483 359

Target groups

SME, local and regional public
administrations

Promoter

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One of the EU's objectives is to build an egalitarian and fair society where women and men can fully enjoy their right to develop their personal, family and professional lives. However, this objective is far from being met in many European countries. If this right is to be protected, it must first be recognised in all areas or spheres of life in a genuine exercise of shared social responsibility. While legislative measures are essential, they are not enough. The human resources management in private businesses and public organisations must also take into account the gender dimension and the need for a better work/life balance.

The *New Hera* project, coordinated by the Spanish Fundación Mujeres (women's foundation), has developed an effective method to analyse the current situation of work/family life reconciliation in public, private, or social organisations. This method is known as GEMS, which stands for Gender Equality Management System. It dates back to the year 2000 when it was developed through cooperation between the Provincial Administrative Boards of West Götaland and Stockholm as a benchmarking tool to work toward equal pay for men and women. Fundación Mujeres, together with its five national and four transnational partners, has used it to favour the implementation of reconciliation measures in the human resource management of private businesses and public organisations. Throughout 2003, the project launched activities in various locations in Spain – Asturias, Castilla la Mancha, Córdoba, A Coruña, and Madrid – as well as in Italy, Sweden, Finland and Germany.

Evaluating and improving reconciliation levels

To secure equality between women and men in the scope of labour relations and make the evaluation of this more systematic, the *New Hera* project used GEMS as a measure card. The system provided an objective description of the situation within an organisation with regards to gender equality in labour relations. It also provided human resources managers with a quick and efficient strategy to take the issue of reconciliation into account in their management policies and practices.

How does GEMS work? It operates in four concise steps: gathering information, evaluating the situation, diagnosing and finally making recommendations for further improvements.

In the first place, GEMS carries out an examination and analysis of documents that demonstrate how equality measures are part

of the organisation's core activities, objectives or how they are used in relations between the entrepreneur or management personnel and the male and female workers. These may be, for example, bargaining instruments, reports, equal opportunity plans or wage policies.

Seven working areas are then analysed to provide a diagnosis. These include external scenario and integration line, work relations and environment, family life and work, training and skills development, selection of personnel and promotions, wages and benefits and sexual harassment. Then, six action areas are analysed according to different criteria. Based on this, the system determines to what extent the organisation complies with reconciliation. The different possibilities are: fully or partly complied with, complied with but not documented or not complied with at all.

On the basis of this method a profile can be drawn up that establishes the situation of the organisation in relation to the work area explored and the most suitable reconciliation solutions can be put into action.

The GEMS toolkit is now available in five languages: Swedish, Italian, German, English and Spanish.

Adaptable methods and solutions

Private companies in any area of business, public administrations at the national, regional and local level, trade union organisations and social organisations in any sector or area can use the GEMS tool. The GEMS method is the result of a process of experimentation and cross-checking among several working groups made up of public, private, social and trade union organisations in seven different contexts in Europe. This includes different types of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large companies (goods transport, restoration, hotels, service, a Swiss multinational company in food manufacturing and a savings bank), as well as in public administrations (the City Hall of Gijon and La Corona, in the region of Castilla-La Mancha). A total of 73 administrations and businesses were involved in the analysis of the needs of working men and women, exchanging experiences and making proposals on strategies for reconciliation mechanisms. Working with international partners offered new perspectives when it came to applying the tool in real-life situations.

A new way of thinking in human resource management

Managing a business is also about motivating people and sharing company achievements with them. The main lesson learnt in the *New Hera* project was that reconciling family and work life can only be properly included in public, private and social policies by engaging in an open discussion. As the Fundación Mujeres noted, 'Precisely because the reconciliation between family and working life is not something that can only be tackled in the private or domestic sphere, initiatives must be taken from public powers, from enterprises and by public agents.' The project and the GEMS tool contributed to increasing awareness and commitment by key social and economic actors to achieve gender equality in the labour market and in society. They also made it clear that reconciliation is a question of joint social responsibility. As the project experience has demonstrated, this tool can help to change mentalities, perceptions and ideologies to foster fairer work environments.

Better work/life balance for Europe's rural areas

Project name

New Neighbours: Reconciliation of work and family life in rural areas in Europe

Duration

January 2003 – November 2004

National partners

Agrotransfer bv Dronten

International partners

Associação Portuguesa de Paralisia Cerebral, Coimbra (Portugal), Ecole Supérieure d'Agriculture d'Angers, Angers (France), Häme Polytechnic, Mustiala (Finland), Groupe South Kerry Development Partnership Limited, Cahersiveen (Ireland), Tamen, Entwicklungsbüro Arbeit und Umwelt GMBH, Berlin (Germany)

European subsidy

EUR 368 446

Total budget

EUR 540 460

Target groups

Professionals working in agriculture, health and other care services, policy-makers at regional, national and European levels and inhabitants of rural areas.

