



Holding a job – Having a life

EQUAL events outcome



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European Commission
Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
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INTRODUCTION

Today gender equality policies are not only a key component of Europe's quest for human rights but also essential to address the Union's major challenges of increasing economic productivity and competitiveness and mitigating the consequences of the demographic decline. Two recently adopted strategies, the European Pact for Gender Equality¹ and the Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006–2010², recognise this dual role. Both commit European and national decision-makers to make gender equality a daily reality for women and men by putting into practice policies that promote women's employment and provide a better work/life balance.

Governments agreed these commitments as part of Europe's long-standing objective to raise the overall employment rate. They reconfirmed³ the so-called Lisbon employment target of an overall employment rate of 70% to be reached by 2010. This can be achieved only if the specific target of 60% for women's employment is attained. So far only eight Member States have managed it.

Yet women with children or those caring for other dependants show significantly lower employment rates than men and other women with no such obligations. This is also the case for women with low levels of education and for older women. The lack of care services and the persistent difficulties to manage a viable work/life balance remain huge obstacles for women wanting to access the labour market and hold down a job. Governments also reconfirmed in 2005 the childcare targets agreed in Barcelona three years earlier. These require that by 2010 Member States increase their childcare facilities to 33% for 0–3 year olds and to 90% for children over three years old until the mandatory school age. Ten countries meet the Barcelona target for pre-schoolers or score close. Only five comply with the target for babies and toddlers.

Low work/life balance affects fertility

Research shows that the lack of a good work/life balance has not only adversely affected women's position in the labour market, but has contributed to lower fertility rates – which also impacts on the EU's economy. Low birth rates combined with the retirement of the baby-boom generation, will soon shrink the working population. Lack of labour supply and skills gaps can already be felt in a number

of economic sectors, such as science, technology, engineering and construction, and the health and care sectors. From now until 2030, the EU will lack 20.8 million people (6.8%) of working age. It will have 18 million children and young people less than today. In 2030, roughly two active people (15–65) will have to take care of one inactive person (65+)⁴. To offset the loss of working-age people, an employment rate of over 70% is needed.

Enabling women and men to have both children and a career is a key priority in mitigating the worst consequences of this reduction in the work force. They need high quality childcare services, parental leave systems and more flexible, family friendly work organisation to help them deal with home and work pressures.

Show casing good practice

This publication showcases EQUAL good practices that made a difference for women and men who want both gainful employment and a career, and a more satisfying family and personal life. EQUAL has created new care and other family support services and work/life balance policies, which brought about cultural change in companies and organisations. EQUAL media campaigns and awareness raising strategies have helped to overcome traditional gender roles and the unequal sharing of unpaid care and family work. The EQUAL website provides a wealth of information on these achievements, including individual case studies, the documentation of two major visibility events in Madrid (2005) and Tallinn (2006) and the so-called Living Document assembling the good practices of more than 60 Development Partnerships (DPs) from throughout Europe.

Led by Spain, Italy and France, these projects formed the European Thematic Group on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. They developed the European Model of Comprehensive Approaches to Gender Equality, which links strategies and concepts to dismantle gender gaps and the segregation of the labour market; to improve the reconciliation of work and private life for women and men; and to overcome traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The model provides all the ingredients to design and implement comprehensive gender equality policies and practices. It can serve as a blueprint for policy makers who are committed to making gender equality a reality.

1 Approved by the European Spring Council, 23/24 March 2006: Presidency Conclusions (7775/06), p. 13 and Annex 2.

2 Adopted by the Commission, 1 March 2006, (COM(2006) 92).

3 Reformed European Employment Strategy (EES) and its integration into the new Community Lisbon Programme, the Integrated Guidelines for growth and jobs 2005–2008 (COM(2005) 141), as well as the Community Strategic Guidelines 2007–2013 (COM(2005) 299).

4 European Commission: Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations" (COM(2005) 94 final).

JOBS, CAREERS AND CARE RESPONSIBILITIES

Facts and figures on gender gaps in the European Union

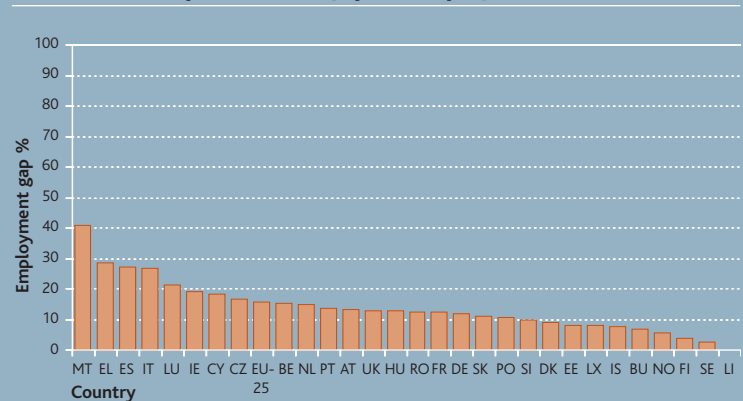
Policies enabling women and men with care responsibilities for children and/or other dependants to reconcile work and private life differ greatly among Member States. Each country's culture, legal and social system has resulted in a different mix.

However, despite the variations in quantity and quality of provisions aimed at facilitating reconciliation, Member States have similar labour market participation patterns when it comes to those who have to care for children, old and frail family members or people with disabilities. Caring obligations have a different impact on women as compared to men and this is reflected in their employment levels.

Employment data are usually based on a head count and so do not take account of working time differences. The gender gaps may be even larger as significantly more women than men are working part-time. Imbalances increase for the EU-25 and the ranking of the Member States also changes if the gap is measured in full-time equivalents. The Netherlands or the United Kingdom, for example, with many women part-timers score much higher gender gaps in full-time equivalent than in headcount.

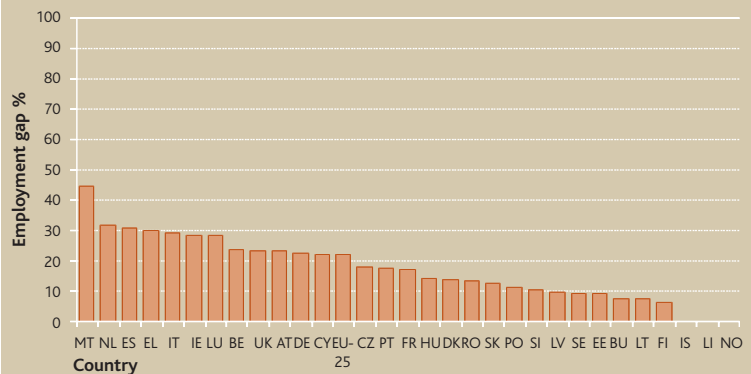
Women without children tend to have significantly higher employment levels than women with children. For men the opposite is true. Men with children have a higher employment rate than those without. The impact of parenthood is fairly similar across the EU and stands at around 10%, whereas for mothers the figures show differences ranging from almost 40 percentage points in the Czech Republic and Hungary to 3 percentage points in Denmark. The only exceptions are Portugal with minus 2% and Slovenia with minus 8% where both male and female employment rates tend to increase once women and men become parents.

Graph 1: Gender gaps in employment 2003⁵



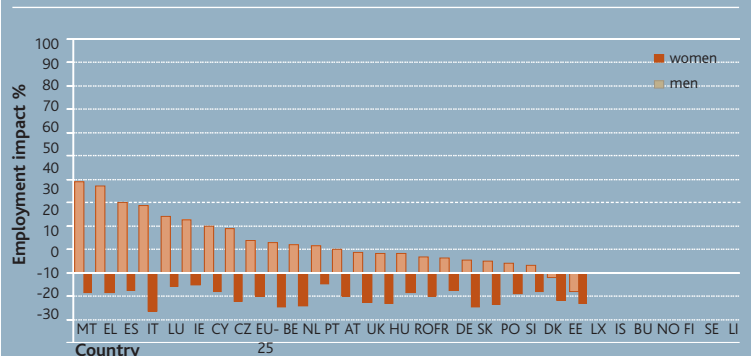
* Employment gap in Iceland for 2004
Sources: JER 2004/2005 (Annex 2)
For Bulgaria and Romania: Employment in Europe 2004
For Iceland and Norway: Eurostat 2005

Graph 2: Employment gender gap in full-time equivalents in 2003⁶



Sources: JER 2003/2004, Statistical Annex
For Bulgaria and Romania: Employment in Europe 2004

