

Work-life balance in the ICT sector

Step 3: Maximise buy-in from stakeholders

There are many ways to secure enthusiasm for change in the workplace. Motivation can come from both management and from employees. Groups of employees can form a network to create mentoring and discussion opportunities in order to bring attention to the issue, and HR departments may begin evaluation and certification for ‘family-friendly employer’ awards. In some cases, the decision to improve work-life balance and initiate gender mainstreaming came from the company leadership. To ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to any workplace initiative, buy-in from senior leadership is essential.

Understanding employees’ needs is the first step in designing successful work-life balance measures. This can be done via a survey, which should ascertain the needs of employees with different family situations, for example, working parents of either gender, carers, parents of children with special needs, and those who would benefit from work-life balance measures in order to pursue major life goals outside the workplace.

Roll-out of work-life balance policies is usually led by HR but can be implemented by different departments. Involving multiple departments can be useful for broadening the focus beyond the ‘white collar’ segment of the company and ensuring work-life balance measures are truly inclusive. Involving trade union representatives at an early stage is also critical.

Line managers must also be involved in this process from early on.

**Example: Understanding the gender gap - Gender diversity in action
AON Ireland**

The AON White Paper: The Gender Gap: Why Men and Women Experience Work Differently (September, 2017) is based on data gathered from an engagement survey carried out with nearly 400,000 employees across more than 60 industries. It reveals deep-seated gender inequalities that mean that women are less engaged and have a more negative experience of work than men. AON is the Irish word for 'one' and is used by AON to show that inclusivity and diversity are core to their values. . In Ireland, AON sponsors the Irish Women's Rugby team to demonstrate its belief in women's strength and leadership. The company applies an equal opportunities and affirmative action policy in relation to women and other underrepresented groups and is committed to equality in practice - not just in name. AON Ireland established a 'Diversity Council' in 2017 to further entrench its commitment to equality. Members of the Council act as champions of particular inclusion issues in order to drive change. According to the AON Inclusion Strategy, the company's focus on inclusion and diversity is a way of driving innovation and better serving clients. In order to promote equality through work-life balance measures AON has a flat management structure, affirmative action programmes for the recruitment and retention of women, flexible and remote working, and paid paternity leave. Men are also encouraged to share home responsibilities through equal access to parental leave, home working, and flexible working arrangements.

In-house training sessions on gender-equality for staff involved in the design of work-life balance programmes can further enhance the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Male staff must also be involved throughout the process to show that their interests are being taken into consideration. Sports activities can be a useful ice-breaker and regular fathers' groups a good way of maintaining momentum.