Promoter

Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality, The Netherlands

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The need to work alongside raising a family is a fact for the majority of Europeans whether they live in towns or in the countryside. However, those living in the countryside face added difficulties in balancing the two. This is largely due to the lack of support systems available such as childcare, care for the elderly or other dependents, opening times of shops, banks and other facilities. There are also cultural attitudes that need to be overcome, particularly the persisting notion that care work is a woman's lot, rather than a task that should be shared equally between men and women. There is therefore a pressing need to challenge such attitudes and provide adequate support services. The New Neighbours project, which gathers partners from six countries across Europe, addressed the question of how combining work and family life can be made easier for people living outside Europe's cities.

The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, together with six partners from countries including: Germany, Finland, Portugal, France, Ireland and the Netherlands, collated examples of best practices and models for combining work and family life in rural areas. These examples were then analysed thoroughly and their results distributed in an attempt to promote a healthy work/life balance in rural communities and improve European, national and local policies by making recommendations.

Understanding the issues at stake

The project found that there were four distinct areas that hampered the implementation of effective practices for balancing work and family lives in rural settings. These included:

-*Geography*. The remoteness, isolation and lack of accessible services and jobs are a problem in rural areas.

-*Attitudes*. The images, norms, beliefs and values shared within a community. For example, the traditional roles of men as breadwinners and women as carers can make it difficult to implement change.

-*Jobs*. Full-time jobs that are dominated by men and inflexible working patterns make it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities.

-*Ambition*. The competence, drive, ambition, responsibilities and needs of people according to their specific circumstances also posed a challenge.

Added to these four areas is the fact that each country faces its own unique challenges in terms of cultural attitudes, population density, and economic situation. For this reason, the *New Neighbours* project recognised that lessons can and must be learnt from specific local experiences.

Best practices for good neighbours

In view of each of these specific circumstances, the *New Neighbours* project responded to a need for new social patterns, new partners and *New Neighbours* to reconcile work and family life. The project looked for solutions that could help families balance their responsibilities and in turn improve the social and economic climate of rural communities. With this in view, each partner organisation studied its own region and wrote reports identifying the success stories and the obstacles to implementing new practices. The reports also contained the current policies and regulations that had been implemented at the different governmental levels. Having identified 48 best practices in the six participating countries, *New Neighbours* then produced a booklet in which they included 18 best practices used in both private and government-initiated schemes. The best practices were grouped into four themes: care for people (children, handicapped, elderly), employment, mobility and social vitality (including personal services, meeting place, social infrastructure). This booklet is available online at: <http://www.groenkennisnet.nl/new-neighbours/project-frame.htm>

Recommendations for policy-makers

The identified best practices have provided the project partners with an opportunity to learn from both common and different experiences and formulate nine policy recommendations clustered around four themes: policy for people, work, services and infrastructure. The recommendations are intended mainly for the European level of policy-makers but also stress that lower levels of government, especially at the national and regional level, have their own responsibilities and have drawn up specific recommendations for these levels. The recommendations particularly focus on the need to stimulate the discussion about reconciliation of work and family life in Europe's countryside. The recommendations are gathered in a brochure which has been made available online at <http://www.groenkennisnet.nl/new-neighbours/project-frame.htm>

Ensuring communication

Because national centralised governments do not always know what goes on at the local level there needs to be better communication at the local, regional and national levels. The case study of the village advisor from Finland provides an inspiring example: the village advisor is the link at the local, regional and national levels. That person provides villagers with relevant information about regulations and brings local problems to the attention of policy-makers. In order to promote the need for better communication, the *New Neighbours* project created a network for distributing information, knowledge and experience; developed a website; set up an Internet discussion forum; and promoted the exchange of information and ideas at a conference in June 2004.

New Neighbours has made significant progress in promoting better work/life practices in rural communities while stressing that this is not an isolated issue but one that affects most of Europe.

Making equality possible

Project name

RALFA – Family-friendly women's career: reinforcing and reproducing good practices of reconciliation of family life and qualified women's work

Duration

December 2002 – June 2004

International partners

Arborus (France),
Newnham College, University of
Cambridge (United Kingdom)

EU co-funding

EUR 260 151

Total budget

EUR 325 188

Target groups

Representatives of public and private organisations promoting local work-family reconciliation initiatives, with special focus on those designed to support women's careers

Promoter

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Throughout the European Union, only about 25% of children under the age of three have access to a place at a day nursery. About 80–90% of elderly people, who are no longer self-sufficient, are supported exclusively by their families. What do these figures have in common? They imply that balancing work and family responsibilities remains a major challenge for women, who are often the ones expected to take on care responsibilities. Not addressing that issue means that women will continue to find it difficult to take their places in the workforce; they will continue to experience discrimination when they do have jobs; and their job security will continue to be affected. The Assembly of Women for Development and the Struggle Against Social Exclusion (ASDO), together with Newnham College of the University of Cambridge and the Arborus Association in Paris, created the RALFA project to address these challenges.

