Transitions

CASE STUDIES SUMMARY REPORT

for the EU Framework 5 study 'Gender, Parenthood and the Changing European Workplace'

Socio-economic Research

Manchester Metropolitan University

Transitions

CASE STUDIES
Summary Report

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Transitions is a research project funded within the Key Action Improving the Socio-economic Knowledge Base, of the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Union.

Transitions is a qualitative cross-national research project which aims to examine how young European adults negotiate motherhood and fatherhood and work-family boundaries in the context of labour market and workplace change, different national welfare state regimes and family and employer supports. The project is examining individual and household strategies and their consequences for well-being at the individual, family and organisational levels. This is studied in the context of parallel organisational contexts and macro levels of public support in the 8 participating countries: France, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, the UK, Bulgaria and Slovenia.

Executive Summary of Consolidated Case Study Report

Case studies were carried out in one public sector (social services) and one private sector (primarily finance) organisation in Bulgaria, Norway, Portugal and the UK, a private sector company in the Netherlands and Slovenia and a public sector organisation in Sweden. Methods used included focus groups with parents, interviews with managers, document analysis and short well-being questionnaires.

The **objectives** of the organisational case studies were:

- To understand specific workplace contexts in which employees (aged 25-39) negotiate the transition to parenthood and develop work-family boundary strategies in different sectors and countries
- To examine elements of workplace change and transition and the way in which changes are reflected in workplace policies and practices affecting parents, in public and private/transitional sector organisations in 7 countries (including EU and accession states)
- To examine structural and cultural aspects of organisational change and practice from the perspectives of both managers and groups of employees who are parents of young children
- To examine and compare experiences of organisational supportiveness for parenthood and experiences of positive well being at individual and organisational levels in the different contexts
- To relate parents' experiences of their employing organisations to national policy contexts

Changing contexts
- In the context of economic, technological and social changes at the global level and changes in welfare state regimes at national levels, European workplaces in both the private and public sectors are facing new challenges and are also undergoing massive changes
- Global competition and the opening up of new markets in the private sector, new public management trends in the public sector, and the transition to a market economy in Slovenia and Bulgaria, are all associated with workplace efficiency drives that involve reducing the size of the workforce and expecting surviving employees to work harder. Employees in all of the case study organisations report the widespread experience of intensification of work. This is a particular challenge for young parents,

who must manage work and family in a particularly intense and competitive context. While a minority of employees experience this intensification as challenging in a positive way, the majority appear to experience this as negative, but nevertheless inevitable

- The growth of flexibility, in its many forms, is double-edged. It brings both insecurity and opportunities for parents. Contractual flexibility evident in the private sector, and also a trend towards individualisation of contracts in many public sector organisations, brings job insecurity. In Slovenia and Bulgaria this is a relatively new experience to which parents must adapt. Flexibility of working hours can bring opportunities to integrate paid work and family life, particularly if this is associated with greater autonomy. However, in the context of the intensification of work it can also lead to long working hours that intrude into family time or energy. Trade unions in some countries can play a role in resisting the more negative aspects of flexibility

- New technologies bring important changes to daily work organisation although their impact is often double-edged – they can facilitate flexibility but speed up intensification. New technologies feed into the knowledge society. The spread of knowledge is being incorporated into the employers' role, as organisations increasingly promote training, albeit in a range of different ways

- The different political contexts, and particularly the reconfiguration of welfare states, are shaping different organizational contexts. In particular, the dramatically rapid changes taking place in Bulgaria and Slovenia, including liberalisation, where new pro-market ideologies favour employers; rising unemployment and changes in the labour code; together with new regulations that derive from the EU, contribute to the feeling of deep transition, with both positive and negative impacts on workplace policies and practices and subsequently on workers' lives

- In this context there are new discussions on gender and work-family reconciliation, framed by a wider discussion on caring organisations in some countries. Nevertheless, the male model of ideal workers who do not need time or energy for family work remains dominant

On Work

One of the main tasks in this project was to examine changes in workplace policies and practices in European organisations, from the perspectives of

both managers and groups of employees who are parents of young children. Major findings include:

- There is a significant implementation gap between formal policies and current practices. Managers play a decisive role in the implementation of policies. Colleagues can also act as agents of social control, especially in the context of tight staffing and intense workloads, where parents working flexibly or taking leaves can exacerbate colleagues' overload

- Workplace policies and practices are shaped by national and local regulations, but they are increasingly a matter of daily and informal negotiation in local organisations. The influence of unions and other collective agents is very different among European countries, but appears to be greater in the public sector

- Employees' statutory entitlements are implemented in very distinct forms according to (a) the nature of the work, (b) professional status, (c) type of contracts and (d) access to information

- Most managers still believe that caring about employees' family commitments, and meeting organisational needs are mutually exclusive rather than mutually reinforcing. Managers' priorities appear to be highly conditioned by national and organisational contexts as well as their values and experiences. Gender of managers is not always a decisive factor

- "Family friendly" or flexible working policies and entitlements are still largely perceived as benefits for women workers. Consequently, both men and women feel a growing sense of inequality. Employed mothers feel that this interpretation may prejudice their careers, while caring fathers feel that they have fewer opportunities than mothers to care of their children. The focus generally remains on policies at the margins, rather than systemic changes which might challenge male models of work. Women are particularly disadvantaged by this

- Flexibility of times and place emerged as a major trend of organisational change in all the countries. However, the process by which this is achieved is ambiguous. Often it involves overcoming a great deal of resistance and requires complex negotiations among employers and employees, leading to *ad hoc* configurations in each organisation

- Although there are well-defined leave entitlements for parents, in practice, leave is usually taken through "mixed arrangements", that is a set of formal and informal procedures. Often these prioritise organisational needs, but may sometimes also extend opportunities available to employees

- Training courses are also considered a core practice of organisational change and modernisation. However, time pressure and economic constraints make their implementation difficult. Consequently, they often end up taking place outside the employees' weekly schedule, which increases the experience of intensification of work and is particularly difficult for young parents

Comparison of public and private sector organisations

Case studies in different organisations allowed not only a comparison among different countries but also between the private and public sectors. This study has shown that:

- Very significant differences between policies, cultures and practices of private and public sectors are still evident across the seven countries, although these distinctions vary from one country to another. Further, both sectors are experiencing deep dynamics of change, blurring some traditional contrasts between them

- Men are dominant in the private sector, while women are more oriented to public sector work. This is at least partly due to different organisational demands and family responsibilities, shaping gendered careers and projects

- "Ethics of care" and "ethics of business" were found in all organisations However, the former tends to be dominant in public organisations and the latter in the private ones

- Public and private organisations appear to have a different approach to "family friendly" policies: the former strictly following legislation, the latter using a more flexible approach, which has both advantages and disadvantages

- Insecurity is a major concern among young employees in both sectors, but its meaning varies. The private sector is characterised by "daily insecurity", with good conditions but fear of being dismissed. The public

sector on the other hand, is governed by "future insecurity" with less favourable conditions, ambiguity regarding the future, but more effective support for the reconciliation of work and family

On Organisational well-being

- This study focuses on factors contributing to positive well-being rather than simply the absence of negative well-being. We explore a collective notion of "organisational well-being" or "healthy" organisations from the perspectives of employees who are parents, as well as their managers

- Healthy organisations tend to be defined in the literature as those which can meet the needs of employees as well as those of the organisation. The view that workplace effectiveness can be enhanced by looking after the workforce is explicit in organisational discourses in a minority of the cases studies. However, this view is not always shared by managers and therefore, there is often a gap between theory and day to day practice

- A number of problems and issues emerged in conceptualising organisational well-being. In particular it is difficult to determine the meanings of meeting employers' and employees' needs because a) there is a question of whose perspective to take, as the perspectives of managers and subordinates often diverge and b) participants' evaluations of the organisation in meeting their needs are influenced by national context, subjective and cultural expectations, social comparison and sense of entitlement to support

- A distinction can be made between a fragmented notion of organisational well-being that takes account only of experiences in the workplace, and a more holistic approach which addresses employees' needs within and beyond the workplace.

- The notion of a caring organisation that is evident in some contexts, can raise expectations of "healthy" organisations that can enhance performance by caring for employees in the wider context of their lives. However, even if gender equity is incorporated into the conceptualisation of organisational well-being, many problems still remain. Pervasive current organisational trends such as the intensification of work perpetuate a male model of work, and undermine the equitable reconciliation of work and parenting

- The conceptualisation of organisational well-being, and its relationship to individual and family well-being conceptualisations, in addition to incorporating notions of good practice, is an ongoing part of the *Transitions* project. The Good Practice report and the forthcoming Well-being Report (to be published in 2005) continue to develop these concepts

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1.
Changing Contexts

Recent decades have been marked by what social scientists term 'globalisation' or the rise of 'the information society'. These changes raise new challenges for organisations: new paradigms of work, new modes of management, innovative technologies and products, the increasing development of a global market (both of goods and labour force) and changing attitudes towards organisational cultures and practices. Rather, today organisations are complex nodes of networks which incorporate both traditional and innovative trends. They are not totally new entities, but they all face the challenge of adapting to or anticipating changing contexts.

Simultaneously, the different welfare regimes in Europe are also changing in diverse ways in different countries. This profoundly influences work organisations and labour policies, and conversely, changes in this field have been drivers for change in welfare regimes: recalibration and costs containment. This goes along with significant changes in national social services structures, another major issue for understanding the contemporary European workplace.

In the following pages, we discuss some of these dynamics and present some examples of how these global trends are manifested in the cases studied in the *Transitions* project.

1. Downsizing and intensification of work

Contemporary working contexts are characterised by two distinct but complementary tendencies: downsizing (and outsourcing) and work intensification. Changes in management processes (as part of rationalisation) and the implementation of profit-oriented policies often lead to the slimming down of the workforce, either through redundancies, or through "natural wastage", such as early retirement or temporary contracts not being renewed. The pervasiveness of this trend generates feelings of insecurity among the workforce.

The practice of downsizing is taking place in many of our case study countries, and particularly in Slovenia and Bulgaria (together with an increase in unemployment, see fig. 4K, Context Mapping report), as a consequence of the transition to capitalism, new logics of rationalising labour force costs and the increasing importance of shareholder power. New public management may also

imply downsizing procedures in public organisations, for example in the UK (Bulgaria on the other hand is building up its Social Services).

Despite the implementation of new technologies, decreases in the size of workforces do not reduce the amount of work to be done, with the result that workloads are intensified. Feelings of work intensification are widespread throughout all the organisations studied, although in different forms. One of the major consequences of work intensification is the growing practice of putting in long hours, whether at the workplace or spilling over to the home, impinging on time and energy for families, which leads to stress and resistance to change. In some countries this is well established, while in others it is a more recent occurrence.

The intensification of work exacerbates gendered assumptions in the workplace - that is the assumed ideal worker is one that, in line with masculine norms and stereotypes, does not need time or energy for family work. From the employees' point of view, downsizing and work intensification are perceived as having some of the most negative impacts of all the changes. However, and this is quite remarkable, the general attitude towards change, even if negative, is one of acceptance. Change is seen as somehow inevitable, as employees take for granted the existence of the difficult and insecure context. In addition, sometimes resistance to change is viewed negatively as not being 'modern' enough. In some contexts, as in the private finance companies in Portugal and in the UK, work intensification is experienced by some employees as a positive challenge.

2. Flexibility: opportunities and insecurity

Flexibility, in its various forms, is a major issue in organisational management today. Identified as a major trend, mostly in the last decade, it has been extensively integrated both in managerial and employee discourses. However, it is important to notice that flexibility is a broad, imprecise, concept and may imply different applications and motivations.

In this project, flexibility is approached in two main ways. On one hand, flexibility may be related to employer policies, for example contractual flexibility for the employer. This approach may imply job insecurity – involving the predominance of short term or temporary contracts – but also employee mobility. Even in Social Services, a trend in the individualisation of contracts can be observed. On the other hand, flexibility is directed toward the employees and how they organise their daily working lives, concerning formal and informal flexible work arrangements, flexible schedules and different kinds of employee entitlements.

There is an ongoing debate on the concept of flexibility and on how it is being used. The main question is: do flexibility measures, such as flexible work arrangements, reflect employers' concerns, suit employees' needs and desires, or both? It is clear from our study that in all the participating countries, the implementation of flexible work arrangements in itself, does not guarantee that

employees, and particularly, in this case, working parents, will be able to make use of such arrangements. Moreover, the fact that flexibility sometimes implies the possibility of long working hours and the problems created by work intensification, leads to a certain distrust in flexibility, (in particular when employers adapt work schedules to variation in demand, for instance in the retail sector). Trade unions play an important role in this discussion in many of the countries, tending to resist long hours of unpaid work and are often sceptical about flexibility. However in some countries (for example, the UK) the role of unions is minimal, especially in the private sector studied.

