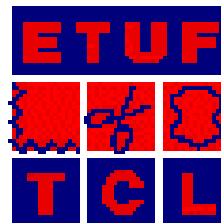


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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES :

VADE MECUM

BEST PRACTICES IN THE TEXTILE AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY

Research-action project relating to the employment and the working conditions of women in the European textile/clothing sector

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PREFACE

The European textile/apparel sector has a large proportion of female workers: depending on the country concerned, the proportion of women can range from 30 to 55% in the textile industry and from 60 to 86% in the apparel sector.

In cooperation with the European Commission (Employment and Social Affairs DG), the social partners in the European textile/apparel sector - EURATEX¹ and ETUF:TCL² - have been looking into the issue of female employment for several years now. Accordingly, within the framework of their sectoral social dialogue, they obtained financial aid from the Commission to draft this Vade Mecum for use by employers, workers' representatives and their respective national organizations.

The Vade Mecum was written by two experts³ in close collaboration with EURATEX and ETUF:TCL.

The text written by experts and the social partners was based on existing research into the improvement of working conditions for women and on visits to European companies in the textile/apparel (T/A) sector.

It proved very difficult to find enough companies in the T/A sector to agree to share their "good practices" on working conditions for female employees with us. Sadly, this reticence and/or lack of innovative practice in the sector - something which is not just the fault of the employers - merely confirmed the "deficiency" noted in a recent multi-sector study⁴. This deficiency is all the more unfortunate since the sector in question has a high proportion of female workers...

By making objective contributions to the debate - i.e. based on real-life experiences by T/A firms or male and female workers - this Vade Mecum most definitely serves a purpose, namely to encourage companies and workers to develop innovative "good practices".

The following pages aim to prove that "something can and must be done" to improve the working conditions of women in the sector, and that ultimately certain measures benefit both companies and their female employees.

Some companies in the textile/apparel sector have come up with ways of improving the daily lot of their female staff, including personnel management, access to training, access to so-called 'men's jobs' and efforts to make work and family life compatible (especially via balanced flexibility).

¹ EURATEX is the European Apparel and Textile Organization (employers).

² ETUF:TCL is the European trade union federation for textile, clothing and leather (workers).

³ KATE THOMAS & KLEYN (Baron R. de Vironlaan 5, B-1700 Dilbeek, Belgium) & CEDIS (Muntaner 178 5è 1a, E-08036 Barcelona, Spain).

⁴ ECOTEC Research & Consulting Ltd, *Women's working conditions in different sectors of the European economy*, Jan.1998, 146 pp.

These examples show that it is possible to from the beaten track and that well thought-out measures tailored to each company could lead to a win-win situation.

It will undoubtedly prove impossible for each and every company to develop measures in all the following areas:

- *internal and external communication on the issue of equality;*
- *personnel management & career planning;*
- *reconciling family life with work & flexible working hours;*
- *access to so-called 'men's jobs'*
- *improving working conditions & health in the workplace.*

A prior analysis of respective needs - i.e. those of employees and their companies - should be carried out on every occasion with a view to identifying ahead of time the domain(s) in which specific measures can be "invented" and gradually implemented.

After all, there is no miracle solution, but rather a multitude of solutions for a wide variety of contexts.

Nevertheless, if we wish to take equality to its logical conclusion, these measures must also be made accessible to those men who wish to take on a greater share of family-linked responsibilities. After all, if that is where the problem lies - and whether it is women who suffer (lack of promotion, timetable problems etc.) or companies (high level of absenteeism, lack of motivation, and so forth) - surely it often arises because of the difficulties experienced by women in reconciling their work and family responsibilities (vis-a-vis several generations) ?

Accordingly, the social partners are hoping that they have given the necessary boost and alleviated the anxiety of the socio-economic actors on the long road leading to equality. They are convinced that raising firms' and workforce representatives' awareness of the problem of equality in the workplace will benefit both sides.

The ball is now in the court of the companies and workforce representatives who, equipped with this tool, have a solid foundation on which to launch the debate at their level, if they see fit to do so.

*For EURATEX,
William Lakin, Director General*

*For ETUF:TLC,
Patrick Itschert, General Secretary*

** * **

METHODOLOGY

This handbook has been developed in conjunction with employers' and trade union associations in the Textile and Apparel sector in the 15 EU countries.

There were four stages in developing this handbook:

- a) identifying and selecting companies that have implemented “good practices” in the area of equal opportunities,
- b) drafting a questionnaire to gather information,
- c) fieldwork proper and
- d) drawing up information sheets and writing the handbook.

Phase 1: Identifying and selecting companies that have developed “good practices” in the area of equal opportunities

During this first stage, a joint letter from the European Apparel and Textile Organization (EURATEX) and the European Trade Union Federation – Textile, Clothing and Leather (ETUF:TCL) was sent to their respective members to explain the objectives of the handbook and to introduce the project managers responsible for its drafting.

These experts then contacted employers' and trade union associations operating in this sector in each country to ask them to identify the most suitable companies that have implemented “*good practices*” in equal opportunities.

Identifying these companies took a long time because not many in the sector have developed “**good practices**”. This meant that the number of case studies initially anticipated had to be reduced. As soon as the list had been drawn up of companies identified either by employers' associations or by unions, it was sent to the European social partners (EURATEX and the ETUF:TCL) for their approval.

EURATEX and the ETUF:TCL then chose the companies which, in their view, were the most suitable (taking into account their size in the sector and their social practices in the broad sense of the term). The experts went on to contact the selected companies in the countries for which each had responsibility.

Phase 2: Drafting a questionnaire to gather information

Using research into literature on this subject, a list of areas to be investigated during company visits was drawn up. The list of areas was submitted to EURATEX and the ETUF:TCL for approval. On the basis of this list, a questionnaire for companies was drafted.

Phase 3: Fieldwork

The two project managers involved in this research contacted the selected companies in writing to clarify what was being required and to establish the conditions for their fieldwork. These were an interview with a senior manager from the company (a director and/or human resources manager), an interview with unions represented in the company and a group discussion with female workers who have benefited from the “good practices” implemented by the company.

This participatory methodology involving all social partners was not accepted by every company approached, which meant that the number of companies identified had to be reduced once more or indeed new companies found that did agree to the established conditions.

The companies that did agree to take part received a detailed programme of how the fieldwork was to be undertaken as well as a summarized questionnaire on all aspects that would be covered during interviews with company managers. They were also provided with a form to complete on statistical data concerning the composition of the workforce and general data on production and turnover. Dates for visits were mutually agreed.

During company visits, the handbook project managers gathered information on objective facts and opinions regarding the good practices developed. Each type of interview lasted around two hours.

Phase 4: Drawing up the information sheets and drafting the handbook

Once the fieldwork was complete the two experts drafted a report on each company before submitting them to the social partners. A summary sheet was then prepared on each company and the five chapters that make up the handbook were written.

FIRST PART

CHAPTER 1

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Company mission

It is important for companies to incorporate their principles on equal opportunities into their overall company policy whilst asserting their respect for equality between men and women in a statement signed at director-level. This ensures that the importance of equal opportunities is recognized. *(Engtex conveys a message about equal opportunities in its company policy. As for William Baird, its statement on equal opportunities is mentioned again in its annual report, distributed not just to customers and shareholders but to employees as well).*

Management as part of an operating plan

However, it is acknowledged that two fundamental conditions need to be met to guarantee the effectiveness of equal opportunities policy:

- an equal opportunities programme needs to have been planned and developed in close consideration of the operational objectives of human resources policy. *(Engtex has established an equal opportunities programme that specifies the aims, responsibilities, budget, annual planning and evaluation of results. This programme is adjusted and redefined every year).*
- The management style and commitment of the managing director are important, if not vital, to the success of the equal opportunities policy. This is a very difficult aspect to measure. *(At Engtex, the culture is very clearly based on an “open door” policy – each employee can approach the managing director to ask questions and raise concerns. At William Baird, the chief executive performs the role of leader and pioneer, resulting in several modifications to the equal opportunities programme. The foundations for the sector’s future are clearly defined by the managing director).*

Continually introducing factors with a view to cultural change

A third decisive element in the effectiveness of equal opportunities policy is the continuous introduction of factors that contribute to bringing about cultural change. A managing director who supports a policy in favour of women and who offers them opportunities in positions of responsibility thus introduces an important cultural development in the company. These incentives for cultural change cannot be isolated initiatives. It is about attracting attention to these activities at every opportunity, for example in identifying employees’ **new requirements** regularly by means of an employee satisfaction survey or by organizing group sessions amongst employees. Equal opportunities can also become part of **ongoing improvement in the organization** and can be integrated into quality cells or performance appraisal systems. *(Engtex has internal quality cells. Employees’ wishes and expectations are*

examined every year. At William Baird an employee satisfaction survey is conducted every other year).

However a company can also emphasize its equal opportunities policy by **drawing attention to the results achieved (the “big wins”)**, for example by giving awards every year and distributing an annual report on social matters. *(At its annual conference, William Baird gives an award for “company of the year”. For the third consecutive year, this prize has been awarded to Windsmoor which is part of the William Baird holding company and managed by a woman).* Similarly it is very important to encourage the **outside world** to recognize and appreciate aspects of equal opportunities, particularly by being involved in networks, disseminating testimony and attending seminars. Such actions boost credibility among analysts, shareholders and society at large.

The foundations of equal opportunities in companies

To ensure that the equal opportunities policy is implemented as effectively as possible, it needs to be supported not only by the CEO but by other influential groups (trade unions) and champions of equal opportunities within the company as well. They have to support the proposed initiatives and incorporate them into operational and social policy.

To actually achieve these objectives, companies require back-up from **internal and external communication** and so cannot rely solely on verbal communication of their strategy. Companies must see that internal and external means of communication are created to convey the range of messages on equal opportunities policy (information, strategy, motivation and inspiration).

1. The equal opportunities **strategy** can be communicated via methods of communication that specify the policy to be followed.

Internal communication tools

- company directors can communicate all kinds of guidelines through **internal messages and memos**;
- the “**analytical plan**” serves as a foundation for a variety of communications. This strategic management plan includes statistical data on the company and employees;
- the “**equal opportunities programme**” is a second important means of communicating policy to employees. This programme should expand the equal opportunities policy in detail, placing the emphasis on its aim, objectives, budget, timetable and evaluation;
- **interpersonal communication** plays a not insignificant role in spreading information;
- lastly the managing director and team leaders have to communicate and reinforce the courses of action via their “**open door**” policy.

External communication tools

- the “**analytical plan**” is not just an internal means of communication. It is also important to ensure its transparency to the outside world (for example as a practical tool within the company’s recruitment strategy);

- a company's unambiguous position regarding its "**equal opportunities programme**" can be displayed in recruitment media;
 - the **annual report** is a vital tool for communicating information to analysts, shareholders and society at large;
 - a company can emphasize its policy, and individual components of it, in **job offers**. It can also include it in **press releases** where it can be communicated in a more detailed manner;
 - well-organized **seminars** are a means of clarifying policy.
2. A second group of communication tools relate to the **transmission of information** intended to reinforce the policy.
Such information can include general information, the description of positions, job vacancies, training programmes, available budgets and time given to equal opportunities.

Internal communication tools

- new technologies (**such as an intranet**) are an effective way of anticipating the communication of what has been achieved. Within this context it is important to avoid giving too much information and to guarantee the equality of all employees regarding access to information that interests them. For example a company may develop information terminals that draw attention to all strategic aspects of the company and to which all employees have access under the same conditions. *Accordingly, Engtex has a network of information terminals (computers distributed across production sites) in which work regulations, the number of hours of vocational training, training plans for each member of staff legislation on production and waste can be found;*
- **notice boards** are an ideal way of communicating all kinds of messages;
- the **in-house magazine** can emphasize, in different ways and at different levels, initiatives taken in the areas of equal opportunities so that the policy adopted in this area may be understood by all colleagues;
- **mediators** are very important intermediaries for highlighting perceived inequalities to management. They are also responsible for personal and individual communication which remains the best method of communication.