RALFA carried out a study of 40 initiatives across three countries that promoted work/life balance. The project also set up a list of 300 work/life reconciliation experiences as a reference for benchmarking. In carrying out the study RALFA focused on some of the limitations of national policies in encouraging work/life balance; current best practices; and local coalition partnerships that are already underway in the three participating countries — France, Italy and the UK. Through these studies RALFA was able to acquire in-depth knowledge of how family-friendly policies were implemented; contribute to an environment that favours family-friendly measures; and highlight initiatives that help women gain high-level posts in the workforce. The project also promoted the need to share existing practices throughout Europe.

Setting up experimental activities

The most innovative element in the RALFA project was the work that it carried out with local coalitions that supported family-friendly policies. Over the course of its 18-month lifespan, RALFA helped set up three initiatives that supported work/life balance. These included:

- A local coalition project, between the European spatial agency (EADS) and six other leading firms and international institutions, that set up inter-company crèches. Inter-company crèches

have meant that several firms located in the same area can pool their resources and needs and provide a service that alone they could not afford.

- A project was set up in Cambridge, UK that promoted a set of measures for creating better work/life balance for women caring for elderly relatives. *RALFA* also supported immediate initiatives that were designed to draw employers' attention to the issues at hand, as well as informing working women of the resources available at local level for geriatric assistance.

- The *Aquilone* project in Treviso, Italy which was set up in a sector considered one of the most resistant to the entry and progression of women at work — industrial production. *Aquilone* is an inter-company crèche promoted by the Treviso province's Unione Industriali in the industrial district of Conegliano Veneto and comprises nine firms in the area.

Guidelines for reconciliation

RALFA set up discussion forums where participants could share their experiences and procedures, including controversial aspects of implementing family-friendly policies in the three countries. These discussions provided the basis for the guidelines on work/life balance drafted by the *RALFA* team which are available in the handbook entitled: *Equality at the turning point. Reconciling family life and working experience*. The handbook is available in English and Italian and can be downloaded from the *RALFA* website. The guidelines address managers of profit and non-profit companies; public administrations; trade union and employers' organisations; and parental associations at local, provincial and regional level.

Providing access to resources

The *RALFA* website (www.asdo-info.org), available in English, French, and Italian, provides access to guidelines for planning family-friendly policies; family support services; information about the investments of the involved actors; and the different projects. The website also published trilingual e-newsletters that report on reconciliation experiences and experimental activities.

As one of the project participants has noted: 'RALFA has demonstrated the leaps and bounds that can be made at local

level through the participation of public and private organisations – showing that adequate provision for care must be tackled by society as a whole.' The project has generated new knowledge and ideas for creating better work/life balance; identified and disseminated best practices; and collected in-depth information about methods for forging local coalitions. Based on research and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, *RALFA* has highlighted some of the best practices that are in use by experts and practitioners today.

Strategies for freedom

Project name

Strategies for freedom

Duration

September 2002 – December 2003

International partners

Associazioni Christiani Lavoratori Internazionale (ACLI) Vlaanderen (Belgium), FAI (Belgium), Ente Nazionale Acli Istruzione Professionale (ENAIIP) (France), Ente Nazionale Acli Istruzione Professionale (ENAIIP) (Germany), ENAIIP.R.U. (Great Britain), The Community College (Great Britain)

National partners

ACLI COOR. FEMMES

EU co-funding

EUR 240 867

Total budget

EUR 316 536

Target groups

Migrant women, employers, trade unions, and politicians

Promoter

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In order to make the reconciliation of work and family life a possibility for all, initiatives will now need to tackle the obstacles to gender equality encountered in the home, from the uneven distribution of tasks to traditional views of gender roles. The objective of the Strategies for freedom project was to gain further insight into these issues by investigating good practice in work/life balance and how gender stereotypes can affect male participation in family life. The project was run by Ente Nazionale Acli Istruzione Professionale (ENAIIP), Italy, and carried out with the participation of ENAIIP offices in France, Germany and the UK as well as partners in the UK and Belgium.

The project activities were both national and transnational in scope. The national activities consisted in several research actions on innovative experiences in work/life balance in Italy, France, Germany and UK. This included documenting legislation, mapping successful experiences and running awareness-raising and educational workshops. The transnational activities involved seminars in each of the four countries to lay down common guidelines, compare activities and evaluate and publicise the project results. All activities aimed to support the project's central tenet: 'It is necessary to promote new ways to encourage men and women to share domestic responsibilities equally'.

Learning from previous generations

To analyse cultural and organisational conditions influencing the reconciliation of work and family life, one research action was conducted among the Italian immigrant community in the UK, involved interviews with 83 Italians, averaging 70 years of age. The key issue emerging from this research was the difficulty in reconciling childcare, family life and work, especially in times (the 1950s and 1960s) when facilities were limited. As for many migrants across European countries today, trying to reconcile work and family life was a rather hard task and the loneliness of life in a foreign country was another aggravating factor. Based on this action, five awareness and training seminars were held in the UK on work/life balance, social security and childcare in the context of immigration.

