Work-life balance in the ICT sector

Step 5: Carefully measure progress

Before tackling the implementation and communication plan and for any work-life balance initiative, management must agree on objectives and how they will be measured. This is crucial because the success of work-life balance measures is dictated by a variety of factors, for example: existing organisational culture, type of business, automation and digitalisation, as well as the degree of gender-equality engagement in the company.

The uptake of parental leave by fathers is not primarily the result of availability of measures, but of company culture. Steps to encourage fathers to take paternity leave can initiate change in a company's culture and increase the number of fathers who are able to take leave without suffering negative reactions from colleagues and managers. These 'forefront fathers' can act as role models to encourage other future fathers to take up parental leave.

> In **AON (Ireland)** men are encouraged to share home responsibilities through equal access to parental leave, home working, and flexible working arrangements.

> **Deutsche Telecom (Germany)** in 2009 started the work-life@telekom programme to help employees better reconcile their professional and private lives. A part of the programme is the Heimspiel fathers' network which provides advice on how to coordinate career and family.

Not many companies collect data measuring issues such as the uptake of parental leave. They are even less likely to collect gender-segregated data. The daunting task of collecting and sifting through data can be discouraging and create resistance in organisations. Yet collecting gender-disaggregated data on the use of a measure is crucial in monitoring progress and being able to influence behaviour in the company. The main benefit of measuring data on update of work-life balance policies is to highlight the link between such measures and improved gender equality.

Below is a proposed list of indicators organisations should monitor in order to track progress:

Leave

- Uptake of parental leave, disaggregated by sex Percentage of women and men returning to work after parental leave (after the first, second and third child)

- Average duration of leave, disaggregated by sex

- Rate of return, disaggregated by sex

Recruitment

- Total number of candidates and their degree of suitability

- Number of women candidates in proportion to men

- Number of women interviewed in proportion to men

- Number of women hired in proportion to men

Employment

- Average tenure (women and men), disaggregated by sex

- Tenure following return from leave, disaggregated by sex

- Sick leave (also caring for a sick child), disaggregated by sex

- Staff turnover, disaggregated by sex

- Intention to leave the organisation, disaggregated by sex

- Percentage of women in middle- and senior-management positions in proportion to men

Financial

- Cost of new hire, disaggregated by sex

- Training budget allocated, disaggregated by sex

- Gender pay-gap

- Average cost of employees' childcare and other dependants

- Communication budget dedicated to communicating work-life balance policies and the employer brand internally

- Cost of absenteeism, by sex

Uptake of work-life balance measures

- Use of work-life balance measures by management/leadership, by sex

- Mentoring programmes (duration, budget, participants by sex)

- Requests and uptake of flexible working, by sex

- Uptake of part-time working or return to full-time employment, by sex

Clarifying the key milestones and targets will provide organisations with clarity about the objectives of the programmes in the short, medium and long-term. Diverse initiatives will impact a range of groups. Some will benefit individual employees, some will impact the performance of whole teams and departments, while others will have a broad organisational impact. Positive outcomes often include cost-saving, increased productivity, increased attraction and retention of talent, and improved customer satisfaction. For instance, occupancy rate is one of the measurements that organisations apply to gauge the use of space. This indicator can be examined before introducing flexible working measures to measure uptake.

Example: Excellence depends on innovation and engagement of staff

Kapsch Group

The Kapsch Group believes that successful companies need productive employees. Because of this the Kapsch Group has a range of measures to support their staff. The company offers flexible working time and tele-work. If parents are faced with a childcare emergency, they can book an on-site "parent-child office", where everything is provided for the child to have a good day and the parent to get their work done. To adapt to changes in life circumstances, employees have the option to reduce working hours for a specific duration and then return to full-time work. Fathers are also encouraged to apply for a reduction in working hours. Kapsch Group also carries out regular employee surveys to understand the changing needs of employees. The company also aims to boost the number of women employed, which is made clear throughout their communication materials, as well as through initiatives such as the "speed dating for women", a women's support network. Having clearly defined work-life balance measures, while being a "family friendly" employer are the pillars of success of this leading IT company, which has offices in over 100 countries.

Companies can also gather qualitative data via employee voice surveys, pulse surveys, focus groups and other platforms. Listening to the needs of employees is a step forward — even when employees acknowledge that the company will not be able to cater to all their needs. Needs expressed by the employees can be often be solved through creative projects, some of which provide a wealth of opportunity. Organising company charity sports events, for instance, can bring together employees, strengthen their sense of purpose and engagement, inform them about important issues related to gender equality or work-life balance, and allow employees to spend time with family.