External communication tools

- a company can use **guided visits of its facilities** to explain to outsiders the way it organizes production and management;
 - another method of communicating the equal opportunities policy that has been implemented is to communicate the results of a **satisfaction survey** in the sector;
 - a company can also explain its policy to the outside world via an **annual report on social affairs**.
3. Having communicated certain guidelines and showed what action should be taken, companies should emphasize how the equal opportunities policy has **helped improve** and contribute to the well-being of the company, colleagues (both male and female), and other stakeholders, particularly shareholders.

A good reputation for promoting women, for example, can facilitate the recruitment of highly qualified women into a sector. (*William Baird is considered by analysts to be an excellent administrator, which greatly increases its attractiveness to qualified candidates*).

Internal communication tools

- **mentoring** is an intensive way of developing a company's own employees. *At William Baird, young employees are monitored by more senior colleagues who work in different functions and different divisions. This extends the horizon of all colleagues which facilitates both job rotation and knowledge of different functions;*
- **meetings** between departments familiarizes colleagues from different departments with the implications, advantages and disadvantages of certain activities inspired by equality opportunities;
- the **in-house magazine** also has a role to play at this level. Outlining different "best practices" in operation means that employees increase their awareness and are more motivated to work in a creative way themselves to introduce new ways of achieving best practice.

External communication tools

- **recruitment advertisements** that include a profile of a female employee, increase a company's attractiveness markedly;
 - **advertisements and sponsorship** showing female employees or representing women in a non-stereotypical way also play an important role in the way a company and its policy is perceived in the outside world;
 - introducing female **managers** to the company acts as a stimulus for both new employees and customers;
 - a company employing **women in commercial positions** clearly asserts its equal opportunities policy to the outside world.
4. These tools and channels of communication must **promote** equal opportunities policy and continue to **inspire** this policy in order for ongoing improvements to take place.

Internal communication tools

- the establishment of an **equal opportunities working group** (*see Engtex's "improvement cell"*) is a well thought out way of working on a stimulating equal opportunities policy;
- a **suggestions and complaints box** is an ideal way of recording a large number of input, reactions and suggestions from colleagues. These proposals can be examined by working groups;
- communicating the results of a **satisfaction survey of customers and employees** also enhances the commitment of employees. The publication of these results leads to employees reflecting upon improvements at all levels which will benefit the company as much as their colleagues.

External communication tools

- a **forum** to exchange information enables the company to keep abreast of the elements on which other companies base their policy and, as a result, to take the best action;
- the company attracts attention to its own equal opportunities policy by having its sector's or group's "**best practices**" written up in publications, receiving awards or presenting a profile of an actual case study;
- "**quality circles**" formed with customers and colleagues outside the company provide inspiration.

Every employee should be familiar with the channels of information that exist and to which he or she has access. The information should be open, especially with regard to vacant positions. There is a variety of ways in which the communication tools listed above can be used.

Internal and external communication

1. Ensuring that the equal opportunities strategy is communicated

- Internal communication tools
 - Memos on company policy
 - Business plan
 - Equal opportunities programme
 - Interpersonal communication
 - “Open door” policy
- External communication tools
 - Business plan
 - Equal opportunities programme
 - Annual report on social affairs
 - Job offers
 - Well organized seminars
 - Press releases

2. Communicating information on the application of this strategy

- Internal communication tools
 - Intranet systems
 - Notice boards
 - In-house magazine
 - Mediators
- External communication tools
 - Company visits
 - Results of comparative analyses
 - Annual report on social aspects
 - Annual report

3. Improving the equal opportunities policy and motivating employees

- Internal communication tools
 - Mentoring
 - Meetings between departments
 - In-house magazine
- External communication tools
 - Recruitment advertisements
 - Advertising and sponsorship
 - Involvement of directors in outside activities by the company
 - Women in commercial positions

4. Inspiring the equal opportunities policy

- Internal communication tools
 - “Equal opportunities” working groups
 - Suggestions and complaints box
 - Results of customer satisfaction survey
 - Results of employee satisfaction survey
- External communication tools
 - Forum to exchange information
 - Publication of “best practices”
 - Awards
 - Quality circles

The Equality Manager will also play an important role in producing the annual report on social matters.

The equal opportunities programme

The equal opportunities programme should clearly state its aim, objectives, timetable and budget. Detailing these factors facilitates their subsequent evaluation. Statistical data is an essential part of the programme. Statistics relating to personnel (divided according to gender, age group, full time and part time work and job distribution), training (opportunities, participants and budget), internal promotions and vacancies should also be included. The programme should be evaluated while in progress so that changes can be made if it is not meeting its pre-defined criteria. The evaluation of the programme and its impact should be carried out at a centralized and decentralized level.

Job classification

Equal opportunities is based on consistent and identical remuneration throughout the sector and this can be reflected by **job classification**.

Job classification enables certain prejudices to be avoided and the distribution of jobs and job evaluation to be conducted in an objective, consistent and unbiased way.

Categorizing jobs guarantees:

- unbiased job titles (without reference to gender)
- that all job descriptions are an objective inventory of the experience and skills required
- the evaluation of all jobs based on the same criteria (possible criteria are the job's role, work organization, description of work and factors specific to the working environment). It is important that the evaluation scale be created objectively, i.e. by an independent body, so that neither social partners nor companies are aware of the different parts of it or the correlations between them.

When a new job classification method is being set up, it is recommended that all parties participate in the discussion (employers, unions and employees) and that this is all conducted in a calm and friendly manner.

The benefits and features of job classification ensure that women who, in the past, would not have applied for certain jobs because of their job title are now happy to apply. (*In Belgium the collective agreement on the job classification of salaried workers has been in place since 1993*).

Managing training

To facilitate the **management** and organization **of training**, information regarding the training available should be clear. Requirements linked to growth in the company and its workforce should be identified so that retraining for the sector and for employees can easily be addressed. It is important to explain clearly to employees the range of training opportunities on offer and to state how these training courses are evaluated. A greater degree of involvement means that their practical implementation and follow-up will be enhanced.

1. **Offering training opportunities effectively**

Possible methods of communication are:

- producing a manual covering training opportunities;
- establishing a notice board to communicate training being offered;
- launching an intranet system so that everyone is aware of the different courses being offered and who is participating in these courses;
- arranging an annual presentation aimed at introducing and explaining training policy.

2. **Training and retraining**

Given the substantial progress in technology and extensive computerization, salaried workers, and especially female employees, should be able to receive effective training. Often they did not acquire these skills during basic training and these initiatives enable employees to increase their range of skills. *(At Engtex great attention is paid to training and retraining female employees in technical areas. By the same token, at William Baird great importance is attached to extending managers' areas of interest to encourage job rotation).*

To approach training policy in a structured and systematic way, it is advisable to come at it from two **perspectives**, namely that of the company's requirements and that of the individual's requirements. To do this, companies can make use of **systems** like the "Performance Review System", "360° Assessment" and "Pay for Skills".

- The **Performance Review System** should clearly rely on the essential strategic skills in the company that are required to ensure a measurable success for the company. The Performance Review System is part of a total identification of skills that can be evaluated and followed up using a suitable evaluation tool. This guarantees the transparency of the system and that everyone involved knows the basis on which skills will be assessed. The Performance Review System should be supported by a training programme that offers all managers the opportunity to familiarize themselves not only with the concept but with the tools and evaluation process as well, including planning and monitoring development. One of this system's strong points is that those involved are not evaluated just by one person but by a team of managers. *(At William Baird, managers' performance is appraised every year. This enables the company to form an idea of how to fill jobs that might become vacant in future or to arrange a transfer of skills in due course).*
- **Pay for Skills.** In the company (often per department) the experience and abilities required to optimize work and customer relations are investigated. An inventory of the required experience and abilities is then drawn up. The second stage consists of seeing who in the company possesses or lacks the required experience and abilities. Within this system, every employee starts at the same level (each employee is paid a basic salary according to training undertaken and length of service). Based on the experience and abilities an employee has, he or she receives increments for acquiring new experience and abilities in order to enable the company to progress. Thus salaries increase according to training undertaken. Within this system, implementation in practice and transferring knowledge to colleagues are important factors.

To guarantee the success of training policy, companies should see that **female employees** are aware of the training on offer. In order to facilitate this process, companies should address a number of **practical details** such as:

- childcare provision during training
- adapting the training timetable
- mobility.

Career policy

Companies should also develop a career **policy** that takes into account equal opportunities. This policy covers recruitment, training and development and staff who leave the company.

1. Appointing employees

All companies should select and recruit employees irrespective of gender. Recruitment processes and channels should be arranged and operated in a way that favours women.

- Job advertisements should be written in a neutral way so that technical jobs are not only appealing to men but to women too. The attractive nature of a job can be reinforced by including a picture of female employees or profiles of female employees and by referring to opportunities for childcare and part-time work.
- The communication channels carrying the advertisement should be easily accessible to women. The employer should carefully select the media according to the job to be filled. Another aspect favouring the recruitment of women is giving them as much information as possible about the work. This can be done by giving information to schools, ensuring a presence in job centres and arranging information sessions for unemployed women. In order to guarantee recruitment irrespective of gender, it is recommended that hiring is not just the responsibility of one person. The ideal is a mixed selection team (men *and* women with different jobs). The selection team should be aware of the prejudices that exist and be able to ignore them, possibly with the help of an appropriate training course and by establishing a code of conduct. The team should establish the requirements to be met beforehand, irrespective of gender. *(At Engtex a candidate profile is established first for each job vacancy with an external consultant. Then employees in the company are informed of the position to be filled, resulting in more internal promotions than originally anticipated. This is a good system, especially for women. In addition, it enables the company to save time and money).* The candidate's application form and employee selection tests should also guarantee that men and women are judged on an equal footing.

2. Staff moves

Job rotation is gradually becoming an important part of company career policy. Horizontal moves (swapping jobs between departments) and vertical moves (moving to jobs at a different level) are important for both companies and employees. Job rotation is an ideal solution for jobs that traditionally offer little opportunity for advancement. It is enriching for the employee and provides the employer with a guarantee of keeping the employee in the company.

Men and women often have differing aspirations regarding their career. Men consider "advancement" as moving up a grade whereas women seek rather to change the nature of their responsibilities.

Staff, especially female staff, can be encouraged by communicating information targeted at career development. For example an inventory of all opportunities could be prepared or courses arranged in which employees can learn about jobs they are unfamiliar with.

Procedures for internal applications should be clear to everyone. In order to have a coherent career policy it is vital for companies to know what employees want and what plans they have. This can be done during an interview or an annual appraisal.

Women who have had an excellent career within the company can act as a role model to encourage and attract other women (for example the only woman manager, women in traditionally male occupations etc.)

Annual performance appraisals have the objective of assessing employees in their jobs and developing them. This also gives a guarantee that the direct manager and the human resources director carry out an unbiased assessment. Mentoring is an important tool for career development and progression. The role of the mentor is not just to introduce someone to a company's informal practices but also serves to make him or her aware of jobs and of exciting opportunities that are not widely known.

3. Staff departures

Companies should take certain steps to ensure employees do not leave. In the case of women, these steps focus on related areas such as childcare provision, opportunities for part-time work, training opportunities, ironing services and distance shopping. Arranging an exit interview when the employee leaves means the employer can find out the actual reasons why he or she is leaving. This evaluation can serve to have solutions to the problems raised included in personnel policy.

Human resources and career planning

Human resources policy:		Mainstreaming Equality Manager Equal opportunities programme
Job classification		
Training policy	Conditions	Ensuring employee awareness of opportunities Improving skills and retraining
	Systems	Performance Review System Pay for Skills
Career policy	Employing staff	Recruitment Selection team
	Staff moves	Job rotation Internal recruitment Appraisal procedures Mentoring
	Staff departures	Exit interview

CHAPTER 3

RECONCILING PRIVATE AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

There are more and more women on the labour market in all EU Member States : they appear everywhere as the most dynamic group in the evolution of employment ⁵. However, equal opportunities between men and women has not been achieved yet.