Researching legislation and good practices

Besides this research project in the UK, the *Strategies for freedom* project conducted targeted research in each one of

the participating countries. The results of the comparative studies and conferences held in Italy, France and Germany were published in 2004 in a conclusive report titled '*Strategy for freedom*' available in English, French, Italian, and German. Each part of the report was written by one of the partners, detailing the findings of their studies in their particular country.

In Italy...

The first part of the final report written by ENAIP-Italy is presented as a guide to the national principles, regulations, procedures and experiences of work/life reconciliation. It introduces the concept of work/life reconciliation and the dimensions involved, the European and Italian regulatory framework and some innovative measures implemented in Italy on time rearrangements, reconciliation at the workplace, information campaigns and the local district level dimension.

In France...

ENAIP-France's contribution on an empirical study on working times, women's time and generation times. The innovative experiences gained in the outskirts of Paris were analysed – including morning childcare at nursery schools, crèches and with nursery assistants – and publicised in two awareness-raising seminars aimed at managers and professionals operating in social, political and associative sectors (infancy, voluntary work, leisure activities and childcare).

In Germany...

After mapping national legislation on work/life reconciliation, ENAIP-Germany identified family-friendly measures. A questionnaire about the work/life reconciliation measures offered to staff, the obstacles and implementation of these measures and their impact was sent to enterprises deemed 'exemplary'. The qualitative evaluation of this study was summarised, emphasising the short and long-term costs and benefits underlying the company decisions.

The second area of work was directed towards providing information about the changes that have occurred in Germany since 2000 as regards legislation on employment relations, parental leave, family benefits and work/life balance. Seven seminars were organised throughout Germany on work/life balance and legislative opportunities.

In the UK...

ENAIP-UK studied the state of awareness of regulations in the United Kingdom on work/life balance, employer's opinions on this topic and legislation in this area (particularly in terms of paternity leave and pay). The study provided a description of unresolved problems in the area of childcare (working hours, pay) as well as a description of the roles and division of the responsibilities of carers. Examples of good practices in famous British firms were detailed, with a special emphasis on the business benefits of flexibility and reconciliation.

On the whole, the statistics on work/life balance in the UK gathered in this project were positive. A high proportion of employers allows flexible working hours and recognises the importance of work/life balance. Indeed, there were generally few feelings of unfairness from employees about the operation of work/life balance policies and practices. The results of this research are available at <http://net.enaip.it/strategiediliberta/progetto/inglese/index.htm>

A new balance for today and tomorrow

The *Strategies for freedom* research allowed the project participants to share best practices and experiences between and within the participating countries. International networks were activated, helping to increase general awareness and provide a platform for discussion and debate. By reinforcing knowledge and skills in gender issues, institutions and social groups were helped to put long-term policies into practice and devise new tools and methodologies to support future initiatives.

Promoting solidarity for gender equality

Project name

Synergy in family and at work

Duration

September 2002 – December 2003

National partners

Centre of Women Studies and Research,
Research Centre for Gender Equality,
University of Thessaloniki

International partners

Centre Régional de Formation et
de Documentation des Femmes de
Bourgogne (CRFDF) (France),
Comitato Impresa Donna Emilia Romagna
(Italy)

EU co-funding

EUR 223 952

Total budget

EUR 287 952

Target groups

The whole of society, men and women

Promoter

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Many women participating in the labour market today are having difficulties balancing what is perceived as their 'double duty' to fulfill family and professional obligations. Women can face difficulties finding and maintaining a paid job and at the same time a deeply rooted prejudice that they are responsible for the care of the family while men are the providers of the goods. These are factors aggravating gender inequality. The reconciliation of family and professional life is a serious problem for men as well, and their participation in the effort to achieve a good work/life balance is both an essential and difficult issue. It is essential because without the participation of men there can be no equal allocation of responsibilities; it is difficult because it will be necessary to promote changes in society and in the mentalities of men and women. The Synergy in family and at work project – an initiative that gathers partners from Greece, France and Italy – called for solidarity and the involvement of society as a whole to address these issues.

The project underlined the notion that the achievement of work/family balance is a problem for all members of society and not just for women. As one project participant stated, "couples will need solidarity to live together in a better, more egalitarian way." The project's primary objective was to promote new mentalities that encourage the fair distribution of family and professional responsibilities and the eradication of gender stereotypes. It contributed to raising public awareness by collaborating with social and economic partners, regions and cities, the media and competent NGOs that deal with these two challenges. The project also aimed to create tools to develop new models of collaboration between men and women. In order to achieve its objectives, the project organised meetings, press publications, a television campaign, discussion round tables and a European congress.

New mentalities for a new way of life

The partners of the *Synergy in family and at work* project believe that equality can be taught and learnt. For this reason they set out to raise public awareness on the sharing of family tasks through the organisation of 12 meetings. These took place across diverse Greek regions and involved the participation of local people and institutions. A two-month

television and radio campaign on this topic were also organised in Greece.