Graph 3: Employment impact of parenthood on women and men 2003⁷



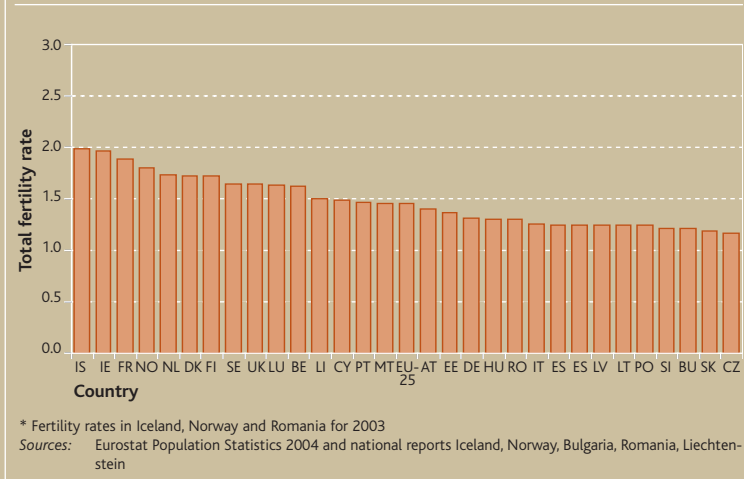
Source: JER 2004/2005 (Annex 2)

5 European Commission, (2005), Reconciliation of work and private life: A comparative review of thirty European countries, (drawn up by the EU Expert Group on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment – EGGSE).

6 ibid.

7 ibid.

Graph 4. Fertility rates 2002⁹



The impact of caring on the age group of 50 to 64 is less pronounced. On average in the EU-15, the proportion of people in work looking after dependent family members, other than children, is slightly lower than for people without such responsibilities. Yet, the inactivity rates⁸ of this age group reveal considerable gender gaps. In 2004, 45.7% of men and 66% of women were outside the labour market. Retirement is the main reason for being inactive for both men (29.9%) and women (31.5%). But whilst the second most common reason for men is illness or disability, for women it is family responsibilities.

Fertility rates in Europe stood at 1.5 in 2004 and ranged from 1.97 in Ireland to 1.22 in the Czech Republic. In all Member States the rates are below replacement level, as 2.1 children are needed for zero population growth. Paradoxically countries with high female employment levels such as Denmark and Sweden show birth rates that are just below the replacement level, whereas in countries with low participation rates like Greece and Poland, the fertility is even lower.

Overall fertility seems to be linked to the political and economic framework that can favour or discourage young people to raise a family. Research¹⁰ shows this includes access to stable jobs, flexible work organisation, flexible patterns of exiting and re-entering the labour market, high quality needs-tailored and affordable care services, generous maternity benefits and parental leave schemes. To produce visible effects, governments and companies need to implement this package of reconciliation policies over long periods of time.

8 Eurostat, (2006), "People outside the labour force", *Statistics in Focus: Population and Social Conditions*, No.2, Brussels.
9 European Commission, (2005), *Reconciliation of work and private life: A comparative review of thirty European countries*, Brussels.
10 *Ibid.*, p.31–32.

MORE AND BETTER CARE

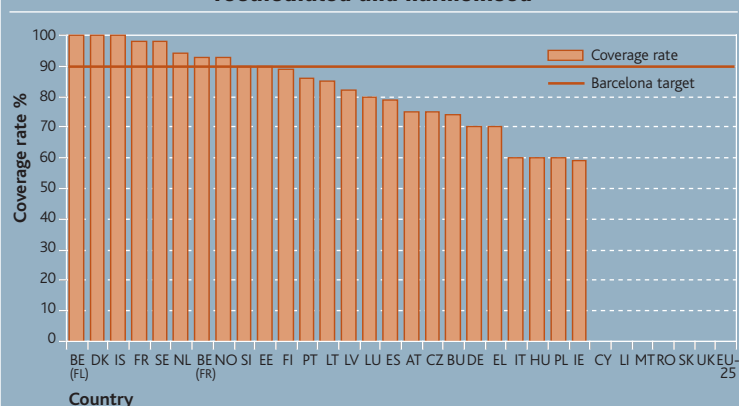
Problem known but progress slow

Governments recognise that the lack of adequate care services remains an obstacle to labour market access for women with young children, ageing parents or other family members requiring care and daily support. Although there have been improvements over the last decade, progress remains slow.

Childcare improving slowly

Since 2002, when Member States agreed childcare targets, they have been monitoring progress. The most recent figures show that whilst a number of Member States are meeting the childcare targets of 90% for children between three to compulsory school age, the provision for babies and toddlers (0–3 years of age) is alarmingly poor. In most cases the existing services cover less than 10% of the demand.

**Graph 5. Estimated childcare statistics:
Childcare coverage rate (3-compulsory school age):
recalculated and harmonised**



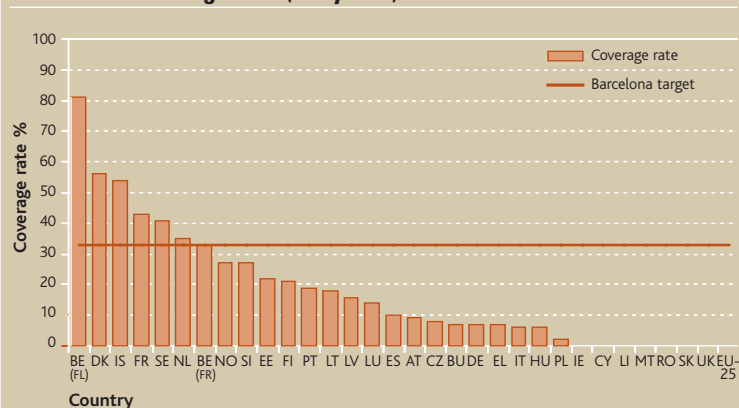
Sources: European Childcare Strategies, Statistical Annex

Estimated childcare statistics¹¹

In some countries even if the coverage rate for babies and toddlers is far below the 33% target, parents are not pushing for more services if there are alternatives such as flexible parental leave. This is the case in Finland for example. In the new Member States, the trend is to extend parental leave and decrease childcare facilities putting pressure on women to stay at home.

Even countries with good childcare track records are under pressure to provide more flexible services, longer opening hours and after-school care because of the rise in irregular working hours. In addition, national statistics hide significant imbalances in the availability of childcare between urban and rural areas or regions.

**Graph 6. Estimated childcare statistics:
Childcare coverage rate (0-3 years): recalculated and harmonised**



* Czech Republic figure only for pre-school
Sources: European Childcare Strategies, Statistical Annex

11 These figures are based on national statistics, but because of the differences in the childcare services and pre-school arrangements were recalculated and harmonised.

Caring for family members with disabilities – a risk of social exclusion?

Parents of children or young people with special needs often find it impossible to reconcile care responsibilities and gainful employment. They must fight for their child's right to access regular education and employment. But with insufficient numbers of professionals in mainstream institutions who are trained to support children or adults with disabilities, the task continues to fall on parents, usually the mother, and often to the detriment of their personal and professional life. Frequently mothers have to give up paid employment to look after their child even into adulthood, a decision with severe psychological and financial consequences, including the risk of social exclusion.

Care for the elderly – a growth sector with problems

Extended life expectancy means that the number of very old and frail people will increase. The group aged 80 and over is expected to nearly triple, rising from 18 million in 2004 to about 50 million in 2051. By 2010, only 10% of persons over 80 will be living in a collective household; 44% will be living alone.¹² The need for professional care will increase because of the fewer descendants, increased female labour participation and greater geographical separation between the elderly and their families. This requires the develop-

ment of long-term care provisions, especially in Member States that rely heavily on informal care.

Case Study 1

In the UK, six million carers look after partners, relatives or friends because they are ill, frail or have a disability. Half of them juggle care with paid work. They save the economy a staggering £57 billion (€83 billion) each year in care costs. This is the equivalent of a second National Health Service.

Case Study 2

In Germany, 2.02 million people need care and daily support. About 80% are aged 65 and over and 37% are 80 and older. Families, and usually the women in these families, cared for almost two thirds (1.44 million). About 1.04 million old and frail people were looked after by family members who received public subsidies. Only 28% are in institutional care and fewer than 20% receive homecare.

Care for the elderly is a promising growth sector in Europe but it has its problems. These include a reputation as a sector with demanding but low paid and precarious jobs and poor career prospects; increased undeclared labour; the lack of skilled care workers; the shortage of flexible services; and the need for improved provision.