From another perspective, flexibility is viewed by many individual working parents as "good practice", as they feel able to organise their lives, with less restraint from the organisation. Some of the case study interviewees suggest that their commitment increases when they have more freedom at work and more control over their own time.

3. Technology and training.

Contemporary society is, to a large extent, based on technology. New information technologies, such as networked computers and mobile phones are integral aspects of work. Investment in technology is therefore a key issue for all organisations. Whether or not new technologies reduce workload, it is quite certain that they introduce new ways of working and their impact is often double-edged. For instance, technology plays an important role in work intensification, as new technologies enable faster communication, and thus leading to the expectation of faster replies.

New technologies also bring important changes to daily work organisation. One known advantage is being able to work from home. Although tele-work is being discussed as a major trend in the future, it is still embryonic in the organisations studied. Nevertheless, some of the case study organisations permit some employees to work from home, mainly as a strategy to address the work overload issue, or, alternatively, as a professionalisation strategy (including the use of training modules on the company's intranet). In some contexts, working from home may be considered a formal strategy for enhancing the reconciliation of family and employment, even though it can also be an informal work arrangement. Later in the report we discuss how employees perceive both the positive and negative impacts of this.

The world of swift technological advancement feeds into the knowledge society or the information society. Moreover, the spread of knowledge is being incorporated into the employers' role, as organisations increasingly promote training. From the need to coach employees to perform their tasks, to the development of skills needed to adapt to rapidly changing contexts, we are progressing towards the idea of life-long learning, facilitated by employing organisations.

All the case studies suggest the importance of training. However, different orientations can be perceived, concerning the following: the promoters of training (the organisation itself or outsourced trainers); the sites where training takes

place (inside or outside the company); the schedules (during work time, after work or at weekends etc.); and orientation towards specific work tasks or more generic skills. There is also variation in the level of employees who are benefiting from training. While in most cases training is particularly oriented towards qualified, technical professions, other organisations direct it to lower hierarchical levels, including administrative staff (see, for instance, the Bulgarian case studies). Swedish social services are one example of investment in professionalisation through education, as managers sustain the belief in education as one of the more strategic factors to develop qualified social workers. On the other hand, the Portuguese private company sees itself as a 'qualifying organisation' which offers in-depth training to junior consultants. This implies that employees have better chances to gain promotions, or even access to better jobs, in these competitive contexts which are marked by high workplace turnover.

4. Political changes and reorganisation of the welfare state

Several general trends have been mentioned, which are being differentially incorporated at the national and local levels. At the same time, Europe is facing a panorama of changing political contexts, resulting from the complex relations between state, social agents, and supranational institutions.

Amongst the main political changes, it is possible to identify – at the state level – a generic propensity towards liberalisation, involving a reconfiguration of the state's role rather than its reduction. This tendency towards liberalisation is also present in the Social Services, with the advent of the so-called 'new public management'.

The way each national society incorporates social and political change, and implements new labour policies, is strongly conditioned by the action of several social agents: social movements, trade unions, professional associations and public opinion. Hot issues, such as flexibility, working hours, and parental leave are being broadly discussed, and all these agents have something to say on how social change is being conducted. Moreover, the European Union (E.U.) plays a role in shaping national policies, for example introducing incremental changes with minimal requirements such as the parental leave directive.

Data collected in the case studies highlight the dramatically rapid changes occurring in Bulgaria and Slovenia, two countries in transition from communist regimes to capitalist ones. Liberalisation; new pro-market ideologies of the post-communist elite favouring employers; rising unemployment (see figure 4k, Context Mapping report); and changes in the labour code together with new regulations that derive from the E.U., contribute to the feeling of deep transition, with both positive and negative impacts on workplace policies and practices and on workers' lives.

5. Developing the 'caring organisation' concept

In the context of intense workloads and insecurity, organisational discourses are moving towards the development of a greater concern with organisational culture and climate, and management trends in many countries include specific plans and measures promoting more supportive work environments.

With the increased participation of women in the labour market and demands by both men and women for an active fathering role in recent years, work-family reconciliation has also emerged as an important public concern generating debates and campaigns, in the media and civil society as well as in the political arena. These concerns are gradually being incorporated in many employers' discourses, because of their preoccupation with issues of workforce turnover and market competition or efficiency. Although there is still a gap between policies to support working parents and their actual implementation (see Context Mapping report, chapter 2), it is important to note the changes at the discursive level. This is, however, less developed in Bulgaria and Slovenia, where organisational support is regarded in paternalistic terms, typical of former regimes and thought by managers and many parents, to be incompatible with competitiveness and efficiency.

Summary

In this introductory chapter, we have addressed some of the major changing processes concerning the new European workplace. We identified some specific trends, including:

- Processes of downsizing and work intensification, with an important workplace impact, and a particular challenge for young parents, as they have to reconcile work and family in a tremendously intense and competitive context

- The specific trend towards flexibility, leading both to new opportunities at the workplace and stronger feelings of job insecurity. The impact of flexibility on work-family reconciliation has also been discussed

- The spread and impact of new technologies and specific challenges involved

- The differing political contexts and, particularly, the reconfiguration of welfare states, shaping different organisational contexts. This is a significant topic as we are dealing simultaneously with diverse political traditions and experiences, ranging from the change towards capitalism in Eastern countries to the welfare regimes of Nordic countries

- The new discussions on gender and work-family reconciliation, framed by a wider discussion on caring organisations, while the male model of ideal workers, who do not need time or energy for family work, remains dominant

2.
Methods

In this chapter we present a profile of the organisations and discuss aspects of the methodology applied in the case studies. The bases for this are the methodological reports provided by each research team.

1. Organisational profiles

Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix introduce the private and public sector organisations studied according to: sector, size, age profile, gender, skill level, part-time status and trade union participation.

2. The case studies' design

The cases focus predominantly on two types of workplace: private sector finance organisations (plus one oil company, an important sector in the Norwegian economy) and public sector social services. Some countries carried out case studies in both sectors, some in one sector only (see Table 3 in appendix). We sought parents of a similar age (25-40), with children aged under 11 years, and working in higher and lower status occupations in the two organisations. Since the design was cross-national we expected differences in the experiences of parents cross-nationally in relation to the type of welfare state regime. Thus in selecting the seven countries, we had a mix of neo-liberal welfare regimes (UK and Netherlands), social democratic welfare regimes (Sweden and Norway), a Southern European welfare regime (Portugal) and two East European countries with no histories of welfare states as such.

3. The methods used included:

1. Documentation and contextual information on the organisation
2. 1 semi-structured interview with the head of HR (or a senior manager)
3. 4-6 semi-structured interviews with managers
4. 4-6 focus groups with parents
5. A self completion questionnaire on well-being, completed by parents in the focus groups and managers during their interviews

4. Gaining access to the organisations

There was considerable variation between countries and across sectors in the ease and speed with which the teams negotiated access to parents in these organisations, as well as the numbers of management layers existing within organisations. Country differences were sometimes less significant than were the

differences between the sectors. In some cases, HR was the first port of call, while in others permission was sought at board and director level and, in the case of some social services, at ministerial level. In several countries, more managers across the different levels had to be approached to gain access and permission to access parents.

5. Management incentives and disincentives to join the study

In some countries and organisations the issues covered by the study were more appealing to management than others. For example, in the UK finance company, interest in the study was underpinned by concerns with recruitment and retention, while quality of life for staff was also an issue. In the UK social services, the appeal of the study related more to problems in recruitment and retention (of social workers). In other countries, especially in Bulgaria where competition for jobs was fierce and unemployment high, the study was much less appealing to management. More problems were generally experienced in getting access to social services organisations than in the private sector organisations. This was often due to a greater degree of bureaucracy since social services are administered by the central state or by local government. Employees are therefore organised in small units with a number management tiers above them, often in distant and dispersed locations.

6. Focus group participants

Sixty eight *managers* took part in the 11 case studies, (an average of 6 per case study) (see Table 4 in Appendix). All managers were interviewed during office hours. Managers varied in their life course phase, although most were older than the focus group participants and many had children. However, their children still tended to be older than the focus group participants. In the social services, more female than male managers interviewed.

Sixty eight focus groups were conducted, an average of 6 per case study. Again there was a spread with between 3 and 11 focus groups per case study. Membership consisted in a total of 281 persons with just over one quarter being fathers (27%). There were more fathers in the finance companies and fewer in the social services case studies, reflecting the fact that social services is heavily female dominated (Table 6 Appendix). In the finance case studies and the other case study, the focus group members were white, with no employees from minority ethnic groups (see Table 5 in Appendix). The workers were in the main highly educated. Almost all recruited were in white collar or professional jobs. Only the UK and Dutch companies had significant numbers of part time employees in the focus groups. The majority of focus group participants met the study criteria with parents falling in the right age group (91%); and most having only children under 11 years (93%).

The profile of parents in the social services case studies was somewhat more diverse on some characteristics compared with finance (see Tables 5 and 6 in Appendix). There were more ethnic minorities (a majority in the UK (18/28) with

three workers in Sweden and one in Bulgaria); and more of a spread of part-time workers (except for Bulgaria). However, the majority of the workers included had a university education (72%). It was difficult to find concentrations of parents for the focus groups, especially in social services. Therefore the range in focus group size was considerable with a half of focus groups consisting of only three or four persons. Given difficulties in focus group size, we did not consider it feasible or desirable to have groups based only on single sex. Over half the groups (57%) were mixed sex. Some groups included managers as many workers in some organisations had management responsibilities. However, with a few exceptions, we were able to ensure that the managers in the groups did not manage the employees who participated in the focus groups.

7. Use of focus group guide

Most teams interpreted the focus group schedule of questions as a guide, so that researchers followed the order of the topics and/or questions set out in the guide. Given the breadth of aims of the case studies, in some cases (larger groups) time did not allow coverage of all the topics. However some questions had already been answered in other contexts, for example the existence of paper workplace policies, so that the moderator was able to concentrate upon the implementation of polices in practice. Different factors affected focus group dynamics: size, composition (whether a mix of men and women, whether there were managers in the groups), whether members worked together, whether they knew one another and the shared status of parenthood. All these factors play a part not only in group dynamics but in creating their emotional tenor. For further details, see the Methodology report (*Transitions* Research Report #4).

Summary

In carrying out cross-national research comparable information needs to be collected across countries. We ensured this through maintaining extensive documentation of methods and data analysis: detailed focus group and interview guides, detailed frameworks for analysis, and reports on methodological issues. We thereby aimed to start from a basis of common understandings and practice, while also encouraging teams to introduce their own understandings and practices. It is important to fill in the silences in empirical research based on respondent reports (Brannen et al 2002) and also the absences: those who did not want or were not asked to take part. This will be achieved through linking analysis o40
f subjective reports to the structural context. Contextual data are provided in this study through a number of activities: the mapping of national demographic and social trends, literature reviews, and analysis of policy and other documents.

Some key challenges for carrying out the study and the analysis of the data include:
- the nature of the sectors: one concerned with the delivery of care while the other was concerned with the production of financial services

- the greater degree of complexity, hierarchy and geographical spread - which was greater in the social services than in the financial services -. This had implications for research access (small focus groups) and often lengthy negotiations with gatekeepers
- the scarcity and invisibility of parents in some organisations whom management did not or could not identify
- the degree of interest and/or threat generated by the research topic to management which was greater in some organisations
- the organisations' gendered assumptions about the problems of being a working parent deemed mainly a woman's problem in some contexts (Bulgaria); which was clearly reflected in the few fathers made available
- a research strategy focusing upon the place of employment which led to greater selection of core employees and the neglect of peripheral workers where services in some sectors and countries were contracted out, for example food preparation and other manual jobs
- the lack of representation of minority ethnic groups in some organisations
- the absence of trade union as key informants in some organisations which followed from the negotiation of research access via management

3.

On Work

1. State, managers, employees: *loci* of power

Three main *loci* of power were identified as responsible for determining and carrying out workplace policies and practices in everyday life: the state (both at national and local level); managers (senior and line); employees (usually organised in teams). The power and responsibilities of these three levels and the way they negotiate workplace practices varies according to each organisation and each social context.

In all countries, the state is responsible for defining basic formal labour conditions and entitlements to be implemented in all organisations. This is done by different legislation, usually sustained by a Labour Code (the UK is the exception to this). However, the degrees of freedom (or vagueness) in the interpretation and of the implementation of codes varies from country to country. The outcome of these different legislation is that there are sharp contrasts in working time regimes between the countries (see chapter 4, Context Mapping report).