In addition, a three-day European Congress was held in Athens to gather representatives from the relevant ministries, municipal authorities, employer and trade unions, the confederation of Greek public servants in secondary education, women's NGOs and experts from other EU Member States. The majority of the participants were men from 20 to 70 years of age.

In order to accompany these information and awareness raising activities, the project also produced several information products. A brochure entitled '*Synergy in family and at work – a new quality of life*' was published in Greek, French and Italian. Six articles appeared in local Greek newspapers and seven publications were drafted about the European Congress. A web site (www.kekgsevee.gr) was also created to provide updated information about the project activities and events.

Through these actions the project targeted all sectors of society to inform them about the necessity for an equal allocation of responsibilities and obligations. *Synergy in family and at work* also sensitised and motivated a large part of the institutions involved on a variety of reconciliation issues. These included the eradication of stereotypical roles, making men aware of their role as fathers and promoting social concepts that encourage women and men to share responsibilities.

Gathering best practices

A manual of best practices was published in 2004 in Greek, French and English, entitled '*Synergy in family and at work. From the initial idea to the insights from the actions' realisation*'. This manual focused on the results of the project conferences in three areas: the EU's reconciliation policy, the role of the different actors involved (politicians, local entities, and social partners) and the everyday life and work of families. It was distributed to almost 40 000 organisations with over 52 000 employees.

Making Recommendations

The project has also used its experience to formulate a number of concrete policy recommendations for European and national policy-makers. At European level, *Synergy in family and at*

work called for a European campaign on the virtues of male participation in domestic tasks, accompanied by research to evaluate the consequences of changes in behaviour.

As this concerns the Member States, the project suggested that laws be introduced to prevent the family from becoming a real obstacle to the professional development of either parent. In order to do this, an essential support structure would need to be put in place. For example, mediation structures could be created in municipalities, equipped with specialised personnel to provide information and counselling services.

In terms of national employment rights and practices, the project noted that flexible employment forms should be defined as 'complementary', and that the terms of these employment forms should be arranged in the framework of collective bargaining, ensuring employment, social security and training rights for women engaged in them. As concerns education and public awareness, training in human rights, with an emphasis on gender equality, could be introduced in schools and universities. The mainstreaming principle could be applied to mass media as well, in order to modify projected male and female stereotypes and adapt them to the real situation in each country.

Finally, the project suggested that an observatory be set up, with the participation of NGO representatives, to monitor the implementation of reconciliation measures and their impact.

Paving the way for an equal tomorrow

Much remains to be done to eradicate stereotypes about the different roles of men and women. Nonetheless, this project took a first step forward by initiating public dialogue and allowing governmental institutions, employer and employee organisations and NGOs to exchange opinions at local and national level. Their dialogue and many of the proposals formulated can be applied today and in the years to come.

Changing attitudes in southern Europe

Project name

The reconciliation of work and family for men and women: from law to practice

Duration

December 2002 – March 2004

International Partners

Centre de Morphologie et de Politique Sociale (Greece),
Centre LUPT, University Federico of Naples (Italy),
Comissão para a igualdade e para os direitos das mulheres (Portugal),
Fundacion Mujeres (Spain),
Lingue Hellenique pour (Greece),
Province de Ferrara (Italy)

EU co-funding

EUR 205 860

Total budget

EUR 268 637

Promoter

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Many southern European countries are still dominated by a traditional culture that reinforces women as primary carers thus preventing them from taking up positions within the workforce. Women still bear 80% of the household tasks and often spend more than twice as much time with their children as their spouses (41 hours per week as opposed to the 21 hours that the average man spends). For this reason reconciling work and family life is more than a basic right for women in southern countries — it is an issue that affects society as a whole. While change has been slow to take hold there have been certain developments. The Constitutions of Greece and Portugal have cited work/life balance as a fundamental right. One project entitled. The reconciliation of work and family for men and women: from law to practice was set up to ensure that such changes in the law are actually implemented and that women gain and keep positions where they can make a difference.

The reconciliation of work and family for men and women: from law to practice project examines how European initiatives stimulate national policies, law, and sociological developments. AFEM (*Association des femmes d'Europe méridionale*), the organisation responsible for the project, is a European federation that brings together associations from Cyprus, Spain, Italy and Portugal. The organisation has worked with six transnational partners; a team of European jurists; and a sociologist to examine ways of supporting the fundamental right of equality between men and women, as well as to promote respect for cultural diversity. The project explores the issue of reconciling family and professional life in southern Europe concentrating on the legal and sociological aspects. It analyses and documents national and EU legislation, as well as the impact such legislation has across the southern Member States. It stages discussion forums and distributes information through a number of important activities.

Fostering communication and networking

The AFEM project developed an online directory of more than 300 NGOs that work specifically with women and which are registered in the five Member States of southern Europe: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece. This directory is freely available to anyone looking for data or contacts.