12 Eurostat, (2004), *Living conditions in Europe*, Statistical Pocketbook.



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EQUAL IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In many Member States, EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) have contributed to adapting the care sector to current and future needs.

New care services have a double effect: jobs for unemployed women with no or low formal qualifications and labour market access for other women – unemployed or inactive – who previously could not seek gainful employment due to the lack of care services. Particularly in Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain, but also in the new Member States, EQUAL inspired change implementing a combination of strategies.

Training as a springboard

Basic training for unemployed and inactive women to become care workers increased the number of qualified staff in many institutions. Among the approaches specific to long-term unemployed and inactive women, some were especially successful.

Using the portfolio method, each woman's prior learning and life achievements were collected to build up an individual record that could be assessed and recognised as equal to the requirements of formal education and training. In some cases this led to a lower secondary school certificate and in others to a qualification giving access to higher-level regular care training. Valuing and recognising the life experience of people with no, or low, formal skills prevented the development of a two-tier labour market with a job category for care workers with low qualifications. The accreditation of informal learning

and skills also helps tackle undeclared labour and precarious employment in the care sector. This approach is even more effective if life-long learning and access to higher level training is incorporated.

Case Study 3

Some 30 women received training that was specifically designed for "family care" covering mixed age groups. Estonia's Professional Council of Health and Social Work established for the first time a Professional Standard for Childminders and the scheme used this as its basis. The new standard requires that care providers possess the knowledge and skills to:

- *guarantee a physically and mentally safe environment for children;*
- *observe the child's daily schedule as set by the parents;*
- *support the development of the child through daily activities (playing, movement, etc.);*
- *observe the personal hygiene of the child, instruct and help the child with this if necessary;*
- *cook for the child, make sure that the child is fed and help the child eat if necessary;*
- *observe and promote the child's health and to care for sick children;*
- *communicate with the family and develop the child's social skills.*

The women were trained to meet these requirements in a practical way. The standard also contains specific skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children with disabilities as well as additional skills to initiate youngsters to computer literacy and foreign languages.

EE: Children taken care of, Mothers at work

Case Study 4

In the UK, an EQUAL partnership helped to break down the barriers facing individual carers who work or want to work through the development and promotion of lifelong learning. City & Guilds is the UK's leading provider of vocational qualifications. As a key partner in the project, this body developed the first ever qualification designed to help carers build confidence, recognise their skills, and take the next steps towards new opportunities, including employment. Learning for Living (www.learning-for-living.co.uk) is an online resource that carers can access through the Internet. It also leads to the "Certificate in Personal Development and Learning for Unpaid Carers" that is eligible for funding under the UK Government's proposed New Deal for Skills – a programme designed to help people move from low to higher skilled work.

UK: ACE National

The schemes were modular and shorter than regular training to accommodate the needs of inexperienced learners. The training content varied to suit the different age groups. For example, training for after-school care included subjects such as environmental protection, gardening, recycling, handiwork, music, theatre, body expression, games and sports. Elderly care training included basic nursing, preparing dietary meals or doing housework.

Case Study 5

A DP in Luxembourg led by the Caritas Confederation developed a training model to enable people to work as auxiliary educators and childminders of children under four years old. The training target group were women and men who had not finished school but wanted to continue or re-start their studies, and women who, after having raised their family, wanted a new career in childcare. The training approach balanced theoretical knowledge and practical skills and built on the participants' life experiences as much as on their formal skills. The theoretical modules tackled teaching and learning methods; the psychology of child development; nutrition; hygiene; and childcare legal issues. Participants also followed practical training by working in two new kindergartens set up with EQUAL funds. Seventeen unemployed or inactive women worked there and were able to experience all aspects of running a childcare centre.

LU: FogaFlex

The EQUAL programmes were work-based and combined practical training with theoretical instruction. Work placements took place in existing care facilities or in new ones set up with EQUAL funding. They enabled women to apply their new skills and work alongside more experienced staff. On-going supervision, networks allowing for exchange and support among colleagues and – in the case of elderly care – meetings with the professional care-givers that had helped the same old person or couple, further strengthened the performance of the new carers.

Case Study 6

In a remote rural area an Italian partnership created a new vocational profile, the "social-family assistant", to work in care institutions or in people's homes. Participants were trained to offer physical and psychological support to older people. Their course covered relevant legal aspects; basic healthcare; first aid; social assistance methods and techniques; nutrition; hygiene; and the prevention of domestic accidents. Following the "classroom" training, the DP organised work experience placements. Under the supervision of experienced carers and medical experts (doctors, nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists), the new "social-family assistant" provided home support to families that included older people with Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease who needed permanent care. There were also placements in traditional care homes for elderly people and in daycare centres for people with disabilities.

IT: Help Donna

From training to the workplace and to job creation

To ensure trainees could enter the world of work, EQUAL combined training with the creation of care services, both institutional and home-based, generating many new jobs. To prevent women from falling back into unemployment or inactivity, the EQUAL DPs managed to have the new facilities running as soon as the training was completed. Close cooperation with local governments helped expand the services of existing care centres and establish new service enterprises. In many cases, the newly trained care workers were hired by existing care services that extended their range of provision with the support of EQUAL. It encouraged social service departments and those responsible for economic development to work together.

Case Study 7

A German DP linking the three largest social economy welfare federations in the country developed a job rotation scheme involving 381 trainees that was piloted in three local areas. While staff of care institutions for the elderly were trained, their posts were filled temporarily by unemployed people who gained work experience and improved their job prospects. The project managed to place 70% of the trainees in permanent jobs. Two key reasons explained the success: the training programme design that supported the trainees and the host institutions, and close cooperation with the local and regional Employment Offices.

DE: Dritt-Sektor-Qualifizierung in der Altenhilfe

Joining forces with economic development agencies and business consultants to support social economy enterprises or micro companies from the very early stages through to start-up phase and well beyond helped to ensure survival, consolidation and future growth of the new ventures. EQUAL subsidies provided seed capital for new small companies to care for children and senior citizens in people's homes and in community centres and encouraged local NGOs to launch service cooperatives.

Case Study 8

In Spain, an EQUAL partnership based in Madrid supported the creation of service companies to care for children and other dependents. It provided training in infant and elderly care as well as in business management. It gave administrative backing to the newly created companies, which also received financial support from the regional authorities. Three types of services were tested and are now part of regular provision: increased opening hours for existing care organisations, a service to pick up children before and after school, and a home-based childcare service.

ES: @accede

Case Study 9

Another Spanish project based in a rural area of the Galicia region set up three childcare centres. A rural neighbourhood association runs the first centre with the financial support of a large foundation that promotes equal opportunities and local development. Another became part of the family services of a municipality and a third was created as a private business.

ES: Deloa

Making care work more professional

EQUAL DPs also worked to extend and develop care worker's qualifications to make the sector more professional and effective. Initial training and continuing education focused on improving childcare quality and embracing the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of children. In addition, steps were taken to professionalise care services for people with disabilities and for the elderly. EQUAL created and further developed occupational profiles and new career paths giving more independence and responsibility in daily work organisation, a rationale which attracted more men to a sector dominated by women.

Case Study 10

In Scotland, an EQUAL partnership linking a major university and a number of private sector care homes for the elderly established a Virtual College enabling care workers to study whilst at work. The College provided virtual drop-in classes, individual tutor support and peer group support. The timetable was organised around the participant's family, work and other life commitments.

They could access the system twenty-four hours a day learning in their own time and at their chosen pace. In addition, the College offered synchronous (real time) communication and interaction providing immediate feedback and support.

Most participants wanted to obtain a degree or a diploma while others wanted to gain the experience of following such a course without the pressure of working for a qualification. For all, their work could be validated towards degree level study.

UK: WAP Scotland

A French example shows how parents can use their knowledge and experience of bringing up children and youth with disabilities as a base for professional training and for building a career as carers.

Case Study 11

The DP designed a vocational profile and training programme for mediators to help integrate children and young people with disabilities. The scheme targets parents, but it is also open to professionals involved in the support of people with disabilities. Around 1 000 people took part in the training, which provided information about people with special needs and the education, training and work possibilities in the participants' areas. The new mediators were able to help children and young adults make a smooth transition towards a more independent life. Several universities integrated these courses into their provision.

FR: Conciliation – Famille – Handicap

Some EQUAL projects working towards the professionalisation of care services introduced quality management into service delivery and working conditions.