In Nordic countries (Norway and Sweden) the welfare state is traditionally very strong, having a greater responsibility and an important role in organisations and organisation working life, and provides concrete measures which are tightly implemented (although managers and colleagues still influence actual practice- see below). In contrast, in the UK, the Netherlands and Portugal, public legislation leaves a higher degree of freedom to organisations. In Bulgaria and Slovenia, a traditional vision of state primacy coexists with emerging liberal and individualised trends. Recent public measures on work-life reconciliation frequently utilises the rhetoric of flexibility – plans, orientations, good practices and so on – in order to encourage organisations to change while leaving them the ultimate power to decide.

State intervention is obviously higher in public sector organisations, although the structure of the state also varies among countries. In most of our countries, central government is the most important agent defining workplace policies. However, in Norway, Sweden and the UK, local government has the power to set major workplace conditions in public services. However, state interventions have to be implemented at the workplace level. State policies do not guarantee ease of access to entitlements.

> I wanted to work part-time regularly. I thought that is arranged for later, I do not have to think about it. I wanted to work 3 days. I talked with my manager when I was 3 months pregnant and it has cost me a lot of struggle (...) They did not want to agree, even though you are entitled to it by law.

Despite both national and organisational differences, the case studies demonstrate the central role of managers in the daily implementation of workplace policies in all the countries. Employees and managers in all countries stress the importance of line (or unit) managers being understanding and supportive. This importance was underlined in the focus groups in regard to moments of crisis in employees' lives, but was extended to broader questions such as workers' benefiting from entitlements. In Portugal and the United Kingdom UK) in particular, employees used strong terms such as "management lottery" to illustrate the variable and discretionary powers of managers, especially in facilitating (or not) employees' family-work reconciliation, but the role of managers was noted everywhere.

> In fact everything depends upon a manager and how they will respond to the needs of young parents... This informal policy is much worse than the written one (formal policy)"
>
> *Slovenian finance corporation manager (male)*

> Yes, some things depend very much on the manager you have and that is a danger. There are all kind of rules people have to keep to, but there is much between the lines. What is allowed and agreed on and what not.
>
> *Dutch finance company employee (female)*

> If you have a good manager, they can give you compassionate leave. If you have a terrible manager, sorry you're out of luck.
>
> *UK social services employee (female)*

Finally, there are also some differences concerning the role of employees in taking up workplace policies. In public services, most workers are unionised and unions can influence workplace policies. This is in contrast to the private companies studied, where employees cannot influence workplace policies in a formal way, although their informal power is often pervasive. This lack of collective action varies among countries. For instance, in the Dutch finance organisation, even if few employees are unionised, there is a significant influence of unions and of the "works council" on workplace policies.

In Sweden, according to an established practice, teams of employees have great freedom to organise work, including work schedules and leave. There is a mixture of formal (organisational) and informal (group) procedures in order to ease employees' needs (see topic 7). This practice emerges in recent organisational changes in the other countries, but it seems to be applied in particular units or professional groups. Moreover, while devolving responsibility for organising work schedules to self-managing teams can enhance employees' autonomy and flexibility to manage family emergencies, in the context of work intensification colleagues often serve as agents of social control, as employees

are reluctant to take time off if this involves further overburdening their team members.

2. Different groups, different entitlements

Although all countries have some legislation on employees' equal rights and opportunities, in practice there are considerable differences. Beyond the importance of the factors already mentioned such as national legislation, social context and level of manager, entitlements and opportunities tend to be interpreted in a different manner among different occupational groups, especially in Portugal, the UK and the Netherlands. Four principles underscore these differences:

a) *Nature of work*: the nature of the work in different occupations clashes frequently with equality policies. Therefore, the availability of flexible and "family friendly" working policies depends on how managers perceive the operational needs of the different departments. The major difference found in most countries was between front-line and back-office employees. While the latter group tend to work more flexibly, having some freedom to organise time and space, the former tends to be limited to a rigid pattern of work organisation, since the way their work is organised is perceived as not allowing much freedom. This difference is largely accepted by the workforce because it is considered inevitable, but it remains a fact that front-line workers have additional difficulties in combining employment and family life.

b) *Professional status*: hierarchical position in the organisation also shapes in some cases, the way policies are implemented. However, there is some contradictory evidence. On the one hand, access to, training, flexibility and work at home seems to be more common for managers and professionals, but these factors are still unusual among lower-status workers. On the other hand, many managers and professionals fail to use all their leave and have to work long hours, even in the public sector, since they feel under tremendous work pressure.

c) *Type of contracts*: There is a gap between permanent workers, who have privileges and entitlements built into their contracts, and an increasing group of temporary and/or agency workers, with short-term contracts and few benefits. In some cases, their entitlements are lower and, in others, temporary workers fear taking them up in case they are dismissed or their contracts are not renewed. This is evident in private companies, but it is also an emerging phenomenon in social services throughout the European countries studied.

d) *Access to information*: especially in countries such as Bulgaria, the UK and Portugal, our study shows that employees' lack of information about current employer' policies and trends in organisational change adversely affect their sense of entitlement and take-up (see Chapter 2, Context Mapping report).

3. Manager's dilemma: being caring and/or meeting organisational goals

Managers frequently see themselves as having to deal with a major dilemma: whether to give priority to employees' personal and family needs or to organisational goals, when these are perceived as conflicting. This causes a lot of stress, since managers have to work with a "dual agenda": that is, their major concern is meeting both employees' needs and the organisation's needs.

> Basically, my concern is how to assure the quality of the service and those entitlements that our employees have... how to harmonise both things.
>
> *Portuguese social services line manager (female)*

A manager's image is therefore often ambiguous: it varies from a position of involvement with employees, supporting them in making use of their entitlements, to the stance of an administrator acting on behalf of the organisation. In some cases, line managers can even be tougher than the organisational policy. Again, the differing power of trade unions in the countries investigated affects the role of managers – in the Scandinavian countries studied, and in France, the powerful role of the unions, especially in the public sector, means that less is left to the manager's discretion.

Managers usually have a strong work orientation and they are not always very sympathetic to their workers who hold other orientations, for instance prioritising their personal or family life. Despite part time work being a common practice in the Netherlands, young mothers were often viewed negatively by management.

> In general women have children. They start working part-time, find their career less important, don't have ambitions and their career shows stagnation. You can't blame the organisation for this.
>
> *Dutch finance company manager (male)*

On the other hand, managers who are the personal link between workers and the organisation are in many cases also parents of young children and face the same problems of using all their entitlements. They have to make a choice between investing time in the organisation (viewed as being a good manager) and being a good mother/father. Therefore parenthood, in many cases, creates a basis for some sort of solidarity between managers and employees.

> In my situation being a parent has not hindered me in my job. Those are the choices one makes and sometimes I have a guilty conscience because I spend so little time with my kids. And then I hear others who have it the same way, and it gets to be a consolation, a false consolation. But if you are in a managerial position you have to stay within certain boundaries. It's expected that you work more than between eight and four, and then some things have to give, don't they? But on the whole I think I've become a better person and a better manager by having children of my own.

In social services, this pressing dilemma is even greater, since their business is dealing with and support for clients' personal and family problems. Managers therefore face the following dilemma: do they provide more care for their clients if this is converted into less care for their own employees? Moreover, they claim major involvement in their clients' family affairs (for instance, care about children or elderly relatives) but they are unable to provide a good example, since work overload does not allow them to do so. Often, these managers adopt a dual strategy with employees: supportive in crisis moments but very demanding with respect to day to day working life.

Managers' responses often depend on status. For example the UK study of social services found considerable differences reported among managers in distinct hierarchical positions: senior 'old-style' managers highly committed to the organisation and less sensitive to employees' problems; senior 'new style' managers (mothers with young children) showed much more enlightened and supportive attitudes; middle and local line managers, who deal directly with social care workers but who feel their hands are tied and were very concerned with control.

In private companies, productivity is the main goal, and the managers have to be responsible for their departments' performance, costs and profits all the time. This puts a lot of stress on managers, often pressing them to focus on organisational goals rather than on employees' needs. In the Slovenian, Bulgarian and Portuguese finance companies most managers are focused on organisational goals and feel that family-work reconciliation is not an organisational problem but a personal affair, demanding state intervention. Therefore, they permit the minimum flexibility required by statutory legislation. Sometimes managers would like to be more supportive to their employees, but they believe that this would be at a cost to their organisation. Yet, many managers try to defend the notion that a decent and caring organisation is morally desirable and also has long-term economic benefits. This is the case in the Dutch, Norwegian and British private companies. For example, the British private company recognises the need to support parents in the context of intensification of work, for business reasons, and this is associated with a drive for culture change. The aim is to develop a new style of relationship between managers and employees, based on the values of trust, openness and training. Of course this is not easy to implement in many situations, and some of the employees are mistrustful of the associated motives of management.

In the Netherlands, many organisations have "family friendly" policies but often no additional resources are available to cover parents on leave or working reduced hours, resulting in many mothers working part time (see chapter 2.2, Context Mapping report). Here, many managers seem to deal with a different dilemma of how to merge an organisational culture of support for young parents, with the protection of employees without children, who face work overload every time that a working parent is absent or reduces their work schedule.

4. Gender roles and organisations

A common pattern around Europe appears to be that, although "family friendly" policies and entitlements are intended to cover both men and women, they are widely interpreted as policies for women workers. Strongly rooted gender assumptions about who has childcare responsibilities, who should take leave and who might need time off or to work flexibly, pervade both public and private organisations. Policies (except in Sweden) implicitly target women despite gender-neutral discourse.

In Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish and British organisations, it is common that women workers (especially those in lower status positions, and in the public sector) reduce their work schedules to part-time work when they have small children (see Chapter 4 of Context Mapping report); but male workers rarely do this. Part-time work for young mothers is also becoming an option in Slovenia, because the state subsidizes it in the first 3 years. Yet some contradictions can be detected in all these countries. For instance: a) part-time status tends to be viewed as incompatible with managerial positions; b) it is often possible to change to part-time work within the organisation, but not to keep the same job; c) even if part-time options are allowed by law, transferring to part-time employment often turns out to be a difficult process, since it requires re-arrangements of the workforce and managers may not agree (this is particularly problematic given the work intensification trend); d) part-time employees often find that they are working full time for part time wages.

> Some benefits are taken away from you [when you work in part-time], in my case these were challenges in my work that I really wanted to keep (...) So, you are sanctioned in a kind of an invisible way to be working less than 100%.
>
> *Norwegian social services employee (female)*

In most countries, parental leaves, or special days off to attend family crises, are predominantly used by women, except for the period of paternity leave, which is at last being taken up, to varying degrees, by most male workers. In the Portuguese public sector there is new legislation – the "continuous working day" – which allows employees with special needs (those who have small children) to have a reduced schedule with no lunchtime. Only working mothers apply for this status. This subject of parental leaves as predominantly a female issue raised a lot of discussion in the focus groups in all the countries. The exception appears to be Sweden; where legislation encourages fathers as well as mothers to share parental leave (120 days off to care for young children).

If flexible working policies are seen only as women's entitlement, this can cause some sense of unfairness not only among workers without children, but also among those working fathers who wish to be more involved with family affairs. It is often assumed that men do not need flexibility for personal and family life. However, more often, a reverse phenomenon occurs: the assumption is used to

justify gender discrimination in the workplace. Since women workers are considered more burdened with family responsibilities, they are accused of being less available to, and less involved in, organisational affairs. This is especially the case during promotion processes, where many women employees in different countries feel themselves discriminated against, seeing their male colleagues rising faster and higher to the top managerial positions. This reflects the overall gender discrimination in the workplace, gender inequalities in accessing management jobs, and the gender pay gap (see chapter 1, Context Mapping report, in particular Table 1c). This discussion arose in Portugal but also in Norway and Netherlands. It was less common in Sweden.

The research has shown that part-time work is, in fact, a controversial solution in Norway, the UK and the Netherlands whereas it is frequently implemented in Sweden, it is also a less fraught solution. In Bulgaria, Slovenia and Portugal it is very rarely used. Many women workers found it a difficult choice, since it affects their career opportunities and their entitlements (see chapter 4, Context Mapping report, on Female employment patterns). There is some evidence that when workers reduce working hours, it is more difficult for them to reach top positions in their companies. It also legitimizes and reinforces gender asymmetries in the division of family work. In the UK, Portugal and Bulgaria, social services employees told us they could not afford financially to work part-time.

