Transitions

WELL-BEING REPORT

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

Socio-economic Research

Manchester Metropolitan University
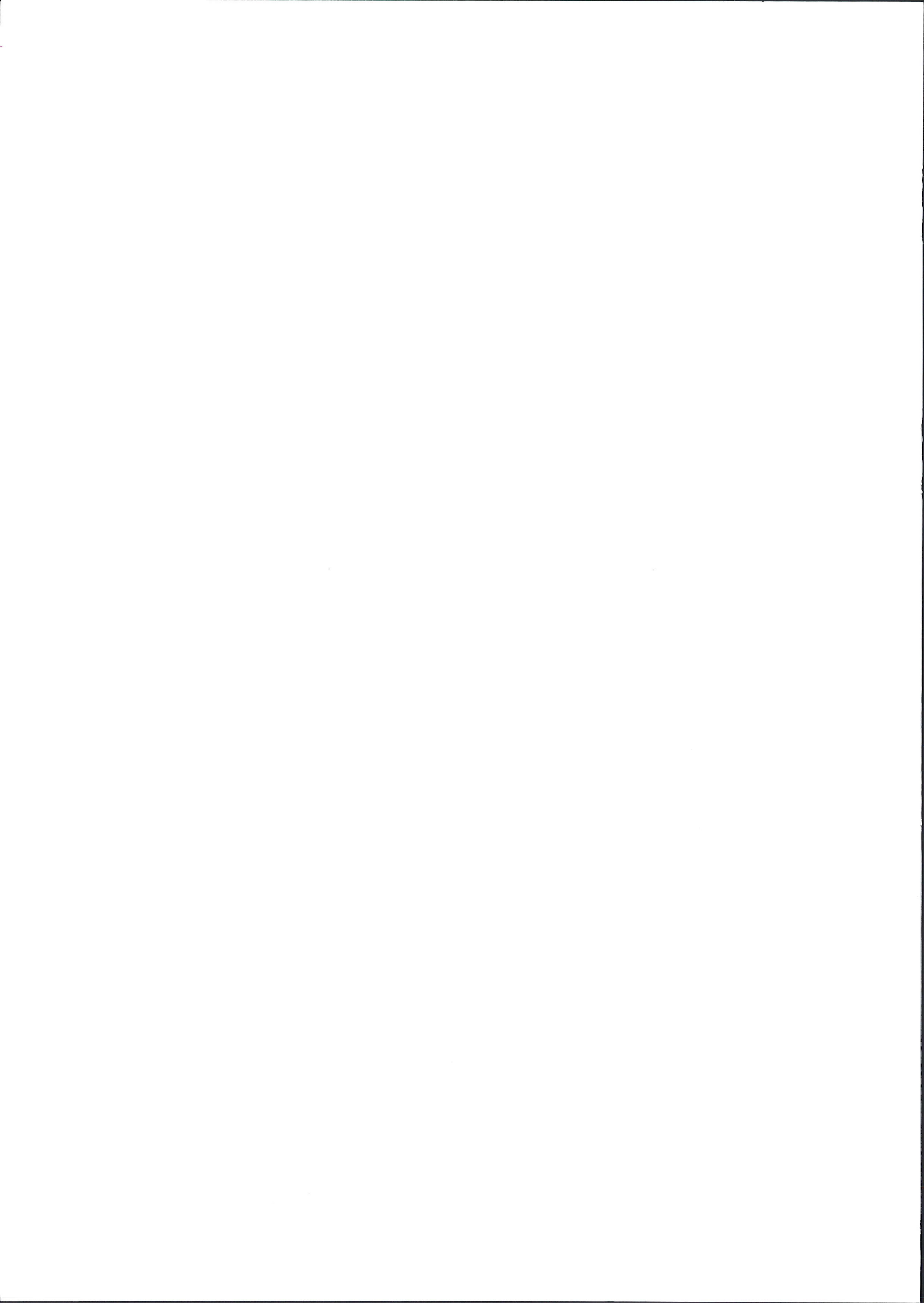
Transitions

Well-Being Report

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RIHSC: Research Institute for Health and Social Change:

RIHSC is a centre of international excellence and innovation in critical research and consultancy on social change, social inclusion, community participation, well-being, work and leisure, health and social care practices and policies, and the clinical biomedical, behavioural and forensic sciences.