1. **General background**

Family responsibilities or childcare very often remain major barriers to progress on the way to equal opportunities as most of these tasks are still performed by women and are part of the main social model.

However, there have been some changes in the recent past. Nowadays women tend not to quit their job once they get married, they go back to work after having children and keep on working until they are retired, whenever possible. European women are slowly getting rid of mentalities or behaviours according to which, for historical reasons, jobs were limited in time. Even though working contracts are more and more precarious, women are coming on the labour market and try to go on working while still playing their traditional role within families.

Nevertheless, the organisation of the labour market does not take into account the specific characteristics of female work. Women are forced to integrate into existing structures, which already existed before their coming; this often leads to discrimination.

This partly explains why the participation rate of mothers in the working population widely differs from one Member State to another while the male rate remains nearly unchanged in all European Union countries. Indeed, women with children – mainly small children – find it difficult to reconcile their professional and private responsibilities. It seems that men would not have to deal with care work.

It appears from some data on how time is used, that the time which is not related to “paid work” is very unequally distributed and that women spend much more time than men performing the so-called unpaid “household” tasks in a broad meaning of the word.

As a consequence, many women find it difficult to reconcile family and professional life and therefore suffer from stress or other health problems ⁶. For instance, the percentage of women to report that reconciling private and professional life is affecting their mental or physical health is twice as high as that of men ⁷.

⁵ The total male employment volume remained nearly unchanged between 1975 and 1996 while the number of men old enough to work increased by more than 20 million. During the same period, the female employment increased from slightly more than 46 million up to 62 million workers while the number of women old enough to work raised by nearly 18 million units.

⁶ Vandelac, L., Méthot, A.L. (1993) *Concilier l'inconciliable*. Quebec Federation of male and female workers. Montreal, p. 73.

⁷ Editeurs (1992). Women twice as likely as men to report that duties at home work affect health. *Canadian Association Journal*, 146 (9) p. 1605.

It was also noticed that introducing different forms of work and time organisation have a direct influence on the reconciliation of private and professional life. For instance, irregular or unpredictable timetables as well as weekly or seasonal changes in working time require continuous conciliation efforts.

In order to compensate for these difficulties there is a more and more widespread consensus on the need to take measures making the reconciling of paid jobs and family responsibilities easier, for both women and men. Workers are more and more often asking for working conditions that enable them to reconcile (paid) jobs and (unpaid) reproduction tasks and to guarantee more flexibility in the labour systems.

2. Possible solutions to improve the reconciliation of professional and private life

Even though, as just mentioned, some forms of work and time organisation may hinder the reconciliation of private and professional life, some measures can definitely make it easier and lead to a better share of family responsibilities between men and women.

Some of these measures are :

- a) introducing **flexible timetables** to be chosen by workers (*this measure was introduced in the Rösch and Engtex companies. The company Filodoro also developed a flexible timetable but only for employees*).
- b) **reducing the weekly working time** while keeping the wage level (*the company Filodoro reduced by four hours the weekly working time of the workers who were the most hit by the changing demand and also introduced a 2 h. 30 reduction for employees*).
- c) looking for solutions to **limit season-linked changes in working time** (*the company Filodoro negotiated a new yearly working timetable with trade unions so as to put an end to the season-linked changes in the production departments where women are working*).
- d) **services to people** (*at Marzotto a day care centre as well as a nursery were opened school for workers'children, both being financed by the company. Their timetables are adapted to the company's. The company Rösch has also a day care centre for workers'children. It proposes prepared meals to take away in the cafeteria*).
- e) **services for looking after children**, (*KBB is financially helping the workers whose children are looked after*).
- f) **parental leave** is also a measure for reconciling private and professional life
- g) **job sharing** for two persons with family responsibilities who cannot work full time

- h) **part-time jobs.** The possibility to work 3/5 or 4/5 for workers, employees and managerial staff with family responsibilities makes it possible to better reconcile private and professional life. Attention should be paid to the fact that part-time workers should enjoy the same working conditions as full-time workers.

3. Results

Absenteeism decreased and the quality of the production as well as the general working atmosphere improved in all companies which adopted measures meant at reconciling private and professional life and at sharing family responsibilities between men and women.

Reconciling private and professional life

Organisation	Flexible timetables to be chosen by workers Reduced working time Reduced season-linked changes Job sharing Part-time
Accompanying measures	Services to people Services for looking after children Parental leave

CHAPTER 4

WORKING CONDITIONS IN WORK STATIONS HOLD BY WOMEN IN THE SECTOR

Are female jobs physically and psychologically easier than male jobs ?

1. General background

Women's work stations often require accuracy, speed, repetitive movements, visual attention and a static posture. More women are to be found in the work stations where dexterity and manual skills are required. Their tasks are more monotonous and repetitive than men's. The ergonomic standards taken into account when designing work stations are generally rather based on an average male worker than on women. This is mainly true for machines, tools and equipment. All this results in problems for women and for any worker whose size differs from the average. As a consequence, repetitive movements in an inappropriate ergonomic environment can lead to a very high cumulative load.

Women are also more stressed because of the production pace and the lack of short rest periods. These functions can be defined as highly "demanding" and hardly autonomous, which increases the risks of stress.

However, as women's jobs do not require major punctual physical efforts nor the use of the whole body, generally speaking, they are –usually –considered as being light.

In fact, the reality is completely different. According to recent studies⁸ focusing on the requirements of female work stations and on common health problems of female workers in the sector which can result from working conditions, it appeared that women's jobs were subject to major physical and organisational factors. It was noticed that women's working conditions rather tend to lead to the progressive weakening of the body which only has major consequences in the long run, even though everyday life is very often painful.

Musculoskeletal disorders should be mentioned among the major health problems of female workers in the clothing sector. This implies a whole series of injuries, such as back pain, related syndromes, the carpien tunnel syndrome, periarticular ailments, injuries due to repetitive movements and injuries of the upper limbs due to professional activities. It is believed that these kinds of problems are the most frequent reasons for sick leaves, anticipated retirements. Most of the time, they remain invisible to health prevention systems in the workplace.

Prevention with respect to health and safety in the workplace is often believed to be expensive compared to its benefits and it is generally admitted that such a policy can only be implemented by large companies.

⁸ Karen Messing : « Comprendre le travail des femmes pour le transformer » (1999), TUTB, Brussels.

2. Possible solutions to improve the working conditions of women in the sector

In order to fight against such a belief, which is not justified, the *good practices* of two small companies which took measures to reduce musculoskeletal disorders were especially chosen (*Mirto with less than 100 workers and Bébé Confort with 25 employees*).

The actions of these companies concern three major elements which answer problems related to health and safety at work :

- 1) better equipment and working conditions**
- 2) more prevention within the companies, and**
- 3) technical assistance of bodies specialised in health and safety in the workplace.**

1) Better equipment and working conditions

As already stressed, the equipment of work stations is not always appropriate for repetitive tasks. If these work stations are not properly equipped, high pace movements which only affect some parts of the body can lead to injuries in the longer run. (*Mirto, on the request of female workers, replaced the seats of women working with a sewing machine by ergonomic seats protecting the lumbar zone*).

Improving working conditions for all workers in the production department – either better heating in Winter or air conditioning in Summer – reduces the pain resulting from high pace. (*Mirto had air conditioning installed in the workrooms which definitely improved the working conditions as people are working in an industrial building and Madrid has a continental climate with high temperature in summertime*).

The noise can also be reduced if workers use helmets. (*In order to have helmets used by workers the Engtex company AB adapted them, so that four radio channels could be listened to*).

2) More prevention within companies

It is not enough to look for solutions when health problems arise because, once musculoskeletal disorders appear, it is difficult to cure them and it takes long. As a consequence, the productivity slightly decreases. In this way, introducing preventive strategies is a policy which can benefit both employers and workers.

(For more than 10 years Bébé Confort has been persuading employees to take care of their body in order to reduce sickness leave which is often the consequence of musculoskeletal disorders. It is why the company started meetings to talk about the working conditions and it offered massage sessions lasting for 30 minutes a month for female sewers. Thanks to these sessions, the painful muscles can be identified and women can be cured. The meeting also allow an exchange of views with the therapist on the gestures and physical movements which should be modified or on the changes to be made to improve working conditions.

The company Engtex AB followed up the health of workers, mainly hearing, with a questionnaire).

3) Technical assistance of bodies specialised in health and safety in the workplace

Developing a prevention policy in a company often requires some expertise on the work stations and the corresponding equipment. This expertise is difficult without the help of specialists in ergonomics or health at work, even though it often means small improvements which do not lead to major changes in work organisation. These improvements are not very expensive but they contribute to improving health in the workplace.

There are bodies specialised in health and safety at work in all European Union countries. They can advise or give some technical help to companies with respect to risk prevention and improvement of working conditions (*Bébé Confort asked ASP Habillement for advice so as to improve the plant, as the company considers that prevention should not only be applied in large companies*).

As a result of these three actions, both companies noticed that the musculoskeletal disorders of female workers and consequently, the production, improved. The general atmosphere was much better in the company and female workers were more motivated.

3. Other problems relating to health and safety at work

Sexual harassment is another kind of problem which disturbs the working conditions of female workers. It is either due to hierarchical personnel (called *blackmail harassment* when the employment is linked to agreeing with sexual favours) or imposed by a colleague (called *environmental harassment*, which is bad for the working atmosphere). Most of the time, sexual harassment is confusing and not really obvious. However, those behaviours are a kind of “culture” in the professional environment which are widespread in companies and which lead to stress and conflicts for female workers. It is also against the dignity of women at work.

The second kind of harassment mentioned (jokes, saucy stories, comments on women’s bodies, embarrassing looks, etc.) is usually considered as being less important. However, it is a “code of conduct” full of ambiguity as the hierarchy is sometimes not aware of it and is accepted as being part of the “company culture” by the whole male population. However, that kind of sexual harassment is affecting the mental health of female workers as well as their psychological well being.

In fact, both behaviours can have important consequences such as nervous breakdown or exhaustion. On the other hand, they are barriers to the smooth running of the company; dysfunctions follow at the level of the rational management of human resources which prevents a good working atmosphere.

4. Necessary measures against sexual harassment

Companies should introduce measures against sexual harassment in the workplace in order to first improve the management of human resources and the working atmosphere and then to guarantee working relations which respect the dignity of workers.

These measures should focus on :

- 1) hiring a reliable adviser to help people who are embarrassed with that kind of behaviour (*as done by the company Volvo in its truck unit*) and
- 2) prohibiting sexual harassment in the internal rule of the company and inform all workers on the fact that the company does not accept behaviours harming women's dignity at work (*the company Volvo informed all workers of the prohibition of that kind of behaviour and it also informs people, when they are employed, about the company's policy with respect to such behaviours*).

These strategies against sexual harassment make it possible to improve the working atmosphere and conditions of women which has positive consequences on the development of the company as a whole.

Working conditions in working stations hold by women in the sector

Problems of health and safety at work	Better equipment and working conditions Better prevention Technical help : ergonomic study of work stations
Fighting against sexual harassment	Reliable adviser Prohibition of sexual harassment in the internal rules of the company Circulation of the internal rules

CHAPTER 5

FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN MALE JOBS

1. **General background**

The textile and clothing sector is considered as being a female sector because of the large number of women working there. Women are usually employed for their dexterity and manual accuracy while men rather deal with handling and machine servicing (because of their more technical education) as well as cutting and weaving. As a consequence, the sector has been characterised until now by a clear sexual cut with respect to the tasks to be performed.

However, this situation was inherited from the past and the sexual division of labour is no more justified nowadays. Indeed, today, more women have a technical education or would like to acquire the knowledge but they are excluded from servicing jobs. Some other functions are still kept for men even though they do not have the objective characteristics anymore which made them unavailable for women.