Case Study 12

In the UK, as in other countries, guidance for care professionals is necessary to ensure services meet official monitoring and inspection standards and promote better quality of care. A Scottish EQUAL DP successfully piloted a new approach to the development and sharing of care guidance. This has now been mainstreamed within Scotland and has influenced debate in other parts of the UK.

The approach was the result of a collaboration between practitioners, academics, older people and policy agencies. Developed by the National Health Service, it has become known as a "Best Practice Statement". It is a mixture of research and science, practical know-how, what older people feel that they want or need and what nurses wish to deliver. Each statement was tested in real care settings and refined as the work proceeded. The National Health Service also organised an external consultation to give a wider audience the chance to influence the new guidance tool. The new approach was then published and widely disseminated in paper form and via the Internet.

Through the Virtual College, the DP supported practitioners to implement the statement in their workplaces using audit tools and providing advice, based on the experience of the team who developed the statement and tested it in practice.

Within five months of the publication of the first statement promoting nutrition for older people (<http://geronurse.com/en/best-practice-statements/nutrition-best-practice-statement.asp>), a national survey found that half of the care homes and hospitals questioned were changing their practices as a result. Other Best Practice Statements (<http://geronurse.com/en/best-practice-statements/best-practice-statements.asp>) on subjects such as depression, physical exercise and oral health generated a similar impact.

UK: WAP Scotland

Needs tailored services – a lifeline for people with care responsibilities

EQUAL has generated a variety of innovative care services across Europe facilitating the daily life of thousands of carers while improving services by ensuring that they are better tailored to the needs of those who need the care.

It chartered new models of childcare improving availability, quality and flexibility. Many DPs tested opening outside the usual hours of public daycare centres. They launched inter-enterprise childcare services with opening hours that follow company work schedules. Often cooperating with one or several municipalities, the companies contributed to the setting-up and running costs of these services. They also successfully tested emergency childcare for parents in temporary work and even around-the-clock home-based childcare making such services part of regular provision in many areas.

Case Study 13

Gepetto offers parents a 24-hour, seven days a week service looking after children under 13 years old. Parents working shifts, on business travel, in training courses, or needing to fill a gap between their children's timetables and their own, can call on Gepetto for help. It can draw from a team of trained professionals including nursery teachers, child welfare auxiliaries and early childhood assistants to offer support. A childminder can arrive at 5.30 when the parents leave for work, get the children ready for school and cook them breakfast; a single mother away on training can ask for an overnight babysitter; others pick up children after school, help them with their homework, prepare supper and even read them bedtime stories until their parents come home. The service closely cooperates with local childcare providers. The fees are proportional to the income of the family.

Following the EQUAL experience, the National Fund for Family Allowances (Caisse Nationale d'Allocations Familiales) has recognised this type of flexible support that is now known as "accueil en relais" (interface between parents and childcare providers).

FR: Gepetto

Research including the OECD's "Programme for International Student Assessment" (PISA) argues that childcare must offer more than a safe haven for kids. Many Member States are reviewing caring provisions with this in mind. EQUAL took on board this debate exploring services that combine traditional caring tasks with intercultural education and early learning of foreign languages, schemes integrating children with disabilities and different ethnic backgrounds, and schemes working with immigrant and other disadvantaged parents and promoting the role of childcare centres in the community. Other projects were concerned with children's perceptions of the world around them. They employed men and older people as childcare workers challenging the traditional perception that this is a job for women only.

Good practice examples that came out of the EQUAL experiment are now being mainstreamed into regular childcare provision in a number of Member States.

Case Study 14

EQUAL funded childcare centres in Spain providing workshops confronting the use of television as a "babysitting service". They involve children in activities such as recycling, handicrafts, theatre, body expression, nature, games and sports. In 'term-time', they organise after-school workshops while during the summer vacation they last all day. The DP organises minibuses to collect and return the children to villages in its area. Using the same model, they also organise the "A Lua" itinerant infant workshops in the A Coruña area. The Regional Government agreed to promote and fund this service, so that it can be offered to more educational institutions in Galicia.

ES: Deloa

Case Study 15

A DP, led by the Flemish Resource, Research and Training Centre for Early childhood, is working to increase the number of male childcare workers. It wants to challenge stereotypical views of men and women, encourage staff to change their own gender assumptions and avoid children developing a skewed picture of the roles of men and women in society. The partnership designed a training course that succeeded to attract men. It is also working with the media to raise public awareness and to influence policy.

BE: ECCE AMA

EQUAL partnerships supporting parents of children and young people with disabilities developed different strategies. Some worked to integrate this target group into regular childcare facilities and schools while others concentrated on the creation of new care services dedicated to groups with special needs. Both approaches were combined with support schemes for parents, which included guidance, training and practical help to find and/or hold on to a job.

Case Study 16

In Poland, an EQUAL DP created a Care and Rehabilitation Centre for children with disabilities. This was combined with a Career Counselling and Employment Agency as well as a Law Counselling Service for parents. They had access to individual counselling and guidance and innovative forms of flexible part-time work and/or self-employment. The Centre drew up individual work profiles for parents to assess their training needs and used them to offer appropriate training that will help them find a job. While the parents were in training, the Centre looked after their children.

PL: Having a Full Life – supporting parents of disabled children

Case Study 17

A Latvian DP is developing a system of palliative care for terminally ill children who often require uninterrupted care, sometimes for many years. In such cases, one of the family members, usually the mother, has to take extensive childcare leave frequently resulting in job loss. After the death of the child, parents find it difficult to re-enter the labour market. In addition they need support to cope with the heavy pain of such a loss. The Centre looks after the terminally ill children, giving parents the time to improve their vocational skills or to continue with or seek employment.

The project is working to make such services available across Latvia. As a first step, it is organising mobile teams of professionals to help families throughout the country. The DP is also training specialists to work in the palliative care of children.

LV: A Palliative Care Centre for Children

Home-based care was often at the core of the models developed for elderly people. DPs looked at a range of services that were needed but not offered by the regular public systems for elderly care nor by third sector family help organisations. They were not seeking to replace doctors, nurses or social workers but complement their work so making an important difference in the lives of older people and their families. They experimented with offering care outside normal working hours, 24 hours a day throughout the year. Some did this by training and then employing older, formerly unemployed women who were offered flexible part-time work in a timeframe defined by them.

Other models provided services for elderly people who do not have serious health problems and prefer to continue living in their homes. They combine domestic services with daycare centres that offer cultural and leisure time activities as well as basic healthcare. In some cases, volunteers provided this support.

Case Study 18

In Italy, a DP piloted a daycare centre for older people who were normally looked after by younger women family members. The senior citizens tested the new centre during a nine-month trial period. They were

picked up from their homes in the morning and returned to their families in the late afternoon. They spent the day with their peers and were assisted by two tutors who were also qualified nurses. This liberated the younger women in their families for paid work knowing their relatives were in safe hands.

The centre was a big success and is continuing after the end of EQUAL. The older people enjoy each other's company and participate in activities ranging from playing cards to painting and cooking as well as cultural events. They consider the centre as an important part of their lives and one of these "guests," who had not spoken for months started to talk again!

IT: Help Donna

Case Study 19

In Portugal, a Volunteer Network was created to bring together people who are willing and able to donate time to help others. It provides support to families with children, the elderly and to people with disabilities or suffering from temporary or chronic disease. Senior citizens, for instance, can "book" a volunteer to accompany them when they want to go out or to help them with administrative problems and paperwork. Parents can call on the network for a volunteer to take their kids to school and back home, or help with homework and occasional babysitting. Volunteers are also visiting people who are alone or isolated. The Network backs up regular family support institutions as it offers services outside official working hours.

PT: ConVidas





FLEXIBILITY FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Going beyond part-time employment

Work organisation flexibility has increased significantly in recent years. Driven by company production needs and market competitiveness, it has not always resulted in a better reconciliation of work and private life. Few employers understand how a flexible, family-friendly work organisation can enhance the overall performance of a company.