In the Dutch, Portuguese and Bulgarian private companies, some managers confessed that they preferred male workers, especially single ones, because they are more available for travel, training, or to work long hours when the organisation needed this. Their assumption seems to be that they can allow some working mothers in the workforce, but if they become a majority this would cause problems, for instance in periods of work intensification. The dominance of the male model of work is not questioned, nor the value of diverse ways of working considered.

> I think the best working profile is actually that of women. But then, mostly in these last 2-3 years, I tried to bias it towards men. Why? I have lots of clients outside the city... women always have more problems with work travel. They are married; they have children... It's not a barrier (...) but I recognise it's difficult for them to find a balance...
>
> *Portuguese finance company line manager (male)*

5. Times and spaces: hidden negotiations

Flexibility regarding working time and space, a major tendency of contemporary organisations, turns out to be a complex and ambiguous process in the workplace. The general idea is that even if there are many formal (both national and organisational) rules and procedures, working time and working space are usually a matter of local and informal negotiations between managers and employees. Unions are rarely present in these informal arrangements. A major part of the interaction is not even based on direct conversation, but in "the hidden negotiation" - the creation of a particular atmosphere that sets out what

procedures are right and wrong. Concerning working time, the study found some organisations with flexible systems (the Portuguese, British, Norwegian and Dutch private companies), others with rigid schedules (the Bulgarian organisations) and a third group of organisations, in the middle of this continuum, with "partial flexibility" (the Slovenian company, the Portuguese, Swedish, British and Norwegian social services).

But these general orientations only set the stage for local informal negotiations, based on workplace culture and the nature of the work. In most flexible systems, there are many "invisible norms" regulating working time, for instance, pressuring employees to work five days a week. In contrast, all the case studies in organisations with rigid schedules emphasised that informal flexible arrangements are developed to match individual employees' and organisational needs.

Moreover, the ongoing tendency of work intensification in all the case study organisations often leads to work overload. Managers frequently have to work long hours in order to deal with the amount of work they have; in most cases this pattern is extended to other employees. This situation seems particularly dramatic in Bulgaria, since both public and private employees sector employees said that it was usual to work at night and during the weekends, beyond the 40 hours/week prescription. Bulgaria illustrates that in a context of high unemployment and economic uncertainty (see chapter 4), power relationships between employees and employers are very unbalanced and employees cannot afford to resist employers' demands.

> You are obliged to do your job; nobody makes you bring work home. Under the present circumstances, however, the work is a lot more than you can do at your workplace in the allocated time, and you just don't have a choice. And even if you go home, because of the computer in the office, you can't do everything from home, and you won't get paid.
>
> *Bulgarian social service employee (female)*

These extra hours are rarely paid (usually only compensated on low-paid jobs). In some cases, like Bulgaria or Sweden, for example, workers may convert overtime into compensation time used in periods of lower work intensity or for annual leaves. However, in most cases, the "long hours culture" appears as an inevitable (and so legitimate) fact of our times. Workers who do not accept it are not dismissed but often tend to be put slowly aside, not being promoted or supported.

Working time flexibility may increase time control, and is becoming very popular especially among young working parents, but may also facilitate the "long hours culture", generating problems for that particular group.

The British finance organisation is a particular example of flexibility (similar examples have been observed in France). A deep change is going on from a "clocking in" system to a "trust-based approach" to working time flexibility, implemented as part of the "new management", stressing workers' autonomy and

informal negotiation with managers. However, the old system was much more popular, since people say that now they have to work more hours without getting the benefits of time off *in lieu* (even with 5 more days off per year). Moreover, pressure to be visible in the workplace remains, both from colleagues and from managers. Something similar was observed regarding workspaces and, in particular, with the possibility of working from home. In most organisations, working from home is formally very restricted (for example, because of confidentiality requirements and lack of email at home). Being present in the workplace is what really counts. Nevertheless, work intensification leads to a progressive increase of work done at home, pressuring workers to be always available and blurring work-family boundaries. This appears to be common among managers, but also for many other employees.

> There are some positive and some negative aspects. Because of our office situation, they want to squeeze in more people in the same space to cut costs. And then there is the opportunity to work from home. I consider that positively because I live far from here, and the long queues getting here (...) And then at the same time you have to be prepared to work eight hours and then done! Because it's easy to be taken advantage of when you can access the computer system from home, and maybe the expectations will change.
>
> *Norwegian private company employee (female)*

In most case studies, working from home on a regular basis is rare, although there are some experiences of this in the UK, Norway and Sweden. In the Netherlands, working from home occurs in special circumstances (for example, living far away from the workplace). However, in all these countries, this facility is not applied to employees in direct contact with the public, but only to administrative staff.

On the other hand, working from home is a common (yet informal) practice as a complement to regular working time, meaning that managers and employees may continue working at night, during weekends, holidays and leaves, and in particular during periods of work intensification. Therefore, many workers are very sceptical about this possibility. This was particularly evident in the Portuguese, British, Slovenian and Bulgarian private companies, as well as in the Bulgarian social services.

6. Training on the edge

An increasing investment in life-long learning is something common in these organisations. Increasing training opportunities are available, in several models and through different channels, such as self-training, distance training programs (via the web), training in the workplace, training in educational centres, training and scholarships to study elsewhere.

Almost all managers and employees in different countries were positive about training opportunities. In some cases, they stated that this training was very

important to their professional value facilitating career promotion. Most participants even considered that annual budgets for training were insufficient, since more training courses were needed in order to improve employees' skills and promote/follow up ongoing changes within organisations and/or in society.

In all of the organisations studied, the major problem with training had to do with time. The lack of resources for training and the ongoing process of work intensification made taking time for training very problematic. Frequently, only a considerable effort by both managers and staff enabled training course attendance. Managers told us that they tried hard to find some time for their employees to attend training courses, but, in most of the case studies, it was common for workers' training to occur in their own time, usually outside the official working day. This creates the idea that training is often carried out "on the edge".

> I find it impossible to study at home although the nature of my work makes such requirements on me from time to time, but to be honest I simply can't do it.
>
> *Slovenian finance company employee (female)*

So, training is a key factor both for organisation and for employees, but actually family responsibilities and working time organisation are not easily adapted to accommodate this, and in reality training often interferes with employees' free time. In particular for parents, since family duties squeeze their time, it becomes very stressful or impossible to attend training courses and to study at home. This makes some parents (especially mothers) feel unfairly treated, or insecure in their jobs, as they are often less able to acquire the training and qualifications which are key criteria for renewal of contracts and promotions.

Since paid leave for training is rarely available or is inadequate, it is very difficult for employees and managers to engage in broader educational programs, which would improve their qualifications in key aspects. Thus, training is usually based on quick courses on specific topics, but there is little time to incorporate skills in broader areas.

7. Leaves: "mixed arrangements"

Different leave systems are in use in the European countries. Major policies concerning leaves for working parents in the countries participating in this study are as follows:

The use of leaves provided by law is a complex process. While in each country there are formal statements regulating employees' entitlements and duties (see Chapter 4, Context Mapping report), daily reality, for many reasons, often undermines these formal procedures. Sometimes "mixed arrangements" (combination of formal and informal) facilitate workers' lives; at other times they constrain their entitlements.

Statutory maternity leaves are the most accepted arrangement. According to the case studies, maternity leave appears to be almost fully used in social services and in most private companies in all the countries. In Sweden, Norway, Slovenia and Bulgaria, this leave is taken for granted. However, there is evidence that managers in private companies in other countries use "silent strategies" to undermine this entitlement in order to meet organisational goals and tasks, especially in periods of work overload. This results in for example, women: a) having difficulty in booking maternity leaves; b) returning to work before leaves expire; c) being contacted by phone or e-mail and working at home during maternity leave.

One example is the British finance company, where some inflexibility in being able to book maternity leave emerged. Moreover, mothers spoke about limits on how and when they are "allowed" to use leaves rather than about an entitlement. In the end, they feel somewhat guilty about asking for parental leave beyond the statutory regulations for maternity and paternity leave. In countries like Bulgaria or Sweden this problem did not arise, since organisations usually contract a temporary worker to substitute employees in maternity leave.

Note that, after resistance in some countries, a few days of paternity leave appears now to be used by almost all male workers in the countries where this study is carried out. However, the number of days off varies dramatically across countries.

Parental leaves are not very popular among employees, since they are usually not fully paid: in some countries, parental leave is unpaid; in others, it is partially or fully paid. Nevertheless, when families choose to take it up, it is usually mothers who use it, which may have some negative effects on their careers. The exceptions are in Sweden and Norway where there is a law, which encourages fathers to use a part of this parental leave, otherwise it is lost.

The situation with regard to leaves to care for a sick child is more ambiguous. In most countries, there is a sick leave for employees' illnesses, but legislation is not always clear in cases of childcare crises. For example, in the UK, the right to five days a year for care of a sick child is implemented inconsistently. The effective use of such leaves appears to depend to some extent on managers' discretion and colleagues' support. There is some pressure to avoid bureaucratic procedures, like filling in forms to request the entitlements, and they are often used only as a last resort. This informal system is defended by managers but also by employees, in countries where formal leaves entail the loss of some benefits, such as wage reduction or limits on days off per year. This occurs less in Nordic countries, where paid time off for care of sick dependants is more common.

> **W1** There is this option. They let you on sick leave but if there is much work they call you back.
>
> **W2** No one has forbidden sick leaves but it is better not to go on such leave.
>
> **W3** We put restrictions on ourselves because we may lose our jobs.

W4 I notice that this problem is not regulated at all. You need to find someone to look after your child. I was told about a colleague – a single mother – her child had angina, with temperature of 39,5º, and she did not know what to say to her boss in order to get sick leave.

Bulgarian bank employees (working mothers)

Long-term leaves were also a topic of discussion by employees. A general idea is these leaves are a formal facility for working parents that they use in some situations, usually permitted by employers, but with some risks for their careers. Long-term leaves are not very popular, since they imply the loss of (or at least, a part of) monthly wages. Further, in a workplace context driven by insecurity, training and fast changes (see chapter 1), many employees feel that it is dangerous to take long-term leaves, since they can not keep up with up workplace transformations and they may therefore be dismissed in the next downsizing round.

Moreover, when an employee applies for a type of leave and the organisation agrees, often no other employee is contracted to cover for absences (a pattern found in different countries but not in Bulgaria or Sweden). Therefore, a worker's leave is often at the expense of their colleagues' work overload. Many employees reported that they did not ask for leaves – or they felt guilty about having done so – based on a sense of solidarity with their peers.

Finally, annual leave (holiday leave) is a very old and institutionalised workers' entitlement, and is respected in all organisations, but with some variations. Usually, annual leaves' date and duration are negotiated between managers and employees, in order to match personal wishes with department needs. However, intensification of work may sometimes block the use of leaves. Even though they are rarely forbidden, they may become unsustainable (or even undesirable) due to the work situation. The organisational climate has a strong effect on this matter.

Overall, the use of leaves is a formal right but it is shaped by complex negotiations taking place in the local workplaces. These entitlements are very old but are being progressively extended, for instance in countries such as the UK where they were for shorter periods (note that in Bulgaria we found the reverse phenomenon with the reduction of parental leaves taken up, even if the official leaves' period remained the same). Meanwhile, ongoing trends like the intensification of work and downsizing make it more difficult to use all of these entitlements.

8. Friends & rivals: basis of solidarity/competition

· As discussed in previous sections, relationships among employees as well as with managers are a key factor for the negotiation of workplace practices.

Strong solidarity ties may provide amicable informal arrangements, which can be very useful for workers (especially for those with young children in situations of crisis). For instance, in many organisations, peers' support is fundamental to

motivate and facilitate working life; staff manage their work-family tensions informally by covering each other (i.e. swapping shifts). Yet, these ties may also lead workers to make sacrifices – not to take some leaves or not to apply for part-time – in order to not burden their colleagues and managers.

An interesting focus of the research is how – in some situations – these relationships of solidarity and competitiveness arise. When directly asked about this, employees and managers around Europe referred to several factors that facilitate solidarity among the workforce. For example, parenthood was mentioned as an important basis for solidarity. However, there is some evidence to suggest that not having children may also be a basis for solidarity, especially for those who feel that parents' family duties interfere with their work availability at the expense of those without children. On the other hand, sharing an "ethic of care" was also referred as crucial for understanding and support. When directly asked whether gender matters, many participants in all countries suggested that women (colleagues and managers) showed greater solidarity than men, but others felt that generation, experience of having young children or orientations to work and family are more important than gender.