The project also set up an interactive forum for discussion, which is monitored by project partners and provides the opportunity for people to air their views, discuss issues and share best practices or original initiatives implemented in Europe. Two topics for the online debate included 'work and family for young people: a new dilemma?' and 'pregnancy — still a bridle to a woman's career?' Running alongside this forum, the AFEM website provided publications highlighting cases where reconciliation rights had been violated.

In Portugal, the Rede de Jovens para a Igualdade de Oportunidades entre Mulheres e Homens, which is a network for young Portuguese people who campaign for equality between men and women, raised awareness about reconciliation issues through a mailing campaign targeted at 120 newspapers and magazines. In Madeira, an awareness-raising campaign was also carried out in a professional training school. Other information campaigns have included the creation of brochures, videos and 15 000 leaflets in French, Italian and Portuguese distributed at the European Social Forum and the Euromed Forum in 2003.

Reporting on reconciliation

The AFEM project also kept national and European policy-makers informed through a report, which offered a fresh view on reconciliation between family and professional lives in all countries. The report, which bears the same name as the project, includes a chapter detailing the situation, improvements and challenges in each of the four partner countries. It explores the legal and sociological stakes linked to family and professional life and their implications for European women. This report also provides a comprehensive overview of the legislative provisions that have been implemented and the best practices used in these countries. It offers in-depth reflections for the policy-makers of southern European countries, providing a number of recommendations at a national as well as European level. The results of the report were presented during a final conference that took place in February 2004 in Ferrara, Italy.

Recommending change

In the report the AFEM team make several recommendations for the European level that would make reconciliation a reality in southern EU Member States. Among these were: an increase

in childcare facilities; a guarantee of quality services; financial compensation linked to parental leave (especially for fathers); more rights and better guarantees for atypical workers who are often left outside the scope of employment protection legislation; as well as the possibility to set the charges for childcare and care of dependants against taxes. AFEM also raised the issue of promoting more women to decision-making positions where they can make a difference. As the project's legal representative, Ana Coucello, has stated: 'Women are not looking for a greater representation. What they really want is to be able to make themselves heard where the decisions are being made.'

Future steps

The project spotlights the current situations in France, Greece, Italy, and Portugal and highlights the progress they have made in striking the right balance between work and family lives. The situations in each one of these countries may guide the way as we turn to future challenges such as improving childcare facilities, implementing parental leave rights and changing working time habits.

Making the work/life balance happen

Project name

Tipping the Scales –
Making the work/life balance happen

Duration

December 2002 – February 2004

International partners

Foyle Trust (United Kingdom),
Springboard (Sweden)

EU co-funding

EUR 302 717

Total budget

EUR 406 362

Target groups

Home-help care workers

Promoter

Department of Justice, Equality and Law
Reform, Ireland

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One of the most common sources of stress today is the conflicting demands we face at work and home, particularly when it comes to juggling our family lives with time pressures and deadlines, long hours, unclear or conflicting duties or too much responsibility. While numerous measures have been introduced help us create a balance between our work and family lives, many organisations in the private, public and NGO sectors seem reticent to accept them. Such measures are often perceived as burdensome for enterprises or barriers to personal career development. In order to change this way of thinking and find solutions that are more readily accepted we must highlight the benefits of creating a healthy work/life balance. The interagency project Tipping the Scales, led by the Irish department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, looked into the practices that were currently in use to supporting work/life balance and flexible working. The project focused specifically on flexible working patterns for home-help carers.

Tipping the Scales explored how issues of work/life balance were being managed in the three organisations in the north-west of Ireland. The project documented best practice models and mapped out ways of developing work/life practices in the region. Taking best practices already in use in other countries, the project proposed and implemented changes in three organisations in the north-west of Ireland namely: the North Western Health Board, the Gender Focus Group of Donegal County Development Board and the Donegal County Council.

Changing perceptions

The *Tipping the Scales* project attempted to show how effective work/life balance policies can benefit the whole organisation. The main message was clear: if employees feel personally fulfilled and satisfied outside the workplace they contribute more effectively while at work. Work/life balance practices also help develop a level playing pitch for men and women in the workplace. As one project coordinator explained, 'Employers worldwide are recognising that it makes good business sense for their workforce to achieve a better work/life balance. The pay back is increased morale and greater effectiveness.'

The project highlighted some of the best practices that have had the most positive impact on productivity, family life and the community as a whole. They included:

- an electronic self-rostering system, whereby individuals were responsible for scheduling their workloads over a six-week period. This was then reviewed by the staff manager. Using such a system has led to a reduction in absenteeism.
- Job sharing between two workers who work alternate weeks.
- Kids' clubs at parents' workplaces that proved effective in reassuring staff that their children are safe and enjoying themselves during the lengthy summer holidays.