A woman's problem

Reconciliation of work and family life is mainly perceived as a "woman's problem" and this is reflected in their employment patterns¹³. In the EU-25 countries, 16% of women are working part-time but only 4% of the men. The gap is bigger in the EU-15 countries. There, 37% of women with care responsibilities for children are working part-time compared to 17% of women with no such responsibilities and 7% of men. Although for many women this is a free choice, a growing number have no other option. Particularly in retail or personal services, employers are increasingly organising jobs on a part-time basis. But, whether by choice or not, women part-timers are paying a high price. They have fewer opportunities for training and career progression, lower salary levels and reduced access to supplementary payments and social protection benefits¹⁴. Recent research shows that other flexible working time arrangements such as job sharing, working time accounts, term-time working and telework play a significantly smaller role in the search for more parent-friendly work organisation models.

Striking a balance between work and family life is an even bigger challenge for people working atypical hours that are on the increase. In the EU-25, more than 30% of all employees are working on Saturdays, with figures for women being only slightly lower than for men. Whilst night work remains a male domain, evening work is the norm for 20% of female and 33% of male workers¹⁶.

Part-Time Employment in the EU-25¹⁵

Country	Part-time rate in %*			Share of women in %**
	Total	Men	Women	
Belgium	19.1	5.1	36.7	80.6
Czech Republic	2.8	1.1	4.8	72.9
Denmark	18.9	10.0	25.5	64.5
Germany	20.1	4.5	38.0	82.8
Estonia	6.8	4.1	9.4	
Greece	1.9	0.7	3.6	68.6
Spain	3.8	0.8	8.1	81.0
France	13.7	3.6	24.8	80.6
Ireland	13.7	3.4	25.3	78.8
Italy	6.4	1.6	13.2	76.1
Cyprus	3.6	1.8	5.5	
Latvia	5.2	2.7	7.8	
Lithuania	6.1	3.6	8.4	
Luxembourg	12.9	1.0	29.6	93.0
Hungary	3.3	2.0	4.6	67.7
Malta	7.4	3.1	16.6	
Netherlands	35.7	14.8	60.9	76.0
Austria	18.0	3.4	35.0	86.9
Poland	3.9	2.5	5.5	65.7
Portugal	3.0	0.7	5.5	67.0
Slovenia	2.0	1.4	2.8	
Slovakia	1.8	1.0	2.8	73.0
Finland	8.4	4.8	11.9	63.5
Sweden	15.6	5.5	25.5	69.0
United Kingdom	22.7	7.5	39.6	77.8
EU-25	14.4	4.2	15.9	

*Data for 2003; ** Data for 2004

13 Part-time arrangements vary greatly between Member States. See details in *Employment in Europe 2005*.

14 European Commission, (2005), *Reconciliation of work and private life: A comparative review of thirty European countries* (drawn up by the EU Expert Group on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment – EGGSIIE).

15 Background document for Joint Employment Report 2004/2005.

16 Source: Eurostat; Figures refer to EU-15, calculated by EGGSIIE, 2005.



EQUAL GENERATES SOLUTIONS

EQUAL has made a difference for women and men who want both gainful employment and a career, and a more satisfying family and personal life. Work/life balance policies brought cultural change in companies and organisations that have implemented them.

Convincing employers is crucial

Many companies, and particularly SMEs, shy away from work/life balance policies fearing the costs. EQUAL partnerships have been collecting and studying the introduction of such policies in selected companies throughout Europe, the US and Canada. Good practices showed the substantial gains for employers and spurred other companies to introduce family-friendly personnel policies.

Hard facts

On behalf of the German Government¹⁷, a major European business consultancy undertook a cost-benefit analysis of flexible work organisation and other support measures for parents in a representative sample of enterprises. It found that, on average, each company saved up to several hundred thousand euros in reduced costs by introducing a "family package" (counselling for parents, individualised flexi-time, telework and childcare). Model calculations based on the loss incurred through staff turn-over and absenteeism on the one hand, and on the cost of the "family package" on the other, demonstrate that on average a company can generate at least a 25% return on investment.

An Irish study¹⁸ showed that 86% of senior management employees work longer than the standard hours on a regular basis and 70% do not have access to paid overtime or time in lieu. Flexible work arrangements yielded a number of benefits, including:

- Employee satisfaction: +85%
- Attracting/retaining employees: +74%
- Productivity: +58%
- Reduced labour turnover: -55%
- Reduced absenteeism: -50%
- Improved business results: +48%

17 Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, (2004), *Betriebswirtschaftliche Effekte familienfreundlicher Maßnahmen – Kosten-Nutzen-Analyse.*

18 Drew (2002).

Flexibility in many forms

EQUAL helped companies to introduce numerous schemes: full-time hours over four days; periodic home working and telework; combinations of long and short days; and working longer hours over a defined period to accrue non-working blocks of time to be used during school holidays or family emergencies. Both employers and employees gained. Parents appreciated the general reduction of stress and the opportunity to balance working time and childcare provision better, and to spend more quality time with their children and partners. Employers found that both job performance and productivity increased.

Case Study 20

Led by the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies at Trinity College Dublin, an Irish EQUAL project tested flexible working in dozens of companies targeting management and non-management staff. The pilots demonstrated that flexible working is a viable solution for managers shattering the myth that management jobs must be full-time. It successfully tested flexible hours and reduced hours, such as working a three or four-day week. Beneficiaries said they had greater job satisfaction and their productivity improved.

It also tested flexi-time models for people with mental health problems and older workers. Personalised flexible working hours provided a solution for women and men suffering from depression, for example, as they could stop work when ill. The DP also convinced employers to give older workers the choice of retiring at the statutory age or gradually phasing out their working time through flexible schemes. As a result, companies could meet the emerging skills gaps due to demographic change and transfer the knowledge and skills of older workers to the next generation.

IE: The National Flexi-Work-Partnership

In some countries, EQUAL work/life balance programmes resulted in a long-term change process. In southern Member States, for example, DPs involved employers and trade unions in a geographical area or economic sector and influenced collective bargaining. Awareness raising and training for decision-makers in trade union and employer organisations led to "Memoranda of Understanding" which committed the two sides of industry to negotiate work/life balance measures for women and men as part of collective agreements. In Spain, such collective agreements are granting reduced working hours and flexible leave schemes for parents and employees with care responsibilities that go beyond the current legal provision.

Case Study 21

A Spanish partnership used the experiences and results of its activities to build a territorial alliance for work/life balance in and around the city of Barcelona. It succeeded in introducing work and family life clauses into collective bargaining. For example, the collective agreement with the Vodafone Corporation now has clauses guaranteeing maternity leave 15 days before delivery and an extended period of shorter working hours when maternity leave ends, plus paid breast-

feeding and nursing breaks. In addition, workers can take up to one year of leave to care for dependent family members and this leave can be prolonged if they are caring for children under four years old. The DP is also running awareness-raising courses on equal opportunities and reconciliation issues for trade union officials, members of work committees, personnel managers and business owners

ES: Tempora

Case Study 22

An Italian DP tackled the rigidity of working time and care provision by accompanying collective bargaining negotiations to push for work/life balance provisions. Eventually, the regional chapters of the Trade Union Confederation and the Employers Association (Trade Sector) signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing themselves to introduce concrete measures to facilitate the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life. Moreover, the DP experimented with work organisation schemes and redesigning existing care services and the results are also included in the new collective agreement.

IT: Gender Competency

In other cases successful EQUAL work/life models were extended to wider target groups. Pilots for parents, for example, are increasingly becoming regular practice benefiting all staff categories.

Case Study 23

Six major companies operating in key economic sectors in Ireland together developed a "continuum of change". The idea is that organisations move through four stages described as formative, broadening, deepening and mature.

At the first stage, a company may be complying with relevant legislation and offering a small number of family-friendly measures mainly for women with children. The second stage extends these measures to a wider group, involving fathers or more generally people with care responsibilities. During the deepening stage, a combination of policies is emerging and made available to all personnel. These policies are seen as a response to business needs and to attract and retain staff. Relevant HR skills are developed and the up-take of programmes monitored. When reaching the mature stage, an enterprise has found the way to meet its organisational goals and its employees' work/life needs.

As a first step, EQUAL established a Work/life balance Group in each of the participating organisations comprising management and trade union representatives. The Group diagnosed the work/life balance provision of the company. It then explored how it can apply the work/life balance criteria that are based on research and good practices collected earlier and identified the first steps. EQUAL provided Diagnostic checklists to assist the organisations during this process. The managers in all six organisations agreed that the new work/life packages did not have a negative impact on business performance – in fact the reverse was true, as they had improved work satisfaction

and productivity. Today, 80 to 90% of all the personnel policies related to work/life balance adopted in each of the six organisations are based on the EQUAL work.