Today, because of these changes, it would be possible to employ women in more work stations which would give them more opportunities on the labour market.

On the other hand, new choices in the management of human resources stress all the advantages of mixed teams as it allows more flexibility and the workforce is better adapted to the needs of production. It also appears that mixed teams contribute to a better working atmosphere compared to teams consisting of only women or men. Another important element is that women are usually more sensitive to questions concerning the quality of the product and their presence is therefore very positive when quality has to be improved.

2. **Possible solutions to hire women in male jobs**

To be successful, a policy in favour of hiring women in male jobs should be accompanied by a series of measures:

- a) **Raising awareness and informing male workers in the company** so that women are accepted in new functions (*The company Volvo developed a discussion process and set up a working group before hiring women and it informed all workers on the employment policy of the company*).
- b) **Special attention should be paid to the recruitment process** to get motivated candidates (*The company Volvo used employment services and personalised the letters sent to women so as to receive applications from them. It also organised information sessions for interested people*).
- c) **Prior training of selected women** to guarantee good results when women hold male jobs (*The company Volvo trained on the work station so as to facilitate the integration and the familiarity with the new tasks*).

- d) **Accompanying measures** to facilitate the integration of women in male teams (*A tutor was helping women at Volvo. He was in favour of hiring women and he had taken part in the prior working group*).
- e) **Setting up meetings with several women** so as to prevent them from being isolated (*The company Volvo decided to have teams with at least two women and to have them led by team leaders who had taken part in the working group*).
- f) **Adapting the infrastructure** with respect to changing rooms and toilets for women (*At Volvo, changing rooms and toilets were built for women and comfortable uniforms were chosen for them*).
- g) **An equality policy between men and women** (*The company Volvo gave the same employment, promotion and training opportunities*).
- h) **Applying an official policy against sexual harassment** in the whole company (*Volvo appointed a reliable adviser and added the prohibition of that kind of behaviour in the internal rules of the company which are handed over to new employees*).

Female employees in male jobs

Policy of equal opportunities in the company	When hiring When training When promoting
Before hiring	Awareness raising and information Special actions to attract women Information sessions
After having hired	Training Monitoring Non isolated integration Adapting the infrastructure
Policy against sexual harassment	Reliable adviser Adding the prohibition to the internal rules

SECOND PART
CASE STUDIES

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 1

Name of the company : **FILODORO CALZE Spa**
Address : Via Brescia, 6 – 46040 Casalmoro (MN)
Country : ITALY
Category of company and financial group to which it belongs : SARA LEE Co.
Contact : Ms. M. Grazia Bonfante

Production

Category of products : stockings and tights
Turnover : ITL 270 billion (EUR 139,443,362)
Percentage of exports : 30%

Workforce structure: (on June 30, 1999), Casalmoro Plant

Workers in the production : 207 men and 367 women (64% female)
Employees : 70 men and 90 women (56% female)
Total personnel : 734 (62% female)

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY

Filodoro, which was created in 1983, was a family company with Italian capital. It produced stockings and tights. Ten years later it was sold to the American group, SARA LEE Corporation.

Nowadays the Group has three factories in Italy manufacturing stockings, tights and clothes.

1.1. Casalmoro plant

The plant we visited is located in Casalmoro (Mantua). It produces nearly 70% of the stockings and tights made in Italy.

The factory is located in a new industrialised area where trade unions were only introduced very recently. This area is characterised by a very strong country culture and tradition. Since the mid-1980's, many jobs were created in that region because of the industrialisation and it is now one of the Italian regions where the unemployment rate is the lowest.

1.2 Labour structure

The group is employing about 1,000 people, including 70% women. The Casalmoro plant is employing 734 people (including 62% women) who are 30 years old on average.

Men rather deal with spinning and weaving activities (90%) whereas women are working in the sewing and clothing areas, in more or less the same proportion (89%). Nevertheless, the two departments with a high percentage of men only account for 32% of the total male labour, as men hold functions in all departments. However, women mainly work in the typically female departments of sewing and clothing (65% of them). The only department which can be considered as mixed is the dyeing department employing 28 men and 32 women.

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1. Origin and justification

The demand for stockings and tights strongly varies according to the season. There are two periods : the so-called red period which is characterised by a high demand (July-December) and the so-called blue period with a low demand (January-June). Because of that important element, flexibility agreements had to be negotiated with trade unions in 1994.

The seasonal element mainly hits the sewing, clothing and dyeing departments – the first two at least having a high percentage of female labour. These departments depend on the changing demand of the market and their production need to increase sharply between July and December. In the remaining months, the demand is much lower. On the contrary, spinning and weaving, which are based on stocks, are less subject to the changing demand.

Filodoro which wanted to satisfy the demand as soon as possible forced these departments to work up to 45 hours a week during the “red” period. That working rhythm resulted in a lot of stress and tiredness which has negative effects on the quality of the product. Longer hours also made it difficult to balance productive work and family responsibilities.

In 1996 when Filodoro proposed to comply with the ISO quality standards, the company tried to elaborate a new timetable for the departments which were most subject to changing demand so as to improve the quality of the product, to reduce stress and tiredness and better balance personnel life and productive work.

2.2. Content and goals

Keeping in mind the reduction of stress and tiredness and a good balance between private and professional life for workers, Filodoro made a proposal to trade unions to modify and reduce the timetable of the departments most subject to seasonal variation (sewing, clothing and shop of finished products) : 6 hours a day, 6 days a week and

two shifts (6x6x2) instead of 8 hours a day, 5 days a week and two shifts (8x5x2). That meant working on Saturdays and reducing the working day by two hours for the same salary.

According to the proposal, the timetable would remain unchanged for the whole year and during the “red” period, the company would employ about 100 temporary people who would work in a third shift. The permanent workforce would work in two shifts from 6 a.m. to 12 a.m. and from 12 a.m. to 6 p.m., 6 days a week (Sunday off) and the temporary workforce would work from 6 p.m. to 12 p.m., five days a week (Saturday and Sunday off).

The trade unions immediately accepted the proposal. From a trade union point of view, it did not cause any problem as :

- a) Salaries were kept with a reduced working time
- b) 100 temporary jobs were created for 6 months

2.3. Methods of application

The trade unions agreed to submit the company’s proposal to the workers to obtain their agreement.

However, when they proposed the new timetable to the workers of Filodoro, it was refused. On the workers’ side (men), it meant losing overtime during the “red” season, i.e. reducing salaries for six months. Female workers did not accept to work on Saturdays as it seemed incompatible with their family responsibilities.

The trade unions tried to persuade workers of the advantages of the proposal and they suggested that the new timetable should be applied for a while. At the end of the testing period, there would be a survey to assess the situation and know workers’ opinion.

Following the positive results of the survey the new timetable was definitely adopted.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions and company)

3.1. For workers

The women we interviewed definitely admitted that nobody would like to work again according to the old timetable. They said that they were less tired and had more pleasure working.

They also added that they had more time for their family, they admitted that working on Saturdays morning did not result in a reorganisation of the work at home because they had more time in the week.

3.2. For trade unions

Thanks to the positive results of the measure, trade unions were more credible to workers, mainly if we keep in mind that trade unions were only introduced very

recently in the region. Trade union representatives also stressed that the relationship with the company management improved. At the regional level, they tried to spread the 6x6 timetable. It seems, however, that working on Saturdays is not generally welcomed by workers.

It should be mentioned that since Filodoro introduced that timetable, trade unions in the Italian textile tried to have it introduced in the sector.

3.3. For the company

The increased salary costs are compensated by the decreased overtime in the “red” period and by the fact that some machines are working 24 hours a day and some others 18 hours a day.

The management also said that the quality of the product as well as the working atmosphere improved. The absenteeism decreased by one point which proves that the new timetable is advantageous.

Based on that experience, the company introduced a 30-minute-reduction a day for employees but the measure has not been assessed yet.

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 2

Name of the company : **MARZOTTO S.p.A.**
 Address : Largo Santa Margherita, 1 – VALDAGNO (VI)
 Country : ITALY
 Category of company and financial group to which it belongs : family company
 Contact : ***D. Domenico Genito***

Production

Category of products : textiles and clothing
 Turnover : ITL 1,200 billion (EUR 619,748,278)
 Percentage of exports : 40%

Workforce structure: (on September 30, 1999)

	Full-time workers in the production department	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	75	26
Unlimited contracts	1823	1388

	Part-time workers in the production department	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	0	0
Unlimited contracts	12	322

	Fullt-time employees	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	6	11
Unlimited contracts	670	460

	Part-time employees	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	0	2
Unlimited contracts	10	48

TOTAL PERSONNEL	4.853
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1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY

Marzotto is a textile company with Italian capital and a family structure. It has been located in Valdagno for five generations and still is. The town developed together with the company. The latter influenced the development of the town, which can still be observed nowadays. Both houses for workers and managers which were built in the last century are still to be found. The whole Marzotto family also used to live in Valdagno whereas only one of them does nowadays.

Today, Marzotto is a large Italian textile company which started relocating its production towards Eastern Europe because of cheaper labour.

Marzotto clothes are meant for both men and women but men's clothes play the most important role. As far as quality is concerned, man clothing is at the top end of the market, except for sportswear.

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1. Origin and justification

As already mentioned, Valdagno developed together with Marzotto. In the 1920's, day nurseries for young children did not exist in Italy. Marzotto opened a day care centre as well as a nursery school for female workers' children so as to be able to employ women. Today, both the school and the day nursery are open to workers' children (men and women) as well as to children from Valdagno.

2.2. Content and goals

Marzotto is offering a service, first, to its workers but free places are then available to the town of Valdagno. To that respect, the facilities are also a service for the town.

2.3. Methods of application

The day nursery has 75 children, 54 of which are the children of Marzotto's workers. The timetable of the nursery depends on the working time in the company. It is open from 7.30-7.45 a.m. until 6.30 p.m.

The monthly costs amount to ITL 740,000 per child. It is free for workers' children as the costs are paid by Marzotto. For other children, the company reached an agreement with the Valdagno town council : families pay a minimum of ITL 350,000 a month, according to their revenue, and the outstanding amount is paid by the town council.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions and company)

3.1. For workers

They have a free day nursery or a nursery school which are open at the same time as the company.

3.2. For the company

It gives workers with small children an extra advantage. It better balances productive work and family responsibilities while increasing workers' satisfaction.

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 3

Name of the company : **CREACIONES MIRTO S.A.**
 Address : c/. Emilio Muñoz, 57 – 28037 MADRID
 Country : SPAIN
 Category of company and financial group to which it belongs : private capital company
 Contact : ***M. José Carlos Montero Gutierrez***

Production :

Category of products : shirts, pyjamas and ties
 Turnover : EPE 1,800 million (EUR 10,818,217)
 Percentage of exports : 10%

Workforce structure: (on July 30, 1999)

	Full-time workers in the production department	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	0	
Unlimited contracts	8	38

	Part-time workers in the production departement	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	0	0
Unlimited contracts	0	0

	Full-time employees	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	0	0
Unlimited contracts	35	14

	Part-time employees	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	0	0
Unlimited contracts	0	0

TOTAL PERSONNEL	95
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1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY

Mirto is located in an industrial area in Madrid where there are many factories and service companies. The area is located near a rather popular zone. Most workers live in the surroundings.

As far as the workforce is concerned, Mirto is a small company as it does not even employ 100 people. The turnover, however, is rather high. It is an important company in the textile sector with a solid brand in man clothes, between the middle and top end of the market. The company sharply reduced its workforce a few years ago. A major part of its production is now sub-contracted. The personnel has unlimited contracts and most of them have been working in the company for more than twenty years. Most women who were interviewed said that Mirto was their first job.

In the department which we visited, new designs are drawn, sale samples are produced for the marketing department and to meet the orders of up-market products. The remaining production is sub-contracted to smaller clothing companies. The quality requirements are therefore extremely high in the visited department.