A boost for home-help care

Home-help carers provide a diverse and invaluable service. They offer personal and domestic support, as well as assistance that complements medical and nursing services. Such support enables many people to be cared for in their own homes. However, home-help care is carried out predominantly by women and is not very highly ranked in terms of employment opportunities. With an increasingly ageing population the need to recruit young people remains a challenge. The *Tipping the Scales* focused on raising the profile of home-help care, highlighting its importance in the community. In doing so the project hoped to attract more men into this area of work.

Organisations have introduced a number of initiatives set to attract greater numbers of young people to home-help care work. One such initiative was the introduction of the Swedish 3/3 work schedule where carers worked three days and took three days off. The system proved particularly effective in reducing absenteeism by a staggering 70%; reducing stress; and solving the problem of staffing issues at weekends.

Changing the mindset

Effective people and performance management skills are essential for supporting a work/life balance culture across organisations. But senior managers often misunderstand or do not accept the needs for home-help carers to have more flexible working hours. *Tipping the Scales* worked with managers to change that mindset and look for better working practices that supported the work/life balance. The project team organised a series of workshops to promote work/life balance across the three partner organisations. They also developed a county-based network for home-help carers where they could exchange ideas and best practices, and support each other.

Sharing experiences

The *Tipping the Scales* project was also responsible for organising a range of other activities including: a work/life balance handbook for managers and staff; a conference to launch the project team's work/life balance strategy. The conference also provided a useful forum where people could learn about best practices, exchange new ideas and discuss flexible working patterns. Finally, the project has led to greater awareness and understanding within the Donegal Women's Network, the Gender Focus Group, voluntary organisations and the community as a whole as to the issues surrounding work/life balance. It is hoped that the information gathered and the dialogue established will continue to support reconciliation efforts throughout Europe.

Sharing responsibility for change

Project name

Eurotrans – Trans-national partnership for gender equality

Duration

October 2002 – December 2003

International partners

Value training and solutions (Italy),
CoraNE (Portugal),
Deutsche Angestellten (Germany)

EU co-funding

EUR 256 741

Total budget

EUR 330 202

Target groups

Women and men of the region of Castilla and Leon

Promoter

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Parenthood still generally affects the working lives of women to a much greater extent than those of men. Recent European statistics demonstrate that men spend on average at least one hour per day more than women on gainful work or study, while women devote at least one hour more to domestic work. The reasons for these discrepancies are multiple, but the most important are perhaps the gender roles and interrelations within and outside the family, the existence (or not) of adequate family and social policies and the overall social and cultural context.

A.D.R.I. Palomares, a Spanish association based in Zamora, together with partners in Italy, Portugal and Germany, created an international association to promote the need to balance work and family life in the four participating countries. Through this international platform, ideas were gathered and exchanged in order to implement a common strategy and highlight the need for greater shared responsibility.

Opening the door to equality

Over the year of its duration, the project activities were implemented in three targeted modules that promoted gender mainstreaming and developed initiatives related to the conciliation between work and family life. In addition, the project sought to create a space for dialogue and an important platform for action in favour of gender equality. The project's focus on the establishing, developing and implementing a common strategy gave special attention to the use of cultural and educational resources such as theatre, cinema and training sessions.

The project also intended to gather and examine information concerning the conciliation between professional and family life in small and medium-sized companies, where it is often more difficult to implement gender equality initiatives and measures. Because this difficulty is more often symptomatic of missing information than of an unwillingness to change, the project also set out to launch new methodological tools to get their important message across. Awareness-raising campaigns were created within companies to encourage paternity and parental leave.

Distributing tasks and responsibilities

Research has demonstrated that a large percentage of the domestic work is still shouldered by women, even in households

where both partners are employed full-time. The time spent on domestic work is even longer when there are children or other dependant persons in the household. In a house with small children, it is estimated that the time spent on domestic work is between 5.5 and 7.5 hours per day. If this time is not distributed equitably, it will naturally take its toll on the career of the family member with domestic responsibilities.

In order to address this imbalance, *Eurotrans* organised an awareness-raising campaign on sharing the responsibilities of everyday life. The consortium developed a number of actions to promote non-sexist behaviour within families and fight against stereotypes that prevent the fair distribution of domestic tasks. A series of theatre sketches entitled “*La corresponsabilidad como punto de referencia para todos*” (Co-responsibility as a reference point for everybody) were developed and performed at conferences in Spain, Portugal and Germany. The scenes portrayed typical everyday tasks linked to the topic of reconciliation of the labour and family life (such as cleaning, cooking and child care). A DVD of the performances was also produced.

Instilling positive values

It is often stated that change begins with re-education, and for this reason *Eurotrans* placed a great deal of attention on initiatives to train and educate adults and children about the possibilities and advantages of sharing domestic chores and responsibilities. In a second phase of the project, the project partners developed two kinds of training sessions on the work/life balance in the participating countries. On the one hand, an elementary training session targeted men and women and provided information about domestic tasks through the municipalities. These included courses in cooking, cleaning and the care of children and the elderly. In addition, seminars called “schools of parents” were run in Italy, Spain and Portugal. Through these seminars parents were encouraged to learn and adopt a series of values and attitudes that they could then transmit to their own children.