> We are a social security service! Perhaps, even men working in social security may have a different sensibility for those questions, because we live them and also because one of our functions is family protection in other levels... support to unprivileged families, disintegrated families, and so on. And, then, in some sort of way, I guess my colleagues also have that sensibility...
>
> *Portuguese social services human resources manager (female)*

> Some women managers overreact and act super-macho, but generally women seem to understand more. Older managers are less understanding, because times change and because of that they have another standard. They demand more of themselves; they see their tasks differently.
>
> *Dutch private company manager (male)*

Nevertheless, competition was also mentioned as a factor influencing relationships in most case studies, and was exacerbated by feelings of insecurity and intensification of work. These competitive relationships are the reverse of solidarity ties: they are not very common in stable and cohesive groups, but appear to grow in periods of re-organisation and especially downsizing processes.

9. Words and deeds: the policies-practices gap

A major finding of all the case studies is the considerable gap between workplace formal policies and actual practices. Despite national social policies and organisational policies, daily workplace practices appear to be most influenced by informal strategies and interactions, shaped by local workplace cultures.

Swedish social services are such an example; even though Sweden is often considered one of the most organised and regulated workplace systems around the world. However, the case study has shown that, although there is an

"Equality Plan", this is rarely used in practice. Although most of its procedures are already incorporated in Swedish organisations' discourses (less so in practices), it is significant that few managers and employees knew about it and no one knew about its content.

The effects of this discrepancy between policy and practice are varied. Generally, the gaps are considered problematic by employees, since organisations appear to have a discretionary power to restrict employees' entitlements. In a context of increasing competitiveness and intensification of work, organisations often pressurise employees to limit their entitlements, in order to work more. Furthermore, especially in Portugal and Slovenia where formal structures are not so consolidated, this "informal atmosphere" undermines the action of the state and of unions, leaving employees dealing individually with organisational requirements.

Meanwhile, in all countries, it was also observed that this "informal atmosphere" might be used at times to enhance employees' entitlements, allowing them to have some facilities not prescribed by formal policies. Therefore, if managers are sympathetic, they frequently arrange "flexible schemes" with their employees, in order to facilitate their daily life and work-life reconciliation, especially at times of crisis. For example, in Bulgaria, managers informally allow their employees to swap one-month of annual leave with two-months of part-time work, in order to match their family demands. Of course, these informal supports are not substitutes for formal structures, since they depend on the organisations' and managers' good will. It is notable that in Norway and Sweden, where social policies are better, there is less pressure on individual employees and their line managers to work out individualised solutions to family and paid work demands. In Portugal, where there is no security net provided by a welfare state, these negotiations take on a more vital role. However, workplace policies and their implementation by managers are demonstrated in the case studies to be important even in the Scandinavian contexts, in encouraging the actual take-up of policies, for example the father's part of parental leaves.

Summary

One of the main tasks in this project was to find out which major workplace policies were offered in European organisations, especially concerning employees with young children, and also to determine how these policies are implemented in daily workplace life. Major findings include:

- A significant gap between formal policies and current practices

- Workplace policies and practices are shaped by national and local regulations, but they are increasingly a matter of daily and informal negotiation in local organisations (the influence of unions and other

collective agents is very different among European countries, but appears to be higher in the public sector)

- Employees' entitlements, legally equal for all, are implemented in very distinct forms according to (a) the nature of the work, (b) professional status, (c) type of contracts and (d) access to information

- Being caring and meeting organisational needs are still perceived by most managers as conflicting purposes. Managers' priorities appear to be highly conditioned by national and organisational contexts as well as their values and experiences. Gender is not always a decisive factor

- "Family friendly" policies and entitlements are still largely perceived as benefits for women workers. This is double-edged with both men and women feeling a growing sense of inequality: a) working mothers feel this interpretation may prejudice their career; b) caring fathers feel they do not have the same facilities to care of their children. The focus generally remains on policies at the margins rather than systemic changes which might challenge male models of work, and women are particularly disadvantaged by this

- Flexibility of times and place emerged as a major trend of organisational change around Europe. However, the process by which this is achieved is ambiguous. Often it involves overcoming a great deal of resistance and requires complex negotiations among employers and employees, leading to *ad hoc* configurations in each organisation

- Training courses were also considered a core practice of organisational change and modernisation. However, time pressure and economic constraints make their implementation difficult. Consequently, they often end up occurring outside of the employees' weekly work schedule, which is particularly difficult for young parents

- Although there are well-defined leave entitlements, in practice, leaves are usually taken through "mixed arrangements", that is a set of formal and informal procedures. Often these prioritise organisational needs, but they may sometimes also extend employees' opportunities. (Table 7 in the Appendix outlines the national leave regulations in the countries investigated).

4.

Public-Private Sector Contrasts

Several important contrasts emerge from the comparison between private and public sector organisations in this study.

1. Women in public, men in private sectors

Firstly, there is a clear gender contrast between public and private organisations. While social services staff is mostly composed by women, men are dominant in private companies. Moreover, there is vertical segregation and clustering of women into low qualified jobs (see Table 4b in chapter 4, Context Mapping report). Occupational gender segregation was especially evident in Norway and Portugal, but it was also observed in the other countries, with some variations. This pattern in our study conforms to consistent patterns of the social division of work. Traditionally, women are socially more oriented to personal and care assistant jobs, as teachers, nurses, social workers, and so on. Therefore, it is not a surprise to find a huge percentage of women working in social services, although traditional male roles in this sector, such as driving jobs, are still primarily occupied by men. In contrast, men are traditionally dominant in the finance sector and, within this sector, women still regularly occupy traditionally-female roles such as secretary and other kinds of low status or "non career jobs". However, in the Bulgarian, Slovenian and UK private companies observed, there is a similar number of female and male workers. Nevertheless, this contrast, especially in relatively new and "non-gendered" professional fields (for example, computer experts), is also the result of differences in working conditions and dynamics used in any flexible work policies between private and public organisations.

High job intensity and mobility expected by private companies appears to be more easily adapted to men's lifestyles and expectations, while well-defined schedules and job stability appears to be more suitable to women's traditional roles and responsibilities in the household. This is an important cause of segregation, since private companies usually expect higher commitment to work, defined in terms of the length and rigidity of working hours, not easy to harmonise with family responsibilities. Such jobs also tend to be associated with higher salaries and opportunities for promotion and may thus also perpetuate gender gaps in earnings.

> And then she decided to have a second child, well, it was almost a two years' career break (...) Her past: excellent, her present: more or less, her future... I predicted a brilliant future for her. But under specific conditions. Now, she made her choice and left. I felt really sorry. She was a person with an excellent technical profile but then, she told me – 'I made a choice. It is

clearly a choice. I'm really sorry, but I can't combine both, so I prefer to work at a quieter place. Having more time for my family'

Portuguese consultant agency's line manager (male)

In some cases, private company managers confessed that they preferred male workers, but usually this segregation appears in more subtle strategies. Basically, this process is constructed as an "individual choice". Since the gender division of unpaid work is usually unequal, women workers frequently discover that job requirements – long hours, high mobility, curtailed leaves – are not compatible with family responsibilities and projects. Sometimes, women may decide to leave private companies and choose the public sector as an alternative. For instance in Sweden, employed women are concentrated in the public sector (60 per cent are holding a job in this sector, see Table 4f in Chapter 4, Context Mapping report). However, it is a constrained decision, since they feel unable to deal simultaneously with work and family demands. There are strong national differences in women's actual working hours (see chapter 4, Context Mapping report) particularly in regard to part-time working.

2. Ethics of care, ethics of business

A major difference in organisations' orientation was also detected. Private companies are tightly oriented to profit accumulation, being managed by cost-efficiency principles, although often with a discourse of client service. Public agencies on the other hand, are primarily oriented to providing quality services to all. This implies a crucial difference between two ethical (dis)positions: an "ethic of business" in the private sector; and an "ethic of care" in the public sector.

In most countries these two different orientations entail different workplace policies, cultures and practices. Most social services' managers, for example, said that they are very concerned with, and committed to, their employees' well-being and indicated that they used all their entitlements. However, the managers still felt limited in their ability to provide adequate good working conditions for their employees. The ethic of care is especially strong in social services agencies since their task is to provide support to people. Therefore, many employees and managers feel that they must provide exemplary service, by first caring for their colleagues. Economic constraints are sometimes underestimated: any room for manoeuvring is dependent on the agency's financial situation and level of competitiveness. These factors have an impact on human resource policies and the way in which work/life issues are addressed within the agency.

In contrast, most of the private sector company managers in the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Portugal are more committed to organisational goals which they construct as antagonistic to, rather than interdependent with, employees' reconciliation of employment and family life, which they consider to be a personal affair. Often, they understand employees' difficulties but consider that, in a market characterised by intense competition, employees have to choose their

priorities. This gap was emphasised by employees working in both sectors, as well as those who had a husband/wife working in the alternative sector to theirs. In the UK private company, however, the espoused values are that the needs of employees and the organisation are interdependent, although in practice cost efficiency takes priority.

While this major distinction was observed in different countries participating in this study, it is important to stress that its effects vary considerably among countries and organisations. In Norway, this difference between cost-efficient principles in private companies and quality services being provided for the general public in public organisations appears to be very much institutionalised. Therefore, the case studies report two very distinct decision-making processes emerging from the company based on market principles and the public agency oriented to political (democratic) ideology. This difference affects both managers' and employees' discourses about work: in the private organisation, the "personal choice" ideology is dominant; in the public organisation, more politicised approaches arise, emphasising collective arrangements and structural inequalities.

Similarly, in the UK social services, policies of annual leave and sick leave (except for agency workers) are much more favourable than those to which employees in the private company are entitled.

In Portugal, entitlements in private and public organisations are similar, but while in the public sector they are fully utilised, in private organisations, employees feel some pressure not to benefit from them (for example, 35-hours/week schedules or breastfeeding leaves).

Yet at the Bulgarian social services organisation, the ethic of care is applied to clients, but not officially applied to employees. This was to ensure a suppression of public employees benefiting from illegitimate privileges common in the traditional regime. It therefore depends on managers' awareness and willingness to accept/create informal facilities. On the other hand, in the Bulgarian private organisation, the work ethic is clearly dominant and the needs of parents are reluctantly recognised. In a broader sense, a very similar workplace culture was observed in both public and private organisations. This was reinforced in both cases by the dramatic increase in unemployment rates (see table 4k, Chapter 4, Context Mapping report) and, thus leading to a sense of insecurity.

It is important to note that these orientations are constantly changing, and that such transformations are especially fast and with profound impact in periods of transition. As seen in section 5, an evolution of these ethical orientations was observed, in particular in the public sector. This evolution tends to stress cost reduction and efficiency benefits, trying to merge the social function of public services with some of the private sector practices and cultures, including flexibility, flat structures, job insecurity and work overload. Moreover, these contrasts between public and private sector management are increasingly becoming blurred.

3. Public legislation and private policies

This comparison highlights that workplace policies, particularly those concerning family friendly measures, appear to be differentially developed in the public and private organisation. In most countries, employees in the public sector have traditionally had greater job security, although this is currently changing, as noted in section 3.

In all countries, in the public sector organisations, there is a stronger commitment to both national and local legislation, since workplace regulation is seen as directly resulting from state policies. For instance, working hours, annual leaves and maternity and parental leaves are better implemented than in the private sector. This commitment is observed throughout, from the top administration board and HR managers down to the line managers and employees. However, sometimes the quantity and urgency of work – caused by budget cuts, work intensification or the particular nature of the work – clashes with the will to follow legislation, leading to a situation of tension and pressure both for managers and employees.

In private organisations, formal legislation is implemented in a more flexible way, as a general framework locally and is individually negotiated with employees, as a way to merge employees' entitlements with organisational needs. There therefore exists an informal culture of entitlements negotiation, in which asking for formal entitlement or even involving HR are seen as undesirable – because it takes time and it is negative for workplace relationships. Therefore, it is only used as a last option.

> In most positions it is difficult to work part time. Some manage, but in those cases they really have to have the backing of their managers. There are very few part timers here, and it's not favourable for your career development if you are in a position where you have to be in every day. Even with some lower level administrative staff there are external customers to attend to at your office. Part-time is difficult, there are probably other work places where it's easier to work part time and still make a career.
>
> *Norwegian Private Company's manager (female)*

Most public sector organisations, on the other hand, seem to be more tied to legislative policies, and are not so "entrepreneurial" in developing innovative workplace policies which are imposed by law. HR managers indicated that they would like to have such regulations, but contend that these would be impossible to put into practice, particularly at a time when they are faced with budget cuts, work intensification and increasing difficulty in guaranteeing formal entitlements.