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1. Origin and justification

In the textile sector, sewing activities are often considered as a relatively “light” job as women are sitting in front of sewing machines or robots; the parts to be lifted up are rather light. On the contrary, the image of heavy work is linked to a job where heavy weights need to be moved and the whole body is used. As a consequence, when women complain about muskulo-skeletal disorders it is difficult for them to be listened to and to be seriously taken into consideration. However, a few researchers showed how important muskulo-skeletal disorders were for women working in the textile sector.

At Mirto, the women holding sewing functions have been working in the company for at least twenty years. They complained more and more about pain in the shoulders and in the back. This led to sick leaves and absences which were hindering the production rhythm. Women complained several times about the seats but they also blamed their work for pain in the back.

On the other hand, both men and women in the sewing section complained about the working conditions in Summer as the rooms where they were working were on the top floor of an industrial building.

2.2. Content and goals

MIRTO examined how to change the seats and it had ergonomic seats installed for each sitting work station in the sewing workroom.

The company also had the air conditioning installed in the workrooms.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions and company)

3.1. For workers

Women are happy with the new seats and think that their working conditions definitely improved.

All workers are pleased with the better working conditions in summertime thanks to the air-conditioning in the workrooms.

3.2. For the company

The company observed a decreased number of complaints due to a painful back which can result in less absenteeism but they mainly think that the working atmosphere is much better in summertime.

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 4

Name : **TEXTILE JOB CLASSIFICATION**
by the Textile social partners – 1993
Address : Textile Training Centre “COBOT” (technical support)
Poortakkerstraat 92 - B-9051 Sint-Denijs-Westrem
Country : BELGIUM
Contact : *Mr Michel Annaert*

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Prior to 1970, employers and workers were organized at regional level. Gradually, various federations merged, so that today the employers are grouped together in Febeltex (Fédération de l'Industrie textile). The workers, for their part, are represented by three associations: the ACV (Catholic branch), the ABVV (socialist branch), and the ACLVB (liberal branch).

The diversity and fragmentation of the agencies involved had thus made the classification of jobs and wage scales very regional in nature. The last revision was in 1970. The introduction of new technologies and of positions already well established had made the existing classification obsolete and full of gaps. To make the classification system more transparent, employers and workers decided to update and harmonize the job classification in the 1989-1990 collective agreement.

A joint working group comprising representatives of employers' and trade union organizations, plus Cobot, the sectoral training centre, was assigned the task of drawing up a phased plan in this regard.

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1. Origin and justification

The unique element of this Belgian job classification is that the employers' organization Febeltex, the trade union organizations ACV, ABVV and ACLVB, and Cobot were represented in the technical working group which directed the entire process. In March 1993, the new job classification featuring "a single national scale/bracket structure" was ready.

The methodological approach was broken down into two major phases: the technical phase and the negotiation phase. Wages had never been an issue in the three first stages of the technical phase.

In the last phase (negotiation) the working group undertook to classify wages. Only the social partners took part in negotiating these aspects.

In addition to the social partners, the 90 companies also provided their direct contribution.

The joint working group was made up of two core groups, a permanent one for evaluating jobs and a second one whose composition changed depending on the subjects under discussion.

2.2. Content and goals

1) *Job inventory*

An exhaustive list of all worker jobs in the textile sector was drawn up. The formulation of this list gave rise to lengthy consultations with the rank and file (militants and trade union delegations). An effort was made to list all existing jobs.

The purpose of this inventory was to harmonize the content of each job listed. The jobs unique to a single company were not included, since these niches were of little importance to the sector as a whole. At this stage, selecting the exact name of jobs was a problem since it was often largely dependent on the region or the origins of the company.

The inventory includes 379 jobs, subdivided into seven sub-sectors (spinning, weaving, tufting, hosiery, nonwoven materials, dying/finishing, and maintenance and general services).

2) *Descriptions of jobs*

These descriptions include all the elements needed to be able to evaluate a job in a neutral and objective manner.

Each job is described in great detail under the following four headings:

- the goal of the job;
- the organization of work;
- a description of the work;
- specific environmental factors.

Each description was subject to joint approval.

At this point there were two stumbling blocks: firstly, it was not so easy to find the greatest common denominator for each job's tasks and responsibilities; and secondly, all the descriptions had to remain neutral in terms of workers' gender.

The working group chose to go with modern and neutral names without using foreign terms. The jobs were described using an infinitive, a noun or a neutral word to eliminate any male or female shading and avoid historical biases.

3) *Evaluation of the jobs*

Working out the method for evaluating jobs was the most arduous phase. Each criterion is described and allows a choice between a certain number of answers, each

of which corresponds to a certain value. A weighting system (with a scale of points from 0 to 100) enables each criterion to be given a score.

The validity and representative nature of this method have been exhaustively tested.

Cobot was tasked with monitoring this method, using the points scale. Neither the social partners nor the companies know the details of how points are awarded or the correlations among these points. This guarantees a uniform application in which it is the person holding the job, not the individual per se, who is the subject of an evaluation.

This evaluation method was developed by the sector itself and is unique to the textile industry. The advantage of this is that this method fully takes into account the sector's special features.

This was the most critical phase of the study, since each evaluation has an impact on the wage.

4) *Negotiation phase - classification of wages*

After the jobs had been evaluated and classified in the scale of values, a wage needed to be assigned to each one. This aspect was negotiated by the social partners.

Each wage group received a point chart, with which a wage scale was associated.

In the end, four tables of wage scales were chosen:

- textiles
- hosiery
- maintenance and general services
- management positions

These wages are subject to national indexing.

In the revised version of the classification, jobs were aligned with each other. For historical reasons, the job of weaver had been better paid than the functions performed by a spinner. Formerly, the weaver had been a professional who had to be up to date on all the latest developments. Over the course of time, the sector became automated. In the reevaluation, it was found that these jobs were not as far removed from each other as practice suggested. Since the functions of a weaver were often those performed by men whereas those of a spinner were often those performed by women, and since there was a large difference in wage levels, this suggested a lack of equality. The new system of job evaluation establishes equal opportunity not just for women, but for all workers, in a system of "pay for skills".

5) *Implementation*

A staged plan was worked out to put the method into practice. Each company had to submit to the trade union delegation a plan in which it associated the existing jobs with the classification system based on the job description. The jobs were therefore evaluated based on the tasks they included, rather than on a name. The trade union

delegation then had to study the company's plan and state its criticisms, and an effort was made to arrive at a shared agreement. The new system took effect on 1 January 1994.

The wage scales were introduced. Minimum wages correspond to this job classification because the social partners do not want to intervene in companies' wage policy. In addition, the mechanisms of supply and demand always have to be taken into account.

Companies with wages below this minimum wage were unable to lower the wages they paid. Some wages had to be raised, which had financial consequences.

The additional cost per year and per company was not allowed to exceed 0.25% of the total wage bill paid to the workers. The intention was to provide a maximum level of guarantees to avoid financial disasters.

For some companies, implementing this classification entailed added expenses. The companies which refused to formulate a staged plan and apply it on 1 January 1994 were forced to simply apply the job classification system as from that date.

Disputes regarding the implementation of the classification are settled by the joint technical committee using the Cobot procedure. This committee examines the problem by going to the company to study the job and discuss the position with the parties involved. It endeavours to arrive at a consensus with each company.

The implementation has gone almost without a hitch, since the evaluation procedure was worked out with the participation of most of the sector's companies. For some jobs, the companies were active in the joint working group. This involvement enabled them to be fully informed and to understand how the method works, which dispelled any reluctance on their part.

As to familiarizing the workers with the method, it is important that it be provided at their level. The description and criteria will be more readily accepted, and thus put into practice, if the workers can understand them clearly.

Certain functions could not be associated with any other job evaluated. For these specific cases, a technical committee was set up to evaluate these jobs which were ultimately not standardized, using the same method.

2.3. Methods of application

1) Suitable evaluation method

The sector decided to establish a method of its own, which makes it easier to apply it and gain its acceptance.

2) *The project's carefully considered approach*

a) Joint work at every stage of the project

The joint structure is also important to the method's success. From the first meeting to the last, all the parties stood by the agreements.

Another important factor is the participation of the greatest possible number of people in the various phases of the project. After the survey and discussions with the rank and file, the parties involved were informed of the phases of the study and their responsibility in this regard.

Everyone cooperated in working out the method, which promoted its implementation and acceptance.

b) Progress by stages

A method's success depends on working stage by stage, and being able to reach a consensus after each stage. Each agreement was ratified, and decisions were not retracted later.

c) Total completion of the technical phase before the negotiation phase

A distinction needs to be made between the technical phase (refinement of the method) and the negotiation phase. In addition, it is important that the parties taking part in the technical phases do not contribute to the negotiation phase. This avoids certain people wearing two hats.

3) *Ideal climate of dialogue*

a) A calm labour environment without timetable constraints

A proper labour environment is indispensable. The job classification method cannot be worked out under optimal conditions during a period of crisis or when the sector is undergoing downsizing or company closures.

b) A willingness to cooperate constructively

Whatever the backgrounds of the various parties, the shared objective has to be the priority at all times.

3. **RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES** (workers, trade unions and company)

The Belgian classification of jobs according to collective agreement is unique in that the employers' organization Febeltex, the trade union organizations ACV, ABVV and ACLVB, and the sectoral training centre Cobot were represented at each stage of the process.

The method was tailor-made by and for this sector.

All sides were intensively involved in the technical phases, whereas only the social partners took part in the classification of wages. These wages are organized in scales, which means that each company has to comply with these minimum wage criteria while having a certain amount of leeway for its own wage policy.

The system of job classification guarantees equality of men and women.

Thanks to this evaluation method, the wage is determined by the job held, not by the person holding it.

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 5

Name of the company : **ENGTEX AB**
Address : S - 56522 Mullsjö
Country : SWEDEN
Contact : *Torbjorn Eng*

Production

Category of products : Textiles for industrial use
Turnover : 14,000,000 euros
120,000,000 krona
Shareholders : 60% Eng family
40% Protan AVS
Exports : < 80%

Workforce structure :

	Male	Female	Total
Employees	7	6	13
Workers	35	15	50
Total	42	21	63

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY

Engtex is a family company founded in 1939. It currently employs 63 people - 42 men (66%) and 21 women (33%), all on indefinite contracts. Six women (one staff member and five workers) hold a part-time job, compared to only one male worker. The part-time contracts vary greatly in length (25, 50, 67, 75, 85, 95%), and are always tailored to the worker's needs. The company makes high-technology, high-quality textiles such as textiles for covering parabolic antennas, textiles integrated into asphalt to compensate for weather conditions (shrinkage and cracking), and so on. This customized production, which is developing rapidly, justifies the employment of flexible and multi-skilled workers, which makes it easy to extensively rotate jobs. In this manner, the workers have the chance to work with the customers and company management to promote product innovation.

Engtex has been awarded two ISO certificates: ISO 9001 (quality management) and ISO 14001 (environmental assessment).

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1. Origin and justification

The "Equality of Opportunity at Work Act" has been in force in Sweden since 1993. Under the Act, every enterprise has to guarantee equal opportunity, and companies meet this obligation. They have to answer for any violation of this statutory rule to the mediator responsible for equal opportunity.

Engtex has made this law part of its company policy.

- All workers have to be able to participate in the company's activities and make improvements, notably through training and work experience.
- An equal opportunity plan has to be drawn up and complied with.
- Men and women have to enjoy working conditions which are identical and meet their needs.
- The workers have to have the opportunity to easily reconcile work and parental status.

At Engtex, the first initiatives are focused on four points:

- flexibility of working hours
- suitable equipment
- job rotation
- the personal development plan

Flexible working hours are designed to help parents juggle work with their other duties. Enabling them to individually tailor their working hours to be able to combine their children's schooling with their professional life is part of the corporate philosophy. The company also pays attention to "non-essentials" which make work easier. Staff can move from one job to another, and each worker is entitled to a personal development plan.