Activating equality in Europe's SMEs

Due to their size and limited resources, small and medium-sized enterprises are often slower to adopt measures to promote work/life balance. They may fear that the implementation of

the measures would be burdensome or costly. It is therefore essential that SMEs are helped to see equal opportunity and reconciliation measures not as a constraint, but as a positive opportunity to ensure their most valuable resource – their staff – is used in the best way possible. In this context, *Eurotrans* implemented an international study in more than 200 small and medium-sized companies. The study focused on factors that hinder work/family reconciliation and ways to correct the bias.

This project has not only made a positive contribution through these educative and dissemination activities but it has also helped focus attention on the real issue at stake: co-responsibility. It has thereby reminded us that balancing work and family responsibilities is not only about helping women better manage their time but also about sharing responsibility between family members. It is only through this shared responsibility that all members of society will be able to actively participate in change.

Breaking down barriers to change

Project name

What about the men? The integration of men in the European mainstreaming process

Duration

November 2002 – February 2004

International partners

Association Ex-Aequo (Belgium), KHETI, Greece – Panteion University (Greece), Socio-Epidemiological Observatory on AIDS and Sexualities (Belgium), The Catholic University of Louvain-La-Neuve (Belgium), The University faculties of St. Louis (Belgium)

National partners

Confédération française démocratique du travail, Confédération générale du travail, Equipe Simone/Sagesse (Toulouse-le-Mirail University), Ressources sur Internet en Management et en Economie

EU co-funding

EUR 316 501

Total budget

EUR 421 499

Target group

Male politicians, heads of administration and trade unionists, men in renegotiation

Name of the promoter

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Society is changing and, undeniably, men are changing with it. However, while many men have adopted a critical view of masculine norms and behaviour and support gender equality, many more still do not believe that equality is an issue that concerns them. This is perhaps exacerbated by the fact that in recent years an increasing amount of gender research has centred on women, often forgetting that men represent the other side of gender relationships. There is therefore a clear need to address equality issues for both genders, paying close attention to the changes that men now face and how they cope. The What about the men? project, which is a European study, highlights some of these issues, while focusing in particular on why many men continue to resist change.

Les Traboules, a sociological and ethnological French research association, in association with 10 organisations across France, Belgium and Greece, questioned men in all three countries about their relationships with women and other men, as well as their perceptions of, and involvement in, the politics of gender equality. The study provides a greater understanding of the complex nature of gender relations in the workplace and at home.

Coping with transition

Male resistance to change seems to be based on in-built attitudes that men inherently adopt in response to demands of gender equality. Such attitudes can include refusing to accept, or adapt to the loss of positions of power, whether these are professional or domestic, material or symbolic. The *What about the men?* project targeted their research at three distinct groups. The first included male politicians and heads of administration that are charged, directly or indirectly, with formulating and implementing policies and directives on equality. The second group consisted of male trade unionists, especially those tasked with negotiating agreements to reduce work hours. Finally, the project also focused on a group of men who have changed their ways of life in order to be more egalitarian, such as men who have interrupted their careers to raise children.

Gathering life experiences

Although the *What about the men?* project focused primarily on obtaining feedback and information from men, several women

(including trade unionists, politicians and administrators) were also interviewed. A total of 72 interviews were carried out in France, 40 in Belgium and 65 in Greece.

The results of this research can be found in the book entitled *Les hommes aussi changent* (Men also change) that was published in March 2004. The book, written by Daniel Welzer-Lang, a sociologist at the University of Toulouse-le-Mirail, France and coordinator of the *What about the men?* project, explores several topical questions regarding equality between men and women. It also highlights the difficulties men face in accepting the new models of fatherhood, as well as their interaction with partners, friends and other men. Finally, the book provides the basis for further debate on previously neglected issues, such as masculinity in the workplace and at home; and the difficulties of living and talking about equality.

Challenging stereotypes

The project provides a better understanding of how men can get involved in gender equality and recommends that men be included in all initiatives related to gender equality. Leaflets presented as blue and pink '*paper ties*', available in both French and English, were distributed to selected men in a European seminar held in Toulouse in February 2004. The leaflets were a provocative and innovative tool that were used to break down gender stereotypes and raise awareness of the current resistance towards change. The exercise ultimately demonstrated how male passivity – due to fear or conformity – can prevent many men from embracing gender equality. However behind the humorous approach is a powerful message: Gender relations and the need for equality is not only about women and their needs but also about men and their needs and concerns.

As Daniel Welzer-Lang has points out: "If we want to open dialogue between men and women we must move away from the stereotypes that make men out to be inanimate objects incapable of thought and change." The *What about the men?* project has extended a hand to men in their struggle towards accepting equality and challenged the traditional vision of men as passive agents in the process of change. By fostering communication and awareness the project has moved towards a form of reconciliation that will prove both balanced and sustainable in years to come.

European Commission

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