> Here they try to follow legislation. I remember... I can give you a comparison: when I had my first child, the first year of his life – I was working in a private company – and he was 11 or 12 hours in crèche. This is too much for a baby in his first year! And I see, since the moment I came here, I can balance things in another way... although it is not like I was at home, but I can manage things... And with my second child I will have some facilities, which in

a private company would be impossible! However, it is the same law! But we know that the way we are seen and treated is completely different.

Portuguese social services' employee (male)

Private organisations, however, appear to be much more committed than public ones to developing their own innovative policies, including family friendly policies, for business reasons. One reason for this is to enhance staff retention. The private companies in the Netherlands, Norway, and particularly the UK, use these policies in their marketing strategies, aiming to be seen as "caring organisations," in order to facilitate a more positive public image of their organisation and to attract new employees. Of course this strategy is partially rhetoric, since daily implementation of these policies is considerably restrained (see chapter 2).

In the Portuguese and Bulgarian private companies, a similar pattern was observed: a flexible relationship with general laws, trying to find useful solutions around the borders of legality, including some pressure on employees not to take up some of their entitlements, complemented by autonomous strategies of supporting employees. In these two countries, this includes advanced lifelong learning programs. In Norway, there is a complex system of knowing about their employees' lives and trying to support them in critical moments.

4. Different kinds of insecurity

Differences observed in ethical orientations and in commitment to policies lead to distinct workplace environments. In the private organisations, workplace conditions are often considerably better than in the public sector ones– higher salaries, training opportunities and other fringe benefits – but work overload is common and pressure to forego entitlements when alternative actions are inconvenient for the companies. In the social services, managers and employees face many dilemmas and stresses caused by lack of resources, but they tend to feel they are privileged in terms of schedules and leaves. They therefore feel relatively well supported in the reconciliation of employment and family life (especially among female employees).

Although temporary contracts are not common in either the private or public organisations (except for supply workers during critical seasons), a higher sense of insecurity was found among the private sector employees. Even in the public sector, many employees experience are now experiencing a sense of insecurity, due to changing processes occurring in public organisations. This is especially as a result of budget cuts, downsizing, outsourcing and efficiency improvement. However, this is perceived as a "future (not immediate) insecurity" or, at least, a "supported insecurity."

In contrast, many private company employees experience "daily insecurity," resulting from working within a very competitive context. The extent of this insecurity depends on the existence of welfare state facilities and of the changing organisational culture. This is however less evident in Norway, where permanent insecurity affects the use of entitlements – many employees are afraid to request

leaves – which affects workers' well-being. This is particularly evident in the private sector company in Bulgaria, but is also experienced elsewhere.

> **W1** The tendency is to take as short maternity leave as possible, and you hurry up to go back to work. You fight for your position with teeth and claws.
>
> **W2** Everything is so dynamic now. And things change all the time. Leaving work for two years keeps you far behind the others. The normative documents, the requirements for the employees change very quickly. In order to provide a better future for your children, you should catch up with the others.
>
> *Bulgarian finance company employees (working mothers)*

Degrees of individualisation and informality are higher in private organisations - due to the way managers and employees negotiate workplace rules and entitlements locally – but also local monitoring and accountability are more prevalent in the private sector. Often, formal policies are not well communicated or used, unions are not very active (there are low rates of unionism in the private sector, except in Bulgaria and Slovenia), and employees feel more vulnerable, having to negotiate their obligations and entitlements individually with their managers. However, this depends on the country – for instance, due to complex ongoing changes after the fall of the communist regime, a higher degree of informality was found in the public sector agency in Bulgaria.

These different workplace cultures in the private and public sectors were observed in most countries during the first stage of the empirical study, involving negotiating access to organisations. Although the team request was the same, public and private organisations reacted differently. Access to the private organisations was faster and more informal although it was often restricted. In the public sector organisations, many formal procedures were requested. However, employees and organisational data were more accessible (see methodological chapter).

To summarise, many employees nowadays face a dilemma. Better financial and resource conditions, opportunities and challenges in the private sector are counterbalanced by more insecurity, pressure not to use all of their work entitlements, and difficulty in combining work and family. In contrast, lack of resources and a more challenging and bureaucratic climate in the public organisations are compensated for by greater job security, less bureaucracy in utilising work entitlements, and often better support for the reconciliation of employment and family life.

5. Blurring the contrasts

Recent global trends tend to challenge these clear distinctions between the private and public sectors. The state's role as well as the company's responsibility is changing, and some of the borders between them are becoming blurred. Therefore, a mixture of formal and informal arrangements to improve efficiency and also well-being tend to be used in both sectors.

However, this process appears to be deeper and faster in public sector organisations. This was a surprising finding, contradicting as it does the popular conception of the static character and resistance to change in the public sector. The emerging "new public management" stresses the notions of improved efficiency and reduced costs. A new similarity between private and public sectors is emerging, with a public policy of individual/temporary contracts, outsourcing of part of the services, or the recruitment of agency workers in both sectors. In the UK, social services managers spoke about a new idea of public management, stressing "better value for money." There is an overall trend in both public and private sectors that occupations at the lower end of the 'prestige' and salary ladder, with no higher education qualifications needed, are outsourced or occupied by temporary workers such secretaries, cleaners and caterers. In our study, secretaries felt most insecure among those on permanent contracts in the social services.

This trend is growing in a period of consistent budget reductions in all social services organisations in this study. The consequences of this trend are still ambiguous: some gains in efficiency appear to have been made, but meanwhile some entitlements and the sense of security they once possessed, appears to be in danger.

The Bulgarian case studies revealed a major trend towards the liberalisation of all spheres of life. In working life, this entails intensification of work, loss of traditional entitlements, individualisation of working conditions, increasing job insecurity, and segmentation of the workforce as a dimension of human resource policies. This trend is reinforced by growing competition in the private sector and budget cuts in the public sector.

W1 We have permanent contracts now but nothing is secure in Bulgaria.

W2 One new reform and nobody's job is guaranteed.

W3 Look at my case. I am lawyer. There is one such position in the City Agency. I had a permanent employment contract for two years and a half. Then I came back from maternity leave and the moment I returned, my situation changed. I became a civil servant and they gave me a six-month probation contract. The trial period will be over in a few days. I am not sure whether they will continue my contract or will terminate it. As they did with the previous Director.

Did they do this only to you, as a mother coming from a leave or was it due to the structural changes?

W3 No, this transfer from permanent to temporary contracts was obligatory for lawyers, heads of departments and directors. They all became civil servants and received six-month trial contracts. This is independently of the fact that they do the same jobs, they have the same functions. Some have worked for six, ten and more years and all have 'probation contracts' now. Our positions are most uncertain. There is no precedent, nobody can say what will happen, and thus we just wait.

Bulgarian social services employees (female)

This is more visible in Bulgaria, than the other countries in this study since this country is still in a complex process of adapting to the capitalist world after the recent collapse of the communist regime. However, signs of this trend were also observed in the other countries

It is also possible to argue that there is an emerging trend in the business world, emphasising social responsibility, promoting family friendly and equality policies, albeit mainly, or wholly, for perceived business reasons. This study demonstrates that some private companies are increasingly concerned with being known as "caring organisations." Although social marketing strategies appear to be increasingly sophisticated, there is presently no guarantee that these policies are effectively implemented, especially when they conflict with the "business ethic" predominant in this sector.

Both private and public sector organisations are in the process of great transition. General trends linked with modernisation (for example training, flexibility, individualisation or insecurity) seem to be present in changes going on in both sectors, challenging some of the traditional well-defined boundaries between them. Yet, the way these trends are interpreted and implemented are still dependent on distinct welfare state contexts, as well as on different cultural patterns characterising public and private organisations.

Summary

Case studies in different organisations allowed not only a comparison among different countries, but also between the private (finance) and public (social services) sectors. This study has shown that:

- Very significant differences between policies, cultures and practices of private and public sectors are still evident around Europe, although these distinctions vary from one country to another. Also, both sectors are experiencing deep dynamics of change, thereby blurring some traditional contrasts between them

- Men are dominant in the private sector, while women are more oriented to public sector work. This is at least partly due to different organisational demands and family responsibilities, shaping different careers and projects

- "Ethics of care" and "ethics of business" were found in all organisations, but the former tends to be dominant in public organisations and the latter in the private ones

- Public and private organisations appear to have a different approach to family friendly policies: the former strictly following legislative dictates, the latter using a more flexible approach, which has both advantages and disadvantages

- Insecurity is a major concern among young employees in both sectors, but its meaning varies. We have described "daily insecurity" in the private sector, with good conditions but fear of being dismissed, and "future insecurity" in the public sector, with less favourable conditions, ambiguity regarding the future, but more effective support for the reconciliation of work and family

5.

Conceptualising Organisational Well-being

1. Conceptualising well-being

This study aims to focus on factors contributing to positive well-being rather than simply the absence of negative well-being. Well-being in relation to work, or family and work, is usually conceptualised at an individual level. We examined parental well-being in the final phase of the project (using individual biographical interviews). However, in the case study phase, we began exploring the more collective notion of "organisational well-being." This draws on a number of conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives. These include the notion of a "healthy organisation," which considers both business and employee needs as interdependent (McHugh and Brotherton 2000); the idea of socially as well as economically sustainable work (Webster, 2004); and the dual agenda of gender equity and workplace effectiveness (Rapoport et al, 2001). What all these approaches have in common is a focus on the interdependence between the well-being of employees and the well-being of the organisation – however this is defined. This is reflected in one of the objectives of the *Transitions* project, namely to explore whether "healthy" organisations are those that are able to adapt to global challenges while taking account of the work-family needs of workers.

It should be noted that we do not have objective measures of economic well-being for the case study organisations. However, some indication of the trans-national context is provided in table 4g in the Context Mapping Report (*Transitions* Research Report #1) which presents an overall Index of Labour market well-being. In this composite measure, labour market income, human capital, labour market equality and labour market security are all investigated in five of the countries represented in this study. In Northern Europe, Norway and Sweden rank at the top, followed by the Netherlands and France, while the UK lags behind the rest of the group.

The notion of organisational well-being is an innovative and challenging one. In this chapter, organisational well-being is considered within the context of the evaluations and perceptions of individual working parents together with managers' perspectives. The relationship between organisational and individual well-being is thus treated as a matter of analytical focus rather than as well-defined concepts.

As organisational well-being is approached in an exploratory way in the research, all of the national reports attempted to define this concept and to present a set of indicators emerging in the case studies. These indicators included: the language used to describe the organisation; feelings of community and sociability; identification with the organisation/colleagues; the organisational role as a caring

organisation/family friendly workplace; and working policies and conditions (including job security). Some of the national reports develop specific approaches emerging from the data. For example, parents' and managers' perspectives on the success of the explicit objective of achieving business goals while attending to employees' needs for flexible work arrangements (UK Private Company); the relationship between autonomy and a sense of control (UK and Norway Private Companies); the values espoused by employees' (UK Social Services); and the importance of corporate values and communication (the Netherlands).

The analysis of organisational well-being, from different perspectives will be further developed and discussed in more detail in the final report on well-being following the interview stage of this project. Here, we discuss some of the issues arising from the case study data relating to the conceptualisation of organisational well-being.

2 Emerging issues in the conceptualisation of organisational well-being

While the limited literature relating to organisational well-being focuses on "win-win" situations, a number of issues in the conceptualisation of organisational well-being emerged from the case study data. Firstly, the definition of organisational well-being in these terms is not widely accepted in practice. In the case studies, management discourses vary in the extent to which they either recognise a link between employee and organisational well-being (especially in Norway, Sweden and the UK) or view these as mutually exclusive, as discussed in previous chapters. At one extreme, managers in the UK finance company are very explicit in detailing a strategy to enhance employee well-being in order to benefit the business. At the other extreme, in Portugal, Slovenia and Bulgaria, managers tend to focus on the perceived costs rather than benefits to organisations of strategies to enhance employee well-being.

Secondly, if a healthy organisation is a workplace where both organisational effectiveness and employee well-being is guaranteed, this raises questions about whose perspectives are being more favourably considered. We found multiple and often conflicting realities among employees. Managers' and subordinates' discourses often differ in what should be prioritised or in their assessment of certain changes. This can be illustrated by the UK private company's introduction of "trust-based" time which was regarded favourably by managers but not by employees.

Moreover it appears from the case studies that it is difficult to compare organisational well-being across organisations and cross nationally, in an objective or straightforward manner. This is primarily because of the complex values and processes involved in defining the different work situations. In particular, variations in values and expectations, as well as social comparison processes, make it difficult to assess positive well-being at the individual or collective levels. There are dissimilarities in expectations, which are particularly

apparent in relation to discourses about the agents of well-being, and regulations about workplace practices.

