

Study on good practices on reconciliation of work, family and private life in EU member states

POSITIVE FLEXIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Positive flexibility refers to working time arrangements that meet the needs of employees and provide choice in balancing work and family life. Increased flexibility in working hours can thus have a positive impact on gender equality. This is in contrast to negative forms of flexibility that result in involuntary working time arrangements that restrict the choices of working parents, particularly women.

Flexible arrangements include part-time work, flexi-time schemes, telework, working from home, compressed working weeks, gradual return from leave, job sharing, term-time working, time banking and working time accounts.

Surveys consistently show that employees who have access to flexibility at work have higher scores related to engagement and lower scores on stress and burnout, and a positive impact on employee retention.

Success factors in promoting gender equality and positive flexibility

- Achieving gender equality through self-regulation means that it is important that working time flexibility is open to and taken up by both men and women in the workplace.
- Companies that promote men's participation in family life through flexible working time have an important contribution to make to gender equality.

- Taking a comprehensive approach to flexibility is important in creating a supportive workplace culture and practices to enable employees to balance work with family and care responsibilities.
- Innovative and creative flexible working time arrangements can lead to work being defined differently, with a focus on results rather than on the hours worked.
- Women's potential and contribution in the labour market is valued and there is a change in attitude towards part-time and flexible work so that it is available at all levels and in all jobs.
- Men, and particularly men in senior and executive positions in the workplace, are encouraged and incentivised to work flexibly and thereby have the opportunity to participate in family life.
- A social partnership approach can result in innovative and creative solutions, and collective agreements become more gender-responsive.

This **EIGE Study** has collected examples of how positive flexibility contributes to gender equality. This includes policies and incentives to allow for greater flexibility for parents, changes in the culture of the workplace to reduce long working hours and a culture of being present in the workplace and shifting to results-based management.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES IN SELF-REGULATION (POSITIVE FLEXIBILITY)

Example 1: Halcom Family-friendly Enterprise – Slovenia



The e-business company HALCOM D.D. has a long-standing and senior level commitment to implementing reconciliation policies. Information is disseminated to employees through various channels, opinion surveys are carried out and quarterly meetings are held, and the company has a crèche and kindergarten close to the premises. The company also provides care of elementary school children during holidays and a child-related time bonus is given for parents for leave for the first school day. Employees with family responsibilities can take up to 30 days (instead of 10 days foreseen by law) unpaid leave each year. In some circumstances employees can work from home.

Reconciliation activities are coordinated within a wider team that implements the 'family friendly enterprise' certificate and related activities. Auditing takes place through the Audit Council and there is a strong company commitment to implementing the provision under the "family friendly enterprise" certification.



EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES IN SELF-REGULATION (POSITIVE FLEXIBILITY)

Example 2: Project 'More' (Mind-set Organisation Executives), Robert Bosch Group – Germany

The international technology and service company Bosch has developed a range of policies and awareness raising activities on work-life balance, which are embedded in a strong company culture of equality and diversity. Bosch is known for being a family friendly company and was awarded the title of Germany's "Most family-friendly enterprise". In 2011, Bosch signed the German "Charter for family friendly working hours" and this led to guidelines for a flexible and family-friendly working culture and recognition, that "family involvement" periods can be used for career advancement.

The "MORE" project has had a specific focus on executives who are given the chance to test flexible and family friendly working hours (working from home or working part-time) for a period of at least three months. The aim is to create a change in culture in the organisation. Of those who took the three-month trial, 80% decided to continue working flexibly. This way, they also become role models and ambassadors for reconciling private and professional life. Feedback from employees suggests that their greater flexibility resulted in a better quality of life and higher job satisfaction. For the employer it resulted in higher creativity and innovation.

This example is applicable to any large company. The key is learning the importance of a strong company culture on gender equality and reconciliation at all levels.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The European Institute for Gender Equality – EIGE commissioned the study 'Collection of good practices on reconciliation of work, family and private life in EU Member States' in order to identify, collect and select the most promising examples of initiatives that promote reconciliation. The study was carried out by ÖSB Consulting GmbH and supported by a network of country experts in the 28 Member States. Further information related to the study is available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/good-practices>



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