

Work-life balance in the ICT sector

Step 1: Identify national work-life balance initiatives and partners

Measures that work for one company might not work for another company operating in the same country, which is why multinational companies are particularly struggling to implement work-life balance policies effectively across country offices. Attitudes to work-life balance are shaped by a country's history, culture and norms, which are usually reflected in domestic legislation. Before starting to design work-life balance programmes, one must analyse the domestic policy and cultural context in order to pre-empt reactions from employees, social partners, shareholders and clients.

Although examples of effective work-life balance measures in other companies can serve as a source of inspiration, copying successful practices is difficult. It is always advisable to plan initiatives from the ground up, with input from all employees. In order to do so, a sound understanding of the following is indispensable:

- National (or regional) legislation on working time and work flexibility
- National (or regional) legislation regarding leave (duration and compensation)
- National initiatives on gender mainstreaming and gender equality
- Initiatives to encourage women's participation in the labour market and in particular in the ICT sector
- Initiatives motivating fathers to take up parental leave
- Childcare (flexibility, providers and partnerships)
- Care for the elderly (flexibility, providers, and partnerships)

Companies should also be aware of how the ICT sector is perceived by the general public. In the ICT sector this relates in particular to gender stereotypes regarding women in the profession. Women who were interviewed for this set of good practices spoke about the 'masculinity' of the sector and the perceived culture of long working hours and intense competition.

Cooperation with social partners and industry associations would help adjust the sector's image and raise awareness about gender equality and diversity in the ICT sector.

Our study on good practices found numerous companies with successful work-life policies across the EU. A number of selected good practice examples come from countries with well-developed gender-equality policies, while others come from countries where the legal framework to advance gender equality is less advanced. The examples show that employers can go beyond the minimal requirements of legislation in order to improve the conditions of employees.