2.2. Content and goals

Measures regarding equal opportunity involve four areas:

1) *The "equal opportunity plan"*

The 1999-2000 equal opportunity plan pays particular attention to the fact that:

- Men are overly represented in the current distribution between men and women. The company intends to correct this imbalance.
- Rotating jobs is a top priority at Engtex, which wants to have multi-skilled workers and asks each one to understand and appreciate the work of his or her colleagues. The company also stimulates its workers' interest in learning and studies questions related to rotation of jobs.
- Work schedules can be tailored to personal needs. Young parents thus have enough time for their children's schooling. Married employees can work different schedules. Not only can they adopt one of the pre-set flexible schedules, they can also take advantage of customized measures discussed first with the management,

then with the other workers who take over some of the duties so that production can continue.

- Each year, all workers have a meeting with the director regarding their personal development. During the course of this two-hour interview, a development plan is formulated with the worker, who can ask questions and spell out personal factors.
- Equal pay for equal work. In other words, the wage is determined by the job.
- The new action plan has to take into account the results of the meetings on personal development.

2) *The Personal development assessment*

Workers can speak with the director to let him know how their work is less than fully satisfying. This makes it possible to assess possibilities for personal development, and enables each worker to make his or her work more fulfilling by taking personal action.

Most of the workers take advantage of this opportunity offered. But for Engtex, it is important not only to give people the chance to develop themselves, but also to treat in the same manner those who are satisfied with their work and do not wish to take additional training.

The performance evaluation takes place during the annual meeting on personal development held with the managing director. During the first part of the interview, the director asks questions on four subject areas:

1. the immediate environment
2. skills and training
3. the job
4. duties performed

The meeting centres on questions regarding changing of schedules or working conditions, or about the nature of the work. In the second hour, the worker can express his or her wishes and ask questions. This meeting results in a specific training programme which is implemented promptly.

3) *Training*

Each year, a training course is organized consisting of a mandatory segment and a personalized segment. The mandatory training consists in particular of courses in ergonomics (fire prevention measures, first aid, evacuation, and so forth), work experience in computer programs, courses in driving a tow-truck or forklift, and so forth. The second part is the individual training. Depending on the duties performed and the personal needs of each worker, the possibilities are unlimited: courses in environmental protection, quality control and supervision, management courses, specialization in weaving techniques, and on and on.

The table below gives an overview of training courses for 1997 and 1998. These courses were taken by more men than women. The training policy is not guided by the company, but instead is determined solely by personal needs and ambition. In other words, each worker can draw up an annual training plan based on his or her specific professional needs in cooperation with the managing director, and thus take part in

planning his or her career. It is even possible to take courses not directly related to the company.

	1997	1998
Male	62%	65%
Female	38%	35%

The annual budget devoted to training represents 1% to 2% of the annual turnover.

4) *Internal communication*

Engtex has a certain number of internal channels for communicating and clarifying its policy.

First of all, the on-line information column by which all workers can access information related to the company. It covers both practical subjects and detailed operating instructions. For new workers, it is an ideal means to rapidly familiarize themselves with the company and with their jobs, since all the positions are described in detail. For other workers, it is a means to keep up to date on developments. For example, the information column deals with the schedule (so that everyone can see upcoming visitors and when they will be there, and what the production status is for the next few works), and with the company's policy and activities (here is where documents on the company and its policy are found, as well as on total quality management, the environment and in-house improvements). The issue of new laws and matters related to breakdowns and waste are also covered (each worker can thus clearly see the consequences of certain laws in his or her work environment and what he or she has to do when a certain effect occurs). Besides this information focused on the company and production, there is more "non-business" information such as ads for buying and selling items. There are also training opportunities, information on the company's bonus on profits, leave days of the entire workforce, and a detailed list of staff members and their schedules.

The use of this information column is part of the mandatory training on computer programs: indeed, each worker has to be able to use this shared column. This computer must be consulted by each worker, who has access to the documents of personal relevance by means of his or her personal code.

Previously, this information was posted at various places around the production site. The documents all had to be replaced whenever there was a change. This resulted in a waste of paper, not to mention the risk of workers not becoming aware of documents not updated. Today, the system is computerized, allowing the time spent on this work to be cut in half. Computers with a printer are located at various places around the production site. Anyone can log on to them and have access to any documents which may be of interest.

Secondly, the dialogue meetings held every four months in the presence of all the staff, and during which any questions may be asked. This is also when the company

makes a forecast about production and investment in the coming months. These meetings are also an occasion for announcing bad news.

Thirdly, the "open door policy". A meeting with the managing director is possible at any time. He also visits the shop floor often and is open to suggestions. This is how, for example, all sorts of company activities are organized at the initiative of the workers, ranging from a "mini-trip" for a weekend of fishing to a Christmas dinner, from sports tournaments to sharing pastries brought by each person. Invitations are sent out to everyone via the bulletin boards.

This company's culture is very considerate and family-oriented. A specific example is the health supervision plan which every company is required by law to draw up. Working with a public agency, Engtex drew up a detailed health questionnaire. Each worker answers the questions using a five-point scale. In any textile company, noise is a problem, which is why workers' hearing is constantly checked and supervised. Workers are required to wear a hard hat. Previously, they often chose not to do so because it was bothersome. Engtex has therefore provided hard hats that pick up four radio stations.

In addition the health supervision plan, the company has provided separate showers and changing rooms for men and women. In addition, particular attention is paid to tools which can make work easier, such as a semi-automatic robot, a camera which eliminates stress and requires fewer workers. Production has to be constantly monitored to avoid technical mistakes. This used to mean visual monitoring, which was a very stressful job. Today, cameras are placed on the machines, which makes the work easier and lowers the stress. As in most textile companies, advanced automation shifts the focus towards monitoring.

2.3. Constant improvement

The equal opportunity policy and the environmental policy are not left in the hands of one single person. Each measure is approved by the board of directors. An "improvement cell" has been created. By consulting with local staff, this cell is constantly detecting possible opportunities for improvement. After an experimental stage, these improvements are put into practice as quickly as possible.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions and company)

Engtex is a considerate, family-oriented company. Its workers identify with the firm, absenteeism is low, and it is easy to combine one's private and professional lives. Most of the staff consists of four families. Vacant jobs are announced first in the company and among family.

The management of Engtex, a father and his two sons, believe this personnel policy focused on the individual is in their interest. The company preserves its capital stock of know-how, which is easily transmitted. Good training of employees enables Engtex to react to market changes and quickly change its production system. The equal opportunity policy is therefore just one aspect of the company's overall philosophy,

which places importance on the needs of all those involved: not just investors, but also customers, employees and nearby residents.

- Swedish legislation
- Almost zero absenteeism, highly motivated workforce
- Flexibility possible for reconciling private and professional life

- no rotation of staff
- long-term jobs
- family-oriented culture
- many flexible work schedules
- considerable wealth of skills and knowledge in the company
- multi-skilled workforce
- possibility to quickly change production

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 6

Name of company : **WILLIAM BAIRD PLC**
Address : Cavendish Square 2
London - WIM OBF
Country : UK
Contact : Mark Johnson, Director of Human Resources

Production

Category of product : Clothing
Turnover : £ 600 million
Shareholders : 20.18% institutions
77.34% individuals

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

William Baird PLC is centred on three products: its own marques; production for Marks & Spencer; and central administration.

The holding company has a centralized administration. The various companies owned by the William Baird group have the same management structure with seven hierarchical levels:

William Baird employs 15,000 workers in various countries. The bulk of production and sales is situated in the United Kingdom.

Number of employees by contract

	Total	Male	Female
Employees	15,000	60%	40%

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1. Origin and justification

Since the new managing director came on board, equal opportunity policy has been an integral part of the corporate philosophy. Women are actively promoted into management positions. Three years after joining the company, Mr Suddens (managing director) asked for a study of employee satisfaction. A certain number of problems were identified in terms of organization and communication. For example, vacant jobs were not first announced in-house, so that top-rate workers were unable to move to another in-house job and were leaving the company. Internal communication was another negative point: in the past, written communication was given priority over direct communication.

Potentially interested workers do not necessarily apply for a job in the textile sector. The policy aimed at hiring top-rate workers is a conscious approach and is the motivation for promoting equal opportunity.

As part of the policy of equal opportunity, William Baird promotes women into management positions and gives them the opportunity to refine their personal skills and management abilities. In this way, William Baird intends to institute a more worthwhile corporate culture.

The human resources policy is related to total quality management. The managing director's motto can be summed up in four key words: People, Product, Permanently Progress.

2.2. Content, goals and methods of application

The human resources policy is managed at a central level. The corporate philosophy in this area is formulated at central level by the management of the central headquarters and various divisions. This attitude is centred around three pivotal points:

- the company's guidelines and values, such as the equal opportunity policy and ethical standards;
- professional development and implementation of the human resources policy; and
- the introduction and coordination of group programmes, whether these be "Insead" and "YEDP" training programs, mentoring planning, the system for planning the filling of vacated positions, the system for evaluating performance management, and the annual conference.

At the decentralized level, each company interprets the human resources policy and the training policy according to its own needs. The annual study of employee satisfaction also enables the development of the human resources policy to be measured.

The "Insead programme" is a management development programme focused on management and the next two levels below it. This training is centred around the qualities of exercising command and conveying marketing and management knowledge. All managers are required to take this course. The budget is £100,000 per person.

The "Young Employees Development Program" is aimed at employees below the age of 30 who want to pursue a career at William Baird and who show high potential. There is no training criterion. Fifteen employees who have accomplished something outstanding are given the opportunity to take this course. The participants are chosen during the performance evaluation. This is important for the women, since they are evaluated on the basis of their work. There is no positive discrimination by gender or race. The final result at the participants' level is reassuring, since this programme is taken by as many men as women (50-50). The programme lasts six months and is focused on the following central themes:

- interpersonal qualities,
- marketing,

- project management,
- finance for persons without economic training,
- presentation, and
- feedback

The goal of this program is to fill in employees' gaps and familiarize them with a mixture of jobs, disciplines and viewpoints. An in-house rotation of jobs is created as part of this.

Mentoring planning is aimed at management (levels 5, 6 and 7). At these levels, each employee has a mentor. This older person provides personal support to the younger employee and works in a different functional division. This encourages rotation of jobs and knowledge of other divisions.

The system for evaluating performance management is aimed at all management levels. The standard document consists of three blocks:

- performance <-> goals
- management communication <-> management behaviour, and
- self-assessment.

The methodology consists of a meeting of the employee involved, his or her direct superior, this superior's supervisor, and the director of human resources, combined with role-playing. This system devotes attention not only to measurable factors, but also to more "feminine" ones such as emotional intelligence. For the employees, this system is fully transparent since they know exactly the 19 factors which make it up. Of the 19 factors available, six are discussed according to the specific requirements of the job. For example, with a sales manager motivation and personal impact will be examined, whereas with a financial director it will be mainly analytical abilities which will be taken into consideration.

Each year, managers' personal aspirations are taken into account when filling vacant positions. This assessment involves all the management directors and the two levels below, and is performed in cooperation with the central headquarters. The manager involved, the management director and the functional director take part in the meeting. The meeting consists of four elements: performance; potential; professional expectations; and planning for the coming 12 months. Based on these elements, the company obtains an accurate picture of the management and can thus fill and correct in time future shortfalls in vacant positions. This also clarifies individual differences and growth potentials.

In addition, a number of other assessment systems give employees a chance to fulfil their potential while at the same time enabling company management to predict upcoming staffing gaps in good time.

The central budget devoted to training is around £ 15,000 per year per employee (a total of £ 400,000 to 450,000). In addition, 1% of the total wage bill of local companies is likewise invested in training.

The human resources policy is explained in full at the annual conference, which is attended by 500 people (350 from operational units and 150 from administration). The

training programme, vacant positions and future possibilities are covered. This annual conference is an occasion for handing out awards, such as the prizes for company of the year, sales result of the year, fashion designer of the year, the safety award, the quality award, and young manager of the year. For the third time in a row, Windsmoor was chosen "company of the year". This firm has been headed by a woman for several years now. For William Baird, these awards are a way to reaffirm its policy. This conference represents a change of style from the past. The employees present have a better overall view of the policy and are prouder of their company.