IE: The Work/life balance Network (WLBN)

Tackling the disadvantages of flexibility

In some Member States, EQUAL helped change atypical working patterns that hampered reconciliation. In France, for example, EQUAL partnerships (re)assessed and reorganised work environments and job contents and linked them to new work schedules. "Broken shifts" in the highly flexible jobs of the service industry were dismantled as a result.

Case Study 24

"Broken shifts" were a daily nightmare for the cleaning staff of municipal buildings scattered throughout the city of Rennes. To make enough income, the predominantly female staff had to work two shifts, one in the early morning and another at night. As a result of EQUAL, they now have full-time jobs and can either opt for a schedule from 7.30 to 15.30 or from 10.45 to 18.45. Teamwork is a key element of the new model. Whilst in the past one person was assigned a certain number of square metres, two women are now sharing the work of cleaning a larger floor area. In addition, the new scheme provided training improving the women's career prospects. It also enabled cleaners to swap workplaces so that they can live closer to work and waste less time commuting. As a result, absenteeism has dropped by 40%.

FR: Rennes – égalité des temps

Upgrading and/or multi-skills training helped women to access jobs that are more compatible with raising a family. Employers started to realise that in helping employees balance job and family responsibilities, they can more easily attract and retain much needed qualified staff and reduce the high turnover and absenteeism. EQUAL triggered such a change in the hotel, restaurant and catering sector in France, where every year 60.000 jobs cannot be filled.

Case Study 25

A large hotel chain was able to offer a new solution to receptionists who, in the past, had been covering two rush periods – one in the morning when guests were checking out and another in the evening

when new arrivals were piling up. The free hours in between did not help improve family life, since employees had to leave for their second shift just as their children or partners were returning home. A multi-skills programme enabled more family-friendly work patterns. Employees were trained to qualify for more than one job. For example, a person worked on the same day, first as a receptionist and then as a waiter. As a result management could propose full days instead of "broken" schedules. In addition, employees were able to develop their career and increase pay.

FR: Equilibre

Help desks – an interface between work and family life

Another success was the introduction of "help desks for family matters" based in companies or local authorities. EQUAL training programmes enabled women, both employed and unemployed, to provide counselling and practical advice to employees. They deal with enquiries such as helping locate the most suitable childcare or elderly care service and find quick solutions to almost any kind of emergency. They also negotiated personalised working time arrangements and career planning for parents and people with care responsibilities. The "help desks" that have in many cases become permanent facilities also ensure that people on parental leave can stay in touch with their company. They provide regular or occasional part-time work and organise training enabling parents to keep their skills updated.

Case Study 26

A German DP established a virtual help desk for companies and employees with care responsibilities. It provided legal information and practical guidance with an emphasis on parental leave and also offered on-going face-to-face support. Parental leave in Germany can last a maximum of three years. To help both parents and enterprises cope with such long leave, the DP offered a variety of programmes. It supported employees on parental leave to stay in touch with the world of work and to participate in training programmes tailored to their needs. Counselling and advice was offered to employers and HR managers to maintain contact with their employees during the leave period and introduce family-friendly working time solutions to facilitate their return. This service also helped companies to replace employees during their absence and update their skills when they return after three years.

DE: Gender Net



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FAREWELL TO THE MALE BREADWINNER MODEL

Overcoming traditional role models and gender stereotypes

Despite women's increased labour market participation, the private lives of many couples in Europe reproduce the male breadwinner model. Men are perceived as the main providers for the family, whilst women are expected to shoulder the lion's share of unpaid work at home. Women are increasingly behaving as "super women" as they try to reconcile gainful employment and career ambitions with motherhood, marriage or partnership, homemaking and social life.

Time-use surveys¹⁹ comparing the number of hours spent by women and men on work, family and leisure activities reveal a traditional pattern. On average, in all EU Member States, women's work days are longer than men's if the time of gainful employment and domestic tasks is added. Women in the Baltic countries, Slovenia,

Italy and Spain work the longest, whereas in Sweden and the UK, women's and men's working hours are almost the same. Women spend much more time than men on domestic work, ranging from less than 50% more in Sweden to over 200% in Italy and Spain.

But there are signs that the scales are tipping towards a more even distribution of care and domestic work between women and men. Qualitative research²⁰ shows that a growing number of men are keen to live up to their responsibilities as fathers although their employers, colleagues at work or even the media do not encourage this change. However men's contribution to the "second shift", e.g. unpaid work at home, is mainly restricted to feeding, bathing, changing nappies, taking kids to school or kindergarten and – most of all – playing with the children. Men's share of household chores remains small.

19 Eurostat, (2006), "How is the time of women and men distributed in Europe", *Statistics in Focus: Population and Social Conditions*, No. 4.

20 Fine-Davis et al., (2002); Duyvendak and Stavenuiter (eds.) (2004).



EQUAL: LEARNING NEW AND UNLEARNING OLD GENDER ROLES

EQUAL has promoted equality in unpaid care and family work by challenging parental role and task sharing. In some Member States, it has also tried to change young people's and even children's perceptions. Initially, EQUAL targeted men but a substantial number of projects also tackled both the "breadwinner" and the "super woman" models.

From kindergarten to university

EQUAL partners in many countries developed training and education programmes targeting kindergarten and primary school teachers, which allow children to explore existing gender differences and break with stereotyped perceptions of men and women. Role patterns in the kindergarten reflected the different tasks performed by mothers and fathers at home. Role play and discussions raised questions about the causes of inequality and how children envisaged their own adult life. This stimulated further discussions in families. Supported by awareness raising and training events, parents became more open to review their own performance as role models and to consider changes. The projects prepared didactic material and tools to disseminate the approach further.

Case Study 27

A Spanish partnership created and tested curricula for primary and secondary schools, which challenged traditional gender roles and also stereotypes in science and technology. It used household tasks, such

as cooking, baking or ironing to explain phenomena in chemistry and physics. As a result youngsters, and particularly boys, began to realise the contribution of unpaid women's work and to accept more responsibilities at home. The project attracted media attention and prompted discussion among teachers and parents. As a result, the competent authorities adopted EQUAL's approach.

ES: Tempora

Case Study 28

In the Netherlands, EQUAL has built on research indicating that young men at the beginning of their career have a more egalitarian vision than the previous generation when it comes to sharing care responsibilities with their wives or partners. For instance, 40% of Dutch engineers would like to work fewer hours and spend more time with their children but, due to various barriers, are unable to do so. Through an Internet tool, the so-called Barrièremeter, a DP encouraged men to identify the barriers and proposed practical solutions to remove them. EQUAL also examined parenthood and gender roles in secondary and tertiary education. A group of engineers who are combining work and care acted as "ambassadors". They visited schools and discussed their experience with students. Teaching materials and tools were produced including a training module to be taught as part of university technical education programmes.

NL: Breaking Barriers

Learning by doing makes all the difference

EQUAL took account of the cultural context. In France, where kindergartens or schools are rarely meeting points for parents, new neighbourhood centres were set up. Women and men appreciated the possibility to discuss task sharing outside their homes in a neutral space. In several regions, EQUAL provided opportunities for men and women to meet and talk about their lives with or without the support of professionals.

Case Study 29

Paris-based *L'École des parents* (School for Parents) organised workshops where parents learned about practical solutions to task sharing in the home. At first, there were more mothers, but over time the number of fathers attending the workshops grew significantly. In other cities, "parents' cafés" invited men and women to discuss old and new gender roles. Here, parents were also encouraged to meet – with or without their children – and find practical solutions that involved role changes. Men and women discovered skills that are often labelled as typical of the other gender, such as cooking, constructing technical toys, playing football, telling stories, making music or singing lullabies.

FR: Coordination des temps de vie dans les territoires

Case Study 30

An Italian EQUAL DP found that men like to plan and implement projects over a period of time, as opposed to being permanently "condemned" to household or care tasks. "Project work" was used to involve men in family duties. Examples included completing a course in neo-natal care, dedicating Saturday mornings to spend quality time with their kids or preparing a meal for the family once a week, including the shopping beforehand and cleaning up the kitchen afterwards. Moreover, "men-only" courses helped men to assess and improve their skills in household management. They learned by doing domestic jobs such as ironing, cooking, washing or cleaning a house.

IT: Il Laboratorio del Tempo

Media campaigns

The most significant EQUAL campaign was in the Netherlands. It used the same approach as a marketing strategy for a new commercial product. The aim was to build a critical mass of people that would adopt the new product leading to multiplication and eventually sustainable change. Led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Dutch campaign adopted the slogan of "Men Taking the Lead".