3. Defining employer and employee needs: expectations about responsibilities, regulations and actual practices

There are variations in participants' expectations of support from employers and therefore in what they consider to be a "healthy" organisation. This is influenced by cross-national variations in the attribution of responsibility for reconciling employment and family life. In the UK and Portugal, the management of paid work and family life was most often viewed as a personal choice, while in Nordic countries, where there is a greater role of the welfare state, employees tend to take their national entitlements for granted. In Sweden, the organisation was not viewed as having a primary role, due to extensive national policies and regulations. Contrarily, in the Netherlands and UK, the employing organisation is seen as having some responsibility for positive well-being. Trade unions are quite significant in Norway, while in other countries, likethe UK, unions are commonly regarded as irrelevant or powerless in this respect. Portugal faces a dual reality. On one hand, employees tend to wish for greater state responsibility. Yet on the other hand, in everyday life, parents must assume control for their work-family reconciliation. Finally, in Slovenia and Bulgaria parents have to deal with the impact of moving from within the safety of strong state protection, to a more individualistic situation, cauing employees to now be responsible for their own well-being. These differences are reflected in variations in a sense of entitlement to support from employers (Lewis and Smithson, 2001), which in turn has influenced expectations regarding regulations and actual workplace practice. This ultimately affects well-being.

The case studies suggest that expectations concerning organisational policies, practices and the implementation of the same, as well as their relationship to well-being, can be considered in two ways. Some employees, especially in Portugal, Slovenia and Bulgaria, in both sectors, see organisational well-being as compliance with national regulations. There is little or no expectation that organisations should provide support for parents beyond this.

> **W1** Our employer supports are mainly to complement wage [in the case of leaves paid by social security] and some understanding towards absence situations. There aren't other kinds of support.
>
> **W2** Personally, I don't feel like the company should give us more than that. I don't feel that's the company's aim.
>
> **W1**: Yes, that's true
>
> *Portuguese private company consultants (male)*

Others employees tend to evaluate organisational well-being in terms of particular measures promoted and implemented by the organisation, beyond the demands of national regulations, in order to care for its workforce. For example in the UK and the Netherlands, where the idea of 'healthy' or 'responsive' organisations is becoming recognised, and the welfare state is not strong enough

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to act as the main well-being keeper, the ethic of care or notion of the caring organisation is evident in organisational discourse, although its manifestation in practice varies.

Confronted with the idea of a caring organisation[1] employees tend to demand some changes in organisational policies and practices to support the reconciliation of work and family. However, while some see this as a favour or cost to the organisation, it is those who recognise the mutual value of such changes that have the highest expectations of support.

W1 I wish there was a crèche near my office.

W2 Why not a kindergarten organised by the bank.

W3 I have been told that in many places abroad (...)

W4 We all have dreamed to have something like a kindergarten at our bank.

W3 the bank could offer opportunities for children's entertainment.

Bulgarian Private Company employees

Things that are good for private life are also good for work. In that sense the employer also benefits when things are arranged well.

Dutch bank employee (working father)

What constitutes organisational well-being varies across sectors as well as countries. As we saw in earlier chapters, the public sector tends to follow the legislation more strictly than the private sector, although even within the private sector, there can be sharp variations, according to different departments and hierarchical levels. In the private sector, many employees find national regulation of little relevance, because of the implementation gap between policies and workplace practices. Of course this gap is not equally spread through the different countries, or within each organisation.

I feel we have 'our house in order', that we act according to laws and regulations. No messing about, right? That's the way it should be. We do have strong unions here, they look after that everything is done correctly. It's a very good employer (laughter). Suppose that's the way it is, when the formal things are functioning then the framework gets very stabile. It's experienced as very orderly and tidy for all parties.

Norwegian Private company manager

Paradoxically, private companies, where current legislation is less respected, are the ones that develop more specific plans and measures surpassing current legislation (even if these are not fully implemented in practice). The places where informality rules can sometimes be more caring in practice, as they depend

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[1] Note that, in several countries, this topic is very recent and considerably unknown, so our questions regarding this issue generated some surprise and, therefore, a great heterogeneity of answers.

on informal arrangements with local managers. However, it can be argued that employees remain vulnerable and dependent on their managers, as flexible working arrangements are not secure entitlements. This was most marked in the UK and Portuguese private companies, while in Sweden and Norway there is more extensive regulation, leaving less need for informal arrangements, and consequently less dependence on managers' support. Moreover, in Norway the unions are perceived as having a role in organisational well-being, while this was not so in other countries in this study.

4. Processes of social comparison

The subjectivity of notions of positive well-being are also highlighted by the process of social comparison. Well-being judgements are often comparative. People tend to consider themselves happier or less happy in comparison to several other people or situations:

> **I:** In this aspect [work-family balance], do you think working here make it easier or harder...
>
> **W:** In this aspect, it makes it easier. For instance, if I worked in a private company I would have to work more... Here we have a clear schedule, don't we? In a private company, you have to show work! And if you haven't finished yet, possibly, you have to keep working out of your schedule...
>
> *Portuguese Social Services care assistants (female)*

> Our country talks big about the enormous benefits related to having children, but I can tell from my experiences that the food and clothes for children are taxed the same as Coca Cola or beer, although we all know that there is a difference. As for Belgium or Netherlands where you can stay at home if you have a certain number of children. That is a very strong state subsidy... it is enabled in western countries as well as higher living standard or housework support.
>
> *Slovenian Private Company (female)*

In all the case studies, perspectives on well-being were influenced by social comparisons; with other sectors, countries, the past, or just other organisations. When exploring participants' perspectives on organisational well-being therefore, it is important to recognise that well-being is not conceptualised in a vacuum.

5. Well-being boundaries: holism vs. fragmentation

The organisational well-being concept as developed here, acknowledges that the labour sphere always interacts with other life spheres. This section explores this interaction, and argues that organisational well-being may be examined according to two different perspectives: one focusing on daily life inside the organisation and the other focusing on the integration of work with other spheres of life. From the former perspective, organisational well-being is seen as fragmentary, relating

only to employees' lives inside the organisation. Whereas, the latter perspective, sees organisational well-being from a holistic point of view, stressing the harmonious integration of the organisation with the rest of employees' lives.

6. A fragmented approach - organisational well-being within the organisation

Several factors influence feelings of well-being inside the organisation, including material conditions, the nature of work, and possibilities for occupational development. Relational characteristics, such as sociability among colleagues or relationships established with managers also influence decisively the feeling of work satisfaction and positive organisational well-being. In most private companies and some social services, employees stressed the existence of good training and career opportunities and an internal job market as important to meeting their needs, although the latter was often more satisfying for those without small children than others.

> **W1** What I find great in BOC is that there are so many opportunities. If you are working in another company and want to do something else you will have to change employer, but in BOC you have so many opportunities, so many other branches. You aren't locked in the same position. If you don't feel comfortable, you can just apply for something else, a project or... In a way you have a much greater freedom
>
> **W2**: If you look up in the internal job market. I think you'll have an average of four or five new positions every day in the BOC's system, only internal positions, exclusive for people inside our system to apply for. If you get fed up with the people you work with, or the tasks you are given, you have a fair opportunity to change, a very good possibility to change
>
> **W3**: I'm not prepared to move. I'd rather quit than move. It has to do with my children's life situation too. I'm a single mother and we have moved, and to uproot them too often, I don't think that's good for them. So I'd rather sacrifice myself than sacrificing them to give me opportunities in the BOC.
>
> *Norwegian private company women employees*

The nature of work is a major factor promoting positive well-being. Several testimonies from employees at UK social services emphasise the ethic of care and commitment associated with social services, drawing attention to the fact that social assistants think they do a most important job, chosen precisely for its contribution to society:

> I come into Edwardia because when I graduated from university I always wanted to help any community whether my community that I live in or other one. I want to put something back in society because the government have supported me to get my degree, you know...
>
> *UK social services social Worker (male)*

Being proud of one's own job is a major well-being factor, linked with employees' feelings of power, control of professional activity and sense of achievement. It is interesting to note that in some places, such as the British private company, the

trend towards multi-skilling as a means of enhancing functional flexibility is looked upon as less rewarding, because people lose their own sense of achievement in a task well done. The organisation's prestige can also contribute to organisational well-being. This is apparent in the Bulgarian bank for example, which is particularly secure and prestigious in the Bulgarian context, and therefore job motivation is quite high.

Factors which reduce well-being inside the organisations are related to work organisation strategies which are negatively perceived, such as bureaucracy, or inadequate communication relating to change processes, and tensions related to the nature of work. Social services is a good example, where employees' knowledge that their decisions may have a great impact and major consequences on clients lives is positive but also brings a high level of stress. Intensification of work is another major problem, leading to occupational stress, and feelings of lack of control, in all the organisations studied:

> **W1**: Deadlines only. Deadlines, deadlines.
>
> **W2**: If you leave your present work for the next day, there is so much you should do, that you have the feeling that there is no end to it.
>
> **W3**: The number of people [colleagues] is reduced, but the intensification of work is greater, during the winter – we stay late everyday
>
> *Bulgarian Social Services (females)*

Yet even this is complex. Several organisations, mainly private companies (especially the British, Portuguese and Slovenian private organisations) are marked by what can be called a workplace paradox: intensification of work may be regarded both as a problem and a challenge, and work is simultaneously stressful and enjoyable.

> Yes, there is a lot of work, but the good thing is when you look at a clock it is 11 am and the second time – Wow I have to go home – and so much work yet to be done. This time passes really quickly. A week is ended... and there is a weekend again... that's fine..
>
> *Slovenian Private Company (male)*

Trust and a sense of belongingness, social factors and job security are also perceived by participants to be important for organisational well-being as discussed in earlier chapters. This may be part of a fragmented approach, or may be relevant to a holistic approach to organisational well-being, as discussed below

7. A holistic approach- organisational well-being in relation to the integration of employment and the rest of life

The second way of conceptualising organisational well-being emphasises the integration of the work sphere with other spheres of life. This is partly an analytic distinction, but emerges strongly in employees' discourses.

Some interviewees are highly satisfied with workplace practices in this regard, either because of supportive managers or due to low expectations as discussed above, and this can contribute to a more holistic sense of organisational well-being. All participants emphasised the importance of having enough time to be simultaneously good employees and good parents:

> What are your associations to the word 'well-being'?
>
> **W1** Time. To have time for the little things in life.
>
> **W2** And to be able to control your everyday life. We have been talking about flexible working hours.
>
> *Norwegian Social Workers (females)*

Some participants are very positive about the well-being of their organisations, because of supportive managers and some of the job factors described above, or low expectations. Other participants were much less satisfied, and some organisations are viewed by their employees as not being family-unfriendly, creating various problems with work-family life reconciliation. Daily work pressure, disrespect for employees' working schedules and lack of specific formal or informal measures promoting the reconciliation of paid work and family life, are indicated as the most problematic issues, with work family reconciliation emerging as the greatest problem related to well-being for this group of new parents. Workers from social services comment on the irony of a care institution that does not care for their employees.

8. Organisational well-being and gender

We began this chapter by theorising organisational well-being, or "healthy" organisations in terms of "win-win" outcomes, that is, meeting the needs of both employees and the organisation. One such approach is suggested by Rapoport et al (2002), which describes optimum organisational change as that which meets a dual agenda of workplace objectives and gender equity, including equitable distributions of work and family rewards and constraints. However, the persistant gendered nature of organisations is apparent in all the case studies, despite the changes taking place.

The gendered division of labour is reproduced to some extent in all the organisations. Women are still expected to be more concerned with work-family reconciliation problems, while men are assumed to be more connected with career opportunities, although this is slightly less evident in Sweden and Norway. As discussed in previous chapters, maternity is often seen as conflicting with career advancement, and this is a generic trend found in all countries. Of course, gendered family responsibilities result from organisational, societal and individual gender role conceptions (see Table 4e in chapter 4, Context Mapping report: the

effect of the presence of children on the employment status of women). Some statements from women in the case studies suggest that women often construct this as a personal choice; they feel they have chosen to take on more of the family responsibilities, and acknowledge the rewards connected with motherhood. However, it is important to notice the difference between subjective experiences and structural contexts and to recognise that these choices, even when regarded as individual, are socially constrained, as people choose within their own field of available possibilities. Some women and men in the case studies do feel strongly that their choices have been constrained by gendered expectations of managers and colleagues, and by wider societal expectations as well as national policy regulations. This was evident in the UK case studies, for example, where the limited amounts of paid leave and organisational support for new fathers, was viewed by some of the women and men as unfairly channelling couples into more traditional gender roles than they might have wanted. It was also noted in the Swedish case studies, where, although fathers have more legally-enshrined entitlements, there is still a perceived gender bias in organisational expectations.