Internal dialogue has improved personal communication, but the dissemination of information continues to depend a great deal on the manager at the decentralized level.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions and company)

This company's best practices are found mainly at the level of human resources policy, especially since the arrival of the new managing director. The drawback is that this does not entail any guarantee of concrete achievements. Given the high degree of decentralization of local directors, there is almost no monitoring.

The managing director has introduced a new culture and a new policy. This new management method has attracted quality people, especially women, and instilled in them a desire to stay. Another important point is that the company has gained a reputation as the "best management team", which is extremely important for a firm followed closely by analysts. It is also a decisive factor in being able to recruit the best talent. The "People-Product-Permanently Progress" principle is widely appreciated, in particular by customers. However, the specifically measurable return on investment has not been studied since the financial results are recorded for each individual company.

As for the workers, they do not feel the need to have a written equal opportunity policy. They feel they are dealt with not as men or women, but as people, and believe that positive discrimination is unnecessary. At central headquarters, few flexible work formulas - such as part-time work and job-sharing - are possible because the jobs at central headquarters are at management level. The legal regulations on parental leave, identical and transparent for all workers, are complied with.

The dissemination of information has been improved by the Intranet system. The drawback is that some people feel they have information overload, and end up feeling uninformed.

To sum up:

- has been recognized as the best management team in the City, including by analysts;
- important in obtaining the best talent and a good assessment of the firm by analysts;
- extremely motivated and independent workforce;
- continuous progress at all levels of the company;
- continuous desire to improve the firm;

- corporate philosophy which includes statements on the equality policy and harassment;
- senior management positions increasingly accessible to women;
- the various companies are more oriented towards either men or women according to their end customers;
- there is a missing link between the corporate philosophy and the decentralized commercial units (the criteria for evaluation and promotion are not yet well defined).

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 7

(based on desk research)

Name of the company : **GERHARD RÖSCH GmbH**
Address : Schaffhausenstr. 101
D-72072 Tübingen
Country : GERMANY

Production :

Category of products : Dress designing, cutting and clothing
Turnover : DEM 110 billion
Exports : 25% (France, Benelux, Switzerland, Austria)

Workforce :

	Employment
Total Germany	330
Total other countries	200
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>530</i>

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY

Rösch was created in 1948. This company produces textiles and clothing for different sectors of activity : motor car industry, medical sector, protective clothing, high-tech products, geotextiles, technical safety devices, etc... In the fashion sector, Rösch develops house linen, beach clothes and lingerie.

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1. Origins and justification

Rösch pays great attention to its employees. In 1975, this company received the “Gold Award of Baden-Wurttemberg”, one of the decoration given in the framework of a national race. Since then, this company has been recognized as a promotor of social values.

In 1996, Rösch received the award “Der Frauen- und familienfreundlicher Betrieb” (as a women and family friendly company). This competition is based on three assumptions:

- work schedules which make room for family obligations are not incompatible with the company's ability to be internationally competitive ;

- motivated workers can identify better with their company, which makes them more flexible when it comes to service, pace of work and concern for the customer; and
- workers relieved of their family obligations while they are working are more productive.

Today, 61% of the employees of Rösch are women. This percentage is normal for the sector but, in spite of the economic crisis in the textile sector, Rösch is still stimulating measures in favour of the family.

2.2. Content and goals

- The company has 99 different individual work schedules. The personal interests and family obligations of each worker are always taken into account in this company. This explains why highly individualized work schedules have been worked out. Each scheduling wish results in a specific solution.
- For those not working in a shift, the following minimum time-slots have to be worked: from 8.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. and from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. Consequently, an extended lunch break may be taken by those with family obligations to attend to.
- Company management gets high marks for being open to changes in the area of the work organization. In each case, the impact of such changes on the workers and their families are taken into consideration in detail. For example, the arrangements with part-time workers and those working at home are worked out within each department, not in a centralized manner for the entire company.
- The numerous social facilities which the company makes available were deemed by the jury to be particularly out of the ordinary, given the company's (modest) size. For example, the company has developed a free and extensive child care service, which takes into account the workers' flexible schedules. Families can also benefit from the company cafeteria since the workers can buy meals there to take home. Finally, the company offers free or inexpensive opportunities for sports and leisure, notably by providing an in-house swimming pool, tennis courts and a football pitch.

- Opportunities for sports and leisure:

The day nursery for children, playing field, swimming pool, football pitch and tennis courts were set up in 1973, when the company had been in business for 25 years. Workers can use these facilities free of charge or for a modest fee. Once a week the swimming pool is used by the children from the day nursery, and at other times by local associations. The facilities are therefore used on a regional basis, thus lowering costs.

- Child care:

The company day nursery cares for 15 children of workers free of charge during work hours (6.45 a.m. to 4.15 p.m.). The children are looked after by two nursery nurses. All the child-minding costs are covered by the company for a DM 2 (= 3.9 euros) payment per day by the parents for meals. If there are vacant spaces, they are offered to a neighbouring company which has a

shortage of spaces. In exchange for this service, Rösch workers can park their car in this other company's car park.

- The workers are at the heart of company policy, in a dual sense: as persons performing a job and as "members of a family", reflected in particular in individual consultation between the worker and his or her superior to find a solution to any organizational problem. The company management's personalized approach to workers is definitely worth noting here. As an illustration, we would note the "10 in-house rules for personnel management", which guarantee that within the company each person sees his or her colleagues and co-workers as fully fledged individuals. Because of this, the company maintains a stable and faithful workforce, the result being that, for example, older workers volunteer to work fewer hours if necessary, or certain workers agree to take their holiday early or postpone it until the following year according to production needs.
- Company policy:
It is common knowledge in this company that workers are directly involved in searching for solutions. A continuous upgrading process has been established in the form of weekly and monthly meetings. The workers involved are trained by an outside consulting agency.

The management requires textile production of very high quality at all times, and continuous innovation. The schedule models therefore have to serve the interests of both the company and the workers. In this environment, the personnel manager is the key resource person: together with the workers, he is constantly seeking the best way to reconcile everyone's interests.

The company management is always accessible. For example, it is worth pointing out that it pays special attention to each worker on his or her birthday.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions the company)

Different social measures has been implemented at all the company levels. In this way, the employees have received the opportunity to adapt their work schedule in order to better harmonize their work with their family life. They can also enjoy other social measures : free care for their children at flexible hours, staff canteen where the employees can eat and order a take-up meal for their family members, different possibilities of doing sport and having leisures (swimming pool, playgrounds, football fields and tennis courts, etc....).

This company is extremely concerned with its customers, trying to develop several personalized solutions. As the production has been organized with small efficient teams, the employees take care of the product as well of the customers. The employees feel they are an integral part of the company, as they are personally responsible for their own tasks and they take part in resolving problems. In this way, this company has developed a steady and continuous human resources policy.

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 8

(Based on desk-research)

Name of the company : **KONINKLIJKE BIJENKORF BEHEER KBB**
(1999 : merger with Vendex N.V.)
Address : Postbus 12870, 1100 AW Amsterdam (NL)
Country : THE NETHERLANDS

Production :

Category of product : Large-scale retailing (7 store departments in the Netherlands)
Fashion, cosmetic, decoration, leisure, hotel, restaurant

Workforce structure :

1997⁹	Men	Women	Total
Full-time	3.067	2.477	5.544
Part-time	727	5.678	6.399
Temporary staff			6.105
TOTAL			18.048

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY

Of the 18,048 workers employed, 31% (5,544) work full-time and 35% (6,399) part-time. The rest of the workforce consists of temporary workers, often young people also working part-time. Most of the full-time positions (55%) are held by men, whereas in contrast 89% of the part-time workers are women. At the highest levels, there were in 1996-97 only 180 female employees against 412 men employed.

KBB's policy is to attract a sufficient number of workers, reflecting the multicultural nature of KBB's customer groups. Consequently, KBB consciously practices "diversity management" by hiring not only women but also young people with little formal schooling and immigrants.

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1. Origin and justification

For many years now, KBB has been conducting a specific policy of women's liberation. The various stages of this policy were formulated by the company's Central Committee, in which a "Women's Position" Committee was created in 1988. That year, women accounted for just 8% of those employed in senior positions. The main goal of the new committee was therefore to raise this percentage by implementing a

⁹ In 1999, KBB N.V. merged with Vendex N.V. Since then, the KBB/Vendex consortium is the biggest one in the Netherlands (non food retail sector), with 25 kinds of retail stores, 51,000 employees and 2,500 daughter companies in 6 countries.

number of measures. Since then, each site in the company has had to formulate an emancipation program each year.

KBB's second goal is job creation, notably for foreigners given their problems in fitting into the Dutch labour market. In 1996, one quarter of the job applicants consisted of immigrants, although they make up only 11% of the population. The unemployment rate among foreigners is three times that of the Dutch. This is the context in which KBB wanted to hire immigrants.

KBB has been developing a job-promotion scheme since 1990 which has provided 100 foreign candidates with a real job opportunity. The scheme, called "KBB Works!", has made it possible to integrate 100 foreign workers into the KBB workforce since 1996. It includes recruitment, selection, training and integration.

Thanks to the involvement of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, these new staff members have been assigned the job of "store attendants" ("magazijn stewards"), a new service offered to customers. The job of these store attendants is to assist customers: to provide them information in the store, answer their questions, and support and promote sales. This job is also to be seen as forming part of a diversity policy.

The candidates receive three months of training, fully funded by KBB. They are then sent to the various branch offices of KBB depending on their skills. Each candidate is monitored by a supervisor who has already taken a course in the multicultural approach.

- 1) Recruitment takes place via two routes: the official bodies where the job-seekers are registered (employment agencies and social services) want to take advantage of this opportunity; and KBB utilizes informal recruitment channels like going to places frequented by foreigners, such as mosques. This selection procedure operates on the principles of access, a warm welcome, easy identification and multilingualism.
- 2) The candidates have to meet a number of conditions, the main ones being that they have to have been unemployed for more than a year, be receiving unemployment benefit, be between 18 and 30 years of age, have an interest in working in the retail business, be service-oriented, and speak passable Dutch.
- 3) The candidates chosen receive training according to their skills profile and work experience. The main goal of this training is to upgrade their social and communication skills. They are then trained in basic aspects of company management, and receive training as a cashier.
- 4) Finally, they are trained in problem-solving strategies to deal with problems which might arise from clashes between different cultures.

In mid-1997, KBB was already employing 65 of these foreign candidates, while the 35 others were still in training. The prospects were very encouraging, since 75% to 80% of the candidates were ultimately hired.

2.2. Content and goals

Department stores are open not just during normal office hours, but often Saturdays and evenings as well. In the previous system, full-time workers worked during the office hours while the part-time workers worked evenings and weekends. The law of 1 January 1996 had a considerable impact on the distribution and flexibility of work. A system of "employment contracts" was launched on 1 October 1997. This system, the result of negotiations, is based on an optimal balance between the interests of the employer and those of the workers.

The demands of the market are forcing the company to become much more flexible. This varies, being greatest at the time when most of the public does not have to work. This system organizes working time according to a contractual model of annualizing working time. This enables workers to flexibly allocate their working time provided they meet certain conditions. The monthly salary remains fixed. Overtime is compensated by either additional vacation days or a bonus. The annual number of work hours varies according to the category to which the worker belongs:

- 1,826 hours a year for full-time workers;
- between 782 and 1,825 hours a year for part-time workers;
- between 209 and 781 hours a year for type A part-time workers; and
- a maximum of 35 hours a week for seasonal workers.

In addition, each worker is exempt from working at least five Saturdays, not including annual vacations. The number of Sundays worked is likewise limited to a maximum of 10 per year.

Since 1989, workers have been able to take parental leave and take advantage of an arrangement for caring for their children. At present, 300 children are being cared for at KBB, at a cost of two to three million guilders (equal to 4.4 to 6.6 million euros).