The message was simple: if more men were prepared to become more involved with tasks at home, more women would be able to enter the labour market and reconcile their working and family lives. But instead of having the responsible Minister or gender equality bodies "preach" politically correct attitudes as often happened in the past, the EQUAL partners used a mixture of activities to initiate "discussions at peoples' kitchen tables" as a first step towards change.

Case Study 31

The discussions were stimulated through a series of TV and radio commercials, supported by a number of other activities such as press conferences, an Internet site (www.wiedoetwat.nl), talk shows and events throughout the country. First it confronted men with the excuses they tend to use to avoid taking up more responsibilities at home. Then the campaign addressed the need for women to learn to let go of their "household and care monopoly" and of how things should be done. It also highlighted how most employers, male colleagues and friends do not react enthusiastically if a man undertakes more family work. Over a period of 16 months the campaign encouraged men to start a dialogue on the equal division of family tasks with their employers, as well as their friends and peers at work. With the project's assistance, many men made "role sharing agreements" with their partners and/or employers.

The Partnership also convinced other organisations to join forces. Together with large companies, NGOs and the country's top football team, it organised activities for fathers to experience the fun and satisfaction that can be had from spending quality time with their kids, and the difference that this can make to the lives of their children and partners.

NL: Men taking the lead

The impact of the media campaign was closely monitored. Using a representative sample of 700 men and women, the DP measured changes in their attitudes and perceptions. According to the final analysis in May 2004, 59% of men and 52% of women said they discussed the sharing of family tasks at least once a month. This usually led to an agreement on how to divide these tasks. The last telephone survey revealed that between April 2003 and May 2004, the number of men who had negotiated task-sharing agreements rose from 67% to 88%, whilst the percentage of women remained stable at 72%.

The media campaign created a chain-reaction throughout the country. Companies, schools and other educational institutions, sports clubs, cultural associations and grass-root groups continued to explore task sharing in the home.



TERRITORIAL ALLIANCES FOR RECONCILIATION

What's missing?

Easily accessible, affordable quality care for children and other dependants is one of the cornerstones of successful work/life balance policies, – as is a more balanced sharing of unpaid work at home. There are a number of additional stumbling blocks that are difficult to overcome for women and men seeking to reconcile work and family life. Particularly in remote and rural areas, the lack of transport results in “territorial exclusion”, especially for women and older people. There are also urban and sub-urban neighbourhoods that are not well served by public transport. EQUAL identified that commuting from home to work, to kindergarten or school, and to shopping and other service areas was one of the most time consuming and unproductive daily tasks. This is a bigger problem for women²¹ as men are more likely to own a car or have the family car at their disposal. For years, gender equality bodies and NGOs have been pushing to adapt bus and train services to the needs of working women – in most cases unsuccessfully.

Constant time pressure is another major challenge. According to research²², this is the result of moving from an industrial society with synchronised work patterns, to a service and information society with irregular work patterns. Yet the “times of the city” – opening hours of local authorities, stores and other service providers, child-care facilities and schools and the schedules of public transport systems – are slow to adapt to this shift in working hours. This makes it more difficult for people to balance the conflicting pressures of their daily lives.

Women with care responsibilities for children and/or other dependants suffer more from this daily battle against time than men. Coping with a job and managing a family, leaves no time for social, cultural or civic activities, and “personal time” is often out of the question. Even in two-income households, the unpaid work at home is not shared equally. Work organisation patterns continue to be shaped as if the entire workforce were male and had no care obligations. Women as a result suffer from higher stress that can impact on their job performance and productivity, and cause absenteeism and unwanted company staff turnover.

21 Eurostat, (2006), “How is the time of women and men distributed in Europe”, *Statistics in Focus: Population and Social Conditions*, No. 4.

22 Thalys/Ipsos Study 2001: Le temps au cœur des préoccupations des sociétés européennes - www.observatoire.thalys.com

EQUAL LINKS CARE TO OTHER FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Change to balance work and private life requires the involvement of local companies and authorities. In many parts of Europe, EQUAL has integrated a gender dimension in the territorial strategies for more and better jobs and improved working and living conditions for all. It enhanced care provision but also created services to alleviate housework and tackle commuting working through territorial alliances. Usually, the local and/or regional governments and authorities took the lead and formed coalitions with organisations and companies to improve services for people with care responsibilities. This often involved the creation of infrastructures such as local or regional gender equality centres, community centres or time agencies to give support.

Smarter transport solutions

EQUAL helped to create and improve transport services in many parts of Europe. It linked the mobility needs of people with care responsibilities to the policy priorities of local or regional governments and the business interests of transport companies. By introducing new services, transport companies could test the customer appeal and develop more cost-effective services. In addition, extended public transport supported government aims to reduce environmental pollution and traffic jams through minimising individual car travel.

Case Study 32

In Italy, the municipality of Prato that has been participating in an EQUAL partnership joined forces with the employers' consortium of

a huge industrial zone. The consortium known for its environmental protection programmes, was keen to reduce the pollution caused by the daily traffic jam of its employees driving to work in their private cars. With EQUAL, car sharing and a transport system using electric and low-emission cars were introduced. The municipality invested in the cars and the consortium covered the running costs of the new service, significantly reducing both pollution and employee commuting time.

IT: Il Laboratorio del Tempo

Case Study 33

In Barcelona, an EQUAL partnership worked with the Metropolitan Transport Corporation and the bus services of the neighbouring local authorities. Several successful pilot actions resulted in cooperation among the different systems, which before had been operating independently. EQUAL carried out test runs which included an analysis of an urban bus line to check if and how its route connect the areas and provides the services that are most crucial to people with family responsibilities. Other pilots improved mobility between residential areas and industrial zones, and transport between the outskirts and the central commercial zones.

ES: Tempora

In rural areas, EQUAL facilitated commuting by developing new services. These created new jobs for people running the services and the increased mobility which resulted opened employment prospects for others.



Case Study 34

In the Spanish province of A Coruña, the mayors of seven local authorities joined forces to improve local transport. With three minibuses sitting nine people each, the DELOA EQUAL project set out to tackle the lack of transport in these rural areas. Initially, the DP created the minibus service to transport its trainees and their children attending the new childcare facilities. It then became a regular service. The regional administration and, in particular, the General Transport Management of the Xunta de Galicia, is now preparing a Decree that will enable more needs-tailored, flexible rural transport systems in the area. It will allow municipalities to work with small transport businesses which can rent vans with a driver, a model that before could be used only by municipalities with less than 85 000 inhabitants. Meanwhile, under the name of Trebore Transporte, DELOA's own transport service is continuing as a social economy enterprise working with rural tourism operators and schools. It has recently been classified by the Regional Government as a "rural employment initiative" and receives public funding during its first year of operation as a company.

ES: Deloia

Wages for housework

For years, qualified women who could afford to "buy in" additional help to cope with daily chores have been hiring other women to do their domestic tasks such as cleaning, washing, ironing, gardening, shopping and occasional or regular babysitting. Often, this work was undeclared. EQUAL managed to break this pattern and to turn these services into regular jobs with social security coverage.

Moreover, particularly in France and in southern Member States, EQUAL managed to offer this service not only to career women, but also to single parents and others in need of extra help. It did this by closely cooperating with public authorities which in some countries provide service vouchers to low income families.

EQUAL created service agencies to receive work requests (sometimes for only a few hours per week) from different customers and then shape them into regular part-time or full-time jobs for unemployed women. The same model was used for non-domestic chores such as minor household repairs to accompanying children or old people to leisure activities or doctors' appointments. The agencies ensured quality control and provided replacement workers during sickness or leave of absence.

Case Study 35

A French DP created service agencies to carry out household tasks. The project's starting point was a national collective agreement aimed at upgrading and promoting the recognition of home-helpers. Under the agreement, such workers could provide four services: house keeping, buying food and preparing meals, basic care for elderly people and babysitting. For the first time, they could gain a nationally recognised certificate if they have successfully completed a training programme or through the official validation of informally acquired skills. AFPA, the National Organisation for Vocational Training of Adults, runs the certification scheme under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour.

Home helpers are usually hired by the service agency or directly by a family. To generate sufficient income, they often have several contracts as they work only a few hours for each employer. The service agencies help them to find customers, and, at the same time, help these customers with the necessary administrative procedures, like calculating wages and drawing up work contracts.