> The employer is slightly more tolerant towards women in a traditional way.... I sometimes get comments in relation to my absence from strategic meetings – you must come ... after all there are two parents in the house. They obviously think that it is more appropriate that my wife stays at home. There seems to be a hidden agenda.
>
> *Swedish Social Worker (male)*

All the organisations studied tended to be gendered in the characteristics that they value. For example, the pervasive intensification of work implies that the most valued employees are those who do not need time and/or energy for commitments outside of work (traditionally male attributes). The trend towards team work and relationship building suggest a growing valuing of more stereotypically feminine skills, but in the context of the intensification of work, which can limit the benefits of team work to team members, it is the male model of work which remains dominant. This no doubt has implications for well-being and equity.

As the private sector organisations studied tend to be more demanding of people's time and often less supportive of reconciliation of family and employment than the public sector organisations, women's greater family responsibilities also perpetuate trends towards gender segregation across sectors (as discussed in the chapter on public-private sector contrasts).

Summary

In this synthesis, some perspectives on organisational well-being have been gathered, as we tried to develop this concept. We began by drawing on relevant literature to suggest that organisational well-being can be defined in terms of the extent to which the organisation can be effective and also meet the needs of the workforce. We do not have data on the economic effectiveness of the organisations, but explore the concept of organisational well-being from the

55

perspectives of employees who are parents and their managers. We have noted a number of problems and issues in conceptualising organisational well-being. The view that workplace effectiveness can be enhanced by looking after the workforce is not widely shared by managers and even where it is explicit in organisational discourses there is often a gap between theory and day to day practice. It is also difficult to determine the meaning of meeting employers' and employees' needs because:

- there is a question of whose perspective to take, as the perspectives of managers and subordinates often diverge

- participants' evaluations of the organisation in meeting their needs are influenced by subjective and cultural expectations and sense of entitlement to support

- expectations and evaluations of organisational well-being are also affected by processes of social comparison

- a distinction can also be made between a fragmented notion of organisational well-being, which takes account only of experiences in the workplace, and a more holistic approach, which addresses employees needs within and beyond the workplace

6.

Concluding remarks

Downsizing and intensification of work were common trends in all the countries studied, both in the private and public sector organisations. Our study demonstrates how this common trend impacts particularly on new parents, both at the stage of planning prior to having children, and in choices about working and caring made when children are very young. The national contexts – particularly lengths and payments of leaves, childcare options and opportunities to work part time or flexibly – are shown to make a difference in how new parents experience both paid work and parenting. However the impacts of different policies (both national and organisational) are eroded by both current workplace practices due to intensification and downsizing, and by new parent's concerns for future job opportunities in a rapidly changing job climate.

While many differences remain between public and private sector working experiences, our study has demonstrated that some of the boundaries are blurring as the traditional better conditions and higher job security in public sector organisations is eroded, and as private organisations become (in some countries) more attuned to flexible working and part-time working practices.

The study demonstrated the crucial role of line managers in permitting or hindering working parent options for negotiating both their paid work and their family responsibilities. This was particularly the case in the countries with less formal regulations, or less history of people taking up these policies. It also demonstrated the emerging role of colleagues in how new parents manage their workload – with workloads intensified and less likelihood of official replacement, while taking time off for family reasons – resulting in the support of colleagues being increasingly mentioned as an important factor.

The study highlighted the continuing expectation, in all the countries (to varying degrees, but least in Sweden) that policies for combining paid work and family care were primarily, or only, for women. This assumption was made by managers at all levels, as well as by many employees.

The study did not in most countries include agency or contracted workers. With the increasing tendency of organisations to outsource work, especially the lower skilled jobs such as cleaning or catering, this means that many of the lower skilled parents do not count as organisational employees. Therefore, they are not eligible for the organisational policies and benefits. In our study, as in the organisations, the needs and expectations of these key workers is marginalised to the point of invisibility. This is an issue which will be addressed at the next stage of the project – the individual interview stage.

The notion of a caring organisation, or "healthy organisation" is emerging in some contexts. Both of these concepts assume that the organisation's performance can be enhanced by caring for employees in their wider lives. However, many problems remain with this notion. Our study shows that pervasive organisational trends such as the intensification of work perpetuate a male model of work, and undermine the equitable reconciliation of work and parenting.

The study also made apparent distinctions between organisational perspectives on well-being (as outlined in organisational documents, and by senior management), and on employees experiences of the practices assumed to increase well-being. This will be considered further at the individual interview stage of the project.

The conceptualisation of organisational well-being, and its relationship to individual and family well-being conceptualisations, as well as its relationship to notions of good practice and healthy organisations, is an ongoing part of the *Transitions* project. The Good Practice report and the forthcoming Well-being Report (both to be published in 2005) continue to develop this concept.

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Appendix

Table 1 Private sector organisations studied according to: sector, size, age profile, gender, skill level, part-time status and trade union participation.

Countries	Bulgaria	Netherlands	Norway	Portugal	Slovenia	UK
Status	7 offices	national division	on-shore branch	National agency	2 branches	regional office
Size *	extra large	extra large	extra large	Large	Large	large
Workforce Age (all organisation) **	middle	middle	middle	Young	Middle	middle
Gender	mostly women	Mostly men	mostly men	Balanced	mostly women	balanced
Skills of most Workers	high	High	high	High	medium/ high	high
Part-time work	unusual	usual	unusual	Unusual	Unusual	usual
Trade Union participation	high	low	high	Low	High	low

Table 2 Public sector organisations studied according to: sector, size, age profile, gender, skill level, part-time status and trade union participation.

Countries	Bulgaria	Norway	Portugal	Sweden	UK
Status	regional (16 town agencies)	municipality (4 units)	regional district	2 submunicipal districts	metropolitan borough
Size of workforce *	medium	medium	extra large	Large	extra large
Workforce Age (whole organisation) **	middle	Middle	Old	Middle	No data available
Gender	mostly women	mostly women	mostly women	Mostly women	mostly women
Workers skills predominance	high	High	Low	High	intermediate
Part-time	unusual	Usual	unusual	Usual	unusual
Union Membership	medium	High	high	High	medium

* Medium: 51-250; Large: 251-1000; Extra large: over 1000 employees
** Young: most workers under 30; middle: most workers between 30-45; old: most workers over 45

Table 3 Countries participating in both case studies

Countries	Social Services	Finance
UK	X	X
The Netherlands		X
Sweden	X	
Norway	X	*
Portugal	X	X
Bulgaria	X	X
Slovenia		X

Table 4 Focus group and manager interviews: number and size.

	No. Mgr Interviews	No. FGs/ No. FG Members	FG Size 2 3-4 5+	If Mixed sex	If Mgr present in FG	No. agreed to interview
UK Finance	6	6 24	1 3 2	4/5	5/6	21/24
UK SS	11	11 28	9 2 0	5/11	4/11	25/28
Sweden SS	4HR + 2 FGs (N=13)	6 26	0 2 4	5/6	0/6	26/26
Bulgaria Finance	7	5 37	0 2 3	1/5	0/5	34/37
Bulgaria SS	7	4 26	0 0 4	2/ 4	2/4	25/26
Portugal Finance	2	9 24	4 5 0	5/9	0/9	18/24
Portugal SS	3	7 24	0 7 0	2/7	0/7	23/24
Norway Other	6	4 15	0 3 1	3 /4	0/4	13/15
Norway SS	4	4 18	0 2 2	2 / 4	0/ 4	13/18
Netherlands Finance	8	4 32	0 1 3	4/4	0/4	27/32
Slovenia Finance	7	8 29	0 6 2	4/8	0/4	12/29
Total	68	68 283	14 33 21 (21% 49% 30%)	37/ 68 (57%)	7/68 (10%)	237/283 (84%)

Code: Mgr – manager; FG – focus group; SS – social services

Table 5 Characteristics of focus group members in public sector (social services)

	No. in focus group	No. in part-time	No. minority ethnic	No. aged 40 +	No. w. c. 11+	No. fathers	No. lone parent	No agency wks	Educ. Level
UK	28	6/28	18/28	7/28	5/28	7/28	8/28	2/28	14 3 9*
Sweden	26	4/26	1/26	1/26	1/26	8/26	2/26	0/26	19 6 1
Bulgaria	26	0/26	1/26	0/26	5/26	2/26	3/26	0/26	21 5 0
Portugal	24	2/24	0/24	0/24	0/24	6/24	1/24	0/24	12 2 10*
Norway	18	5/18	0/18	5/18	4/18	2/18	1/18	0/18	16 2 0
Total	122	17 (14 %)	20 (16%)	13 (11 %)	15 (12 %)	25 (20%)	15 (12%)	2 1%	8118 19 (66% 15% 16%)

*2 unknown

Code: w.c. – number of participants with children over 11 years-old

     wks – workers

Table 6 Characteristics of focus groups participants in private sector (finance)

	No. In FGs	No in PT work	Minority ethnic	No. Aged 40+	No. with a Child 11+	No. fathers	No. Lone parents	No. in Agency work	Education level Deg US C
UK	24	6/24	0/24	4/24	2/24	10/24	3/24	0/24	12 3 9
Bulgaria	37	0/37	0/37	0/37	3/37	8/37	1/37	2/37	29 8 0
Portugal	24	0/24	0/24	1/24	0/24	11/24	1/24	0/24	14 8 2
Nether-lands	32	23/32	0/32	2/32	0/32	12/32	0/32	0/32	14 17 1
Slovenia	29	2/29 *	0/29	4/29	5/29	7/29	0/29	0/29	16 12 1
Norway ∗∗	15	1/15	0/15	3/15	2/15	7/15	2/15	0/15	14 1 0
Total	16 1	32 (20%)	0 (0%)	14 (9%)	12 (7%)	55 (34%)	7 (4%)	2 (1%)	99 49 13 (61% 30% 8%)

* In Slovenia 2 people worked 6 hours per day
** Norway studied an oil company

Code: PT – part-time
       Deg – degree
       US – Upper school education
       C – compulsory education
       FG – focus group

Table 7 Summary of national parental, maternity and paternity leave regulations

Leaves	BG	NL	NW	PT	SLO	SW	UK
Maternity	20 w (6b +14a)	16 weeks (4b + 12a)	6 w***	17 w	15 w (4b + 9a)	12 w (6b + 6a)	26 w + 26w**
Paternity	No	2 d	2 w	5 d	15 d paid 100%** ****	10 d paid 80%	2 w
Parental	84 w paid at a fixed amount + 24w each parent unpaid** **	3m/each (unpaid)	12 m paid 80% or 10 m 100%	3–48 m (unpaid)	260 d paid 100%** *****	18 m * paid 80%	4 w/year each (unpaid)
Care	2m/year full pay	10 d/ year		*****	******* *	2m/year paid 80%	5d/year

* At least 1month must be taken by fathers

** 26 weeks for all working mothers; additional 26 weeks for those who have more than 1 year employment with the same employer

*** 6 weeks of parental leave must be taken by the mother (Deven & Moss, 2002)

**** Up to child turns 2 years, that is 84 weeks paid at a fixed amount (120 Leva) and after that 6 months, that is 24 weeks, for each parent unpaid till the child turns 8

***** For a sick child the employee can use a sick leave paid 60%. Civil servants have up to 30 days/year 100% paid

****** For 75 days fathers receive social security contribution-based on minimum wage. Due to budget restrictions, paternal leave has been introduced gradually: 15 days in January 2003, 30 days in January 2004 and a further 45 days in 2005. Paternal leave is non-transferable

******* Parental leave in SLO is called "childcare and protection leave" (however, conceptually it is unclear since some refer to the 365 days given on the birth of a child "maternity leave" despite the fact that it can be taken by either parent). Maternity/parental leave is contribution-based (all employees, the self-employed, farmers, representatives who have public functions, unemployed persons in receipt of unemployment benefit are insured for parenthood and are therefore eligible for income replacement of 100% of their average income during the previous 12 months. PARENTAL ALLOWANCE – available for all Slovenian citizens with permanent residence by without insurance for parenthood – is 52% of the guaranteed wage.

******** For a sick child, the employee has a right to up to 15 working days sick leave, with an income replacement benefit of 80% (on the basis of a doctor's certificate). In the case of a frequently ill child, the employee has a right to 15 days for each case of illness.

Codes: BG – Bulgaria

NL – Netherlands

NW – Norway

PT – Portugal

SLO – Slovenia

SW – Sweden

UK – United Kingdom

a – after birth

b – before birth

m – months

d – days

w – weeks