The third measure involved integrating women into the managerial staff. Since 1997, the company has succeeded in reaching the 30% ratio goal it had set for itself earlier.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions and company)

KBB consciously practices "diversity management" by hiring not only women but also young people with little formal schooling and immigrants. Thanks to its workforce, KBB wants to reflect the multicultural nature of its different customer groups.

The system of "employment contracts", resulting from negotiations, is based on an optimal balance between the interests of the employer and those of the workers. It has been developed as an answer to the demands of the market that forced the company to become much more flexible.

The relationship between the company and the employees' representatives is relatively positive, in particular because the company's policy is firmly oriented towards the future and because the management, in handling social issues, pays a great deal of attention to the workers' everyday circumstances.

Creating jobs is also a constant concern of KBB.

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 9

(Based on desk-research and telephone contact)

Name of the company : **VOLVO EUROPA TRUCK NV**
 Address : Smalleheerweg 31 – 9041 GENT
 Country : BELGIUM
 Category of company and financial group to which it belongs : Volvo Truck Corporation - Sweden
 Contact : **Ms. Cecile Desein**, personnel manager

Production :

Category of products : high and middle tonnage trucks
 Turnover : BEF 62.6 billion (1998)
 Percentage of exports : 92.4 %

Workforce structure: (on December 30, 1999)

	Full-time workers in the production department	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	221	10
Unlimited contracts	1.044	16

	Part-time workers in the production department	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	0	0
Unlimited contracts	30	2

	Full-time employees	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	10	0
Unlimited contracts	268	59

	Part-time employees	
	Male	Female
Limited contracts	0	0
Unlimited contracts	2	29

<i>TOTAL PERSONNEL</i>	<i>1691</i>
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1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY

Volvo is an international transport group with plants in 30 countries. At world level, the group employed 72,900 workers at the end of 1997. The main activities are : production of coaches, trucks and buses, equipments and systems for the navy and for industrial use as well as aeronautical development, production and maintenance. The unit which is presented here is specialised in manufacturing high and middle tonnage trucks.

Up to the end of 1996 both kinds of trucks were made on a single assembly line. Because of increased competition in the sector, Volvo had to introduce more flexibility and efficiency in the production of trucks. The organisation changes which followed these measures in the production are part of the project “Fabrique 97”. One of its main results was to introduce an assembly line for each kind of truck.

That change had major consequences on the whole organisation of the company.

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1 Origin and justification

The restructuring resulting from the project “Fabrique 97” required more technical personnel. As the company’s philosophy was in favour of women, those responsible decided to increase the number of women occupying technical functions.

However, the company noticed that all workers did not favourably welcome women in the production of trucks.

2.2 Content and goals

In order to have more women in the production and avoid the resistance of some workers towards that new policy of human resources management, the company developed a series of actions aiming at :

- 1) reaching a consensus with respect to the employment of women
- 2) selecting the most interested women
- 3) succeeding in employing women in a male environment.

1) Reaching a consensus

To reach a consensus, the company set up a working group made up of some responsible persons, some team leaders, some workers’ representatives and the company doctor. That group talked about the various issues concerning the employment of women in the production department, before it actually happened.

First, that working group studied which working stations could be occupied by women. Choosing the possible working stations was based on criteria which are even stricter than the legal criteria applied in Belgium for employing women. When it was

decided to recruit women, the group carefully examined the characteristics of each working station.

Before women started working, the working group started a huge information process. All those responsible for teams were informed and had the opportunity to ask questions. Those responsible who were part of the working group explained the expectations of the company as well as its point of view on that matter.

However, the team leaders and the men who had criteria against the employment of women were not forced to work with them. Only those with a positive attitude with respect to the presence of women in technical functions had to cooperate. The company magazine informed workers that 20 women were about to start working in technical functions. During press conferences, the company also explained its policy as far as the employment of women in the production was concerned.

2) *Recruiting and selecting*

The company launched a few actions to recruit women with a technical education. The company knew by experience that finding such personnel, either male or female, was extremely difficult. It is why it got in touch with employment services. All men and women who were living close to the company received a letter informing them that there were vacant jobs. But the letters sent to women were more personal. Later on, information sessions were organised for interested people.

During the selection process, the company rather chose women if there were two comparable applications. As far as female applicants were concerned, the company paid more attention to their motivations and asked more details about their family.

The women who were recruited said how and why they were interested in the company, e.g. : the company was close to their house, wages, the good name of the company and the fact that women were well accepted.

3) *Introducing women in the production department*

When the first women arrived they were helped by a tutor and were trained. It was also decided to keep women together and to integrate them into teams with a team leader who had taken part in the working group.

4) *Other measures*

Other measures directly linked to women were taken by the company :

a) Infrastructure

Changing-rooms and toilets for women were built. Comfortable uniforms were chosen for them.

b) Training

Both men and women were trained likewise. The training mainly focused on the working station. Every week the production is stopped for 45 minutes in order to talk about problems at team level. During these meetings, the integration of women in the production is discussed but there is not any specific training on the working relations and the cooperation between men and women.

According to the company, women have the same promotion opportunities as men but, in practice, women have less opportunities because of physical barriers preventing them from being promoted in some sections. Another point raised by women was that many men are willing to work with women but they would not accept to be given orders by them. This explains why women do not have the same promotion opportunities.

c) Measures against sexual harassment

A reliable adviser was appointed. She would intervene if there was sexual harassment. She also added the prohibition of that kind of behaviour in the internal rules of the company which were handed over to newly recruited persons.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions and company)

It is difficult for the company to recruit personnel with a technical training at secondary school level.

It is particularly difficult to recruit women with a technical training as there are not many girls choosing that kind of education. Those who do so go on studying at a higher level than the one needed by the company.

To face that kind of problems, Volvo is thinking about recruiting people who have completed secondary school but who do not have any initial technical education. Volvo would then train them on the job. They also thought about having pupils from secondary school visiting the company and organising information sessions.

Women indicated that many girls would like to have a technical education at secondary school level but parents generally dissuade them. They also stressed that most girls do not know in what a technical job consists.

According to the company, setting up working groups first contributed to the success as the problems due to employing women in the production department were thoroughly discussed.

The company also mentioned that since 20 women have been having technical functions, the company culture has been changing.

On one hand, discussions are much more varied than before. Some men feel more at ease than they first thought. As a consequence, sexist behaviours decreased.

Those responsible for the leisure clubs in the company pay more attention to activities which may be of any interest to women. They organised a day “for workers’ families”, including activities for children.

The global assessment of that policy is positive.

Women consider the presence of another woman in the team as a very positive element (a team is made of 15 to 20 people). For them, the relationship with colleagues is good as well as with the supervisor and the team leader. But they also believe that it will take time before a woman has a leading function.

The company intends to continue that policy which it considers as being positive.

INDEX FILE AND SUMMARY 10

(Based on desk-research and telephone contact)

Name of the company : **PRODUITS BEBE CONFORT**
Address : 34 Pointe Langlois – LAVAL (Québec)
Country : CANADA
Category of company and financial group to which it belongs : Banque Royale
Contact : ***Mme Karen Abaziou***

Production

Category of products : bedding for babies
Turnover : Canadian \$ 120,000 (EUR 178.476)
Percentage of exports : 5%

Workforce structure: (on December 30, 1999)

Full-time female workers in the production : 22
Full-time female employees : 1
Part-time female employees : 2
Total personnel : 25 women

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY

The company was set up in 1972. It started with a small team of women who were specialised in industrial sewing. It employs 25 people today.

It is a small company manufacturing bedding for children.

2. BEST PRACTICES

2.1 Origin and justification

Muskuloskeletal disorders are one of the most common health problems in most sectors but particularly in the clothing sector. The workforce in that sector is made up of middle-aged people making repetitive movement at a high pace.

For more than ten years, the company Bébé Confort has noticed that those disorders, which mainly result from the wearing out of the body, play a major role in the health problems of many workers in their sector. The company also observed that these problems – which are very expensive for the State and lead to increased health care costs – also have negative consequences on the production pace. Because of the pain

due to musculoskeletal disorders, workers are often on sickness leave or they work more slowly.

In order to reduce health problems, the company introduced prevention measures, together with the workers, on the advice of the ASP Clothing (Canadian institution financed by employers in the sector and managed by a parity council dealing with the study of health problems and safety in the workplace).

2.2 Content and goals

In the last ten years Bébé Confort has been trying to help its employees take care of their body, be aware of pain and try to know why they were suffering so as to find together ways to improve working conditions and to develop health prevention.

It is why the company introduced massage sessions lasting for 30 minutes/month for employees.

2.3 Methods of application

These massage sessions had very positive results for both workers and the company. During the treatment, the masseur could identify the muscles which were painful and suggest appropriate exercises. It also enables the masseur to ask questions on the working station and to detect inadequate postures or movements. Solutions are then found, such as re-designing the working station or changing the work practices so as to prevent other problems from developing.

Bébé Confort noticed through the years that for a small enterprise to be successful, it has to work in strong cooperation with its employees and to listen to them as they know their tasks and their working station better than anybody else. As a consequence they are able to suggest appropriate improvements.

The company stressed that once it started paying more attention to the needs and ideas of its employees and once it met them regularly, most problems were solved very quickly, very often in an easy and cheap way.

Two years ago, Bébé Confort learned that ASP Clothing freely offered a series of prevention services so as to improve health and safety in small enterprises. It asked for its services and got an expertise with respect to prevention and ergonomics. It was provided with some technical assistance to establish priorities and solve problems thanks to relatively cheap solutions.

3. RESULTS AND ADVANTAGES (workers, trade unions and company)

That company was fully aware of the fact that musculoskeletal disorders had a direct influence on the production pace. To face such problems it found easy solutions while talking to workers and asking for the technical help of experts in prevention.

Prevention being a priority, Bébé Confort noted that employees are thankful once efforts are made to improve their working conditions. Their interest in their work is

increasing, they are more interested in a better work and become more efficient. Thanks to that cooperation and to participation, Bébé Confort keeps high quality levels.

Bébé Confort is encouraging small companies to abolish prejudices against prevention as most small enterprises generally believe that “prevention in the workplace” often means high costs.

That company also stressed that parity bodies in charge of health and safety at work (Committee for Health and Safety at Work in Canada) should not only focus on large companies as far as prevention is concerned but it should also raise the awareness of small enterprises on the importance of prevention and health and safety at work. It could reach these aims while using some incentives and informing companies on bodies which may help and inform them.

**EXPERT'S
CONCLUSIONS**

EXPERTS' CONCLUSIONS

The five chapters that comprise the Vade Mecum on "good practices" in equal opportunities and the technical sheets on companies that have implemented actions geared towards women's interests show the main paths to be followed if women's working conditions in the textile sector are to be improved.

Nevertheless, the difficulties that had to be overcome by the experts before they could identify those textile firms that have developed "good practices" targeting women show that a great deal of work on equal opportunities remains to be done in the sector.

The textile sector is not just lagging behind in terms of the working conditions of its female workforce. It has a long way to go in terms of human resources management in general before it more or less catches up with other sectors.

For this reason, by getting up to date in terms of equal opportunities, the employers' organizations and trade unions in the sector should expand their analysis and debate, the aim being to improve human resources management in general.

To this end "good practices" must not be limited to women. Instead, human resources management in the broad sense of the term should be improved by adopting EFQM¹⁰ or other systems to encourage moves to appreciate and capitalize on the sector's human potential.

It should be pointed out that improved human resources management not only benefits workers by improving the working climate and boosting their interest in the tasks carried out ; employers also have something to gain by improving human resources management, since doing so would:

- enhance the company's image,
- boost productivity,
- reduce absenteeism, and
- improve quality.

This would, among other things, make it easier to secure customer loyalty and lead to a more favourable appraisal of the company by financial institutions.

KTK, CEDIS - 18.02.2000

¹⁰ European Foundation for Quality Management