FR: Articulation des temps de vie

Some EQUAL projects took advantage of a new trend: the so-called "concierge services" which provide tailor-made services to help people find quick solutions to practical problems at home, in order to be more productive at work.

Case Study 36

Bien Etre à la Carte, a partner in a French DP, provides this kind of support to the employees of the ACCOR group, but is also selling it as a commercial service to other companies. It can find people to help with cleaning and ironing, childcare, car washing or even renovating an apartment. It also provides legal information. In short, such a service helps employees save time. A number of employers now include this service in their staff benefit packages.

FR: Equilibre

Case Study 37

An Italian DP, instead of involving commercial companies, created its own social economy concierge service targeting women entrepreneurs. It trained the future service workers, often unemployed women, combining technical know-how with social skills. This included on-the-job training in the services involved.

IT: Da Donna a Donna

Time Agencies – an EQUAL opportunity

EQUAL created and/or strengthened so-called "Time Agencies", particularly in France, Italy and Spain. They work in four policy areas:

- harmonising "city times";
- introducing more flexible work organisation benefiting both employees and employers;
- providing tailored and flexible care and other family support services; and
- changing attitudes to enable a more even sharing of unpaid work at home between women and men.

Achievements in these four areas have made a real difference in the daily lives of women and men, whilst at the same time improved the general quality of life. Public authorities led these changes working in local coalitions involving employers, trade unions, public and private care providers, schools, transport companies and NGOs.

Local and regional governments created one-stop-shops to help people save time by catering for almost every type of demand from getting a copy of a birth certificate, through advice on health and social care services, to setting up an appointment with a careers guidance or placement officer. As a result of EQUAL, one-stop-shops are becoming a permanent feature in cities and regions.

Case Study 38

In France, EQUAL initiated “neighbourhood town halls” which provide services at opening hours that better reflect people’s work schedules instead of the usual 9 to 5 routine of public administrations.

These one-stop-shops provide a variety of services. They focus on early childhood and educational activities, financial aid and health issues like family planning, pregnancy care and supporting couples in crisis situations. In some locations, these services are backed up by an emergency childcare centre, a leisure time hub for kids, a toy library and a unit for daily life advice.

FR: Rennes – Egalités des temps

Case Study 39

A one-stop-shop was developed in the city of Poitiers to help parents at the beginning of the school year. It has now been adopted by many other cities. Before school begins, parents can find all relevant information in one place. In the past, parents had to run back and forth between different offices. Now all the formalities can be done quickly. In addition, parents can enrol their children in extra-curricular

activities, buy transport coupons, get lunch vouchers and so on. The one-stop-shop involves more than a dozen public services and around forty associations.

FR: Coordination des temps de vie dans les territoires

Case Study 40

An Italian DP created community centres in six cities in the Lombardy region. The centres provide support and services to women and men with care responsibilities, but also to enterprises, co-operatives and job centres. Employees of public and private companies tested the reconciliation services developed by the DP. These provided information about relevant legislation, public and private services, vocational training, lifelong learning and labour market opportunities. In addition, each centre created specific services according to the needs of its locality. These included a Time Bank, a mechanism where people can barter time and services instead of paying with money; a “family desk” at a local health department; a one-stop-shop focusing on female business creation and entrepreneurship; childcare services for women shift workers; and intercultural mediation.

IT: Con-Tempo



CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the EU, EQUAL helped women and men with care obligations to have both a career and a satisfying family and personal life. At the same time, work/life balance policies illustrated the business advantages and brought about cultural change in companies and organisations that have implemented flexible work organisation and family support services. EQUAL good practices, including a wealth of methodologies and tools, are available to support national, regional and local governments seeking change. This publication presents some of the EQUAL achievements.

Social innovation: comprehensive approaches to work/life balances for women and men

EQUAL's needs-tailored services packaged as work/life balance strategies were particularly successful. The most important aspect of these innovative services is that they are available locally and regionally. They combine home-based and institutional care with family-friendly working time arrangements, leave schemes, support for domestic tasks and improved transport services. Frequently, they also organise training to help women who have been absent from the labour market as a result of care responsibilities to (re) access gainful employment. Showing employers that supporting employees caring for relatives makes good business sense, and providing them with advice and materials that they need to enable the carers in their employment to continue to work, is another important part of EQUAL's work/life balance strategies.

EQUAL offered a unique chance for organisations committed to gender equality and reconciliation policies such as gender equality advisers or NGOs to work with partners that were much less convinced of the benefits of work/life balance policies. It encouraged employers to experiment with new personnel policies that helped them attract and retain qualified staff. In many cases, test runs of flexible working time arrangements to accommodate the needs of parents and other workers with care responsibilities showed that they benefited both employees and employers. Absenteeism and unwanted turnover decreased and work satisfaction and productivity rose resulting in the permanent introduction of such schemes.

Partnership: Joining forces for change

In line with the ESF Regulation for 2007–2013, the EQUAL partnership approach enabled all players to come together "for reform in the fields of employment and inclusion"²³: political decision-makers, public authorities, employers, trade unions, civil society and citizens. Investing time and resources to prepare the ground for joint actions helped to create local alliances for reconciliation, backed by sustainable infrastructures. Placing the activities under the direct responsibility of a mayor or high-level regional decision-maker was particularly effective and helped to emphasise the policy priority given to work/life balance.

Events bringing together the top decision-makers of a territory at a high visibility event were similarly successful. Small teams of practitioners in the field of work organisation, transport, education, social care and culture elaborated the practical details of the different institutions' contributions to the intended work/life balance alliance. Over many months, they cooperated thus enabling change.

EQUAL also involved groups of citizens. For instance, they participated in surveys that identified the worst "reconciliation problems" and what they needed to resolve them. In parallel, it carried out studies to explore how companies viewed more flexible work organisation. Information campaigns, town meetings and round tables encouraged employers and trade unions to be part of the change process. It created a new "societal dialogue" that went beyond the traditional social dialogue between employers and trade unions.

Gender mainstreaming: towards parity in unpaid care and family work

EQUAL redressed the perception of care and family work as a "woman's problem". Throughout the EU, DP members were trained to use gender mainstreaming as a tool to uncover and understand the causes of inequalities between women and men and come up with appropriate strategies to tackle them. Research and surveys explored "who does what" (as a Dutch DP put it) when it comes to care and domestic tasks and how women and men envisage task

23 Regulation (EC) No. 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999.

sharing at home. As a result two strategies emerged reflecting the so-called dual-track approach applied by the European Commission and most Member States: the integration of gender equality in all policies, and, in parallel, as long as persistent inequalities continue, the implementation of specific actions in favour of women, and in certain contexts also of men.

Consequently, EQUAL reconciliation policies and strategies not only targeted women as main providers of care and daily housework but also men who – according to research – wanted to become more dedicated fathers and partners. A number of EQUAL actions taught men to manage care and domestic tasks, thus bridging the gender gap in unpaid work at home.

Transnational cooperation: learning together and from each other

The need to mitigate the effects of demographic change has in many Member States created a renewed interest in care services for children and other dependants and in work/life balance strategies. Across Europe, EQUAL has facilitated the exchange of ideas and the transfer of good practices. In fact, working together and learning from each other often created a competitive edge. For instance, policy-makers became aware that their regions' or cities' gender equality track record compared poorly to counterparts in other Member States. They felt compelled to adopt EQUAL approaches to achieve better benchmarks. Organising peer meetings for key play-

ers sometimes meant a quantum leap in their performance at home. Good practices recommended by another company, public administration or political decision-maker seemed more credible than messages and statements delivered by project staff or gender equality advisers.

As a result, new forms of flexible childcare passed from France to Italy and methodologies to assess and recognise informal learning from the UK to the new Member States. Time policies were taken on board in many countries thanks to EQUAL. Facts and figures showing how enterprises can benefit from work/life balance policies were in great demand among projects as were guides and tools to help companies adopt, implement and monitor such policies.

Mainstreaming: influencing regular policies and practices

EQUAL reflects European and national policy priorities that link labour market gender equality with improved quality and productivity at work enhancing European competitiveness. EQUAL played an important role in convincing key players of this link. As a result, in a number of countries, work/life balance policies become an important component of collective agreements and companies that were not involved in EQUAL are now lining up to join territorial alliances for reconciliation. Another EQUAL mainstreaming success is the integration of flexible childcare models into regular family policy funding.



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Further Reading: a selection of EQUAL products²⁴

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European Commission

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