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 the Well-being Report

This report explores the notion of well-being in relation to the transition to working parenthood for new mothers and fathers employed in private and public sector organisations within seven European states: Bulgaria, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK. The different social policy, historical, ideological and economic contexts in these countries constitute a range of different situations in which working parents combine employment and family life. (See Table 1 below, Section 1.1 "National contexts, review of relevant literature on well-being, and development of a conceptual framework").

The state of the art literature review for this project (see Section 1.2 below) demonstrates that current research on well-being is approached from very different perspectives, through a host of different concepts, sometimes overlapping and sometimes quite distinct. The focus varies from research on living conditions, poverty and social exclusion/inclusion to studies on stress, quality of life, and a variety of feelings or emotions, such as happiness, joy and flow. The term well-being is often used interchangeably with the term quality of life.

The concept of well-being is used increasingly frequently in some countries (especially the UK and other English speaking countries). It is emerging in research and national debates in the Netherlands and Sweden, but is rarely or never used in other countries (Bulgaria, Slovenia or France). The term is difficult to translate in a simple way in Norway.

Well-being in relation to work, or work-family issues, is usually conceptualised at an individual level. Much less attention has been paid to the notion of well-being at more collective levels, such as the level of the organisation. This project aimed to extend the notion of well-being, and especially positive well-being, to organisational contexts, focusing on collective interpretations of well-being.

The development of a framework for studying the concept of well-being, both individual and collective, in diverse contexts, is thus particularly challenging.

A Framework for exploring well-being of parents of young children and organisational well-being, in the context of changing workplaces

Conceptual foundations

In conceptualising well-being in this project several dominant approaches were considered, drawing on the literature and research traditions in several countries and disciplines. The approaches which most explicitly informed the project's conceptualisation of well-being, at the individual/group and organisational levels, include:

at the individual/group level:

> Positive Psychology, including sources of positive well-being, in addition to causes of stress.

> Scandinavian sociology, including Allardt's model of Having, Loving, Being.

at the organisational level:

> Ethics of care, including co-operative relationships, shared responsibilities and obligations.

> Organisational culture, including support, mutual trust, group morale, and shared values.

> Concepts of healthy organisations and organisational well-being, including individual well-being within organisations and socially sustainable work.

Overall approach

In the project, well-being in the transition to parenthood is explored in the context of:

- national social and economic policy
- organisational change at the workplace level
- individual and family resources and supports

This framework for the study permits the exploration of inter-relationships between the different levels of context on well-being.

The study also explores multiple, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives on well-being at the organisational and family levels; including those of:

- employers/managers
- employees/parents
- parents /spouses

Well-being is explored first in relation to organisational context and change and then developments in individual well-being during the transition to parenthood are explored within socio-historical and biographical framework.

Multiple methods

In order to examine the impact of organisational context and change on well-being eleven organisational case studies were developed in public and private sector organisations in seven countries. The specific, multiple methods employed to explore well-being in the case studies included: questionnaires, document analysis and manager interviews (to explore organisational context), and focus groups with parents. Biographical interviews were carried out at a later stage with selected focus groups participants, and where possible their partners, to locate the well-being of employed parents of young children within a life course perspective within the diverse contexts.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Questionnaire results: some preliminary findings

The results of the **questionnaire** which assessed well-being in work, family, and life in general indicate that the **most significant sources of individual well-being are in family life** for the respondents at this phase in the life-course in all the countries studied in this project. Being a mother or a father contributed most to the positive experiences of well-being. However, this can be undermined by material circumstances.

Work is also an important source of well-being, and is particularly so in the Scandinavian countries, which might relate to supportive social policy and its implementation in workplaces. Parents report feeling least positive about their experiences of work in Bulgaria (where public policy is supportive for parents, but is not always implemented at workplace level or is undermined by job insecurity) and also in the Netherlands, where the family appears to be a much stronger source of well-being.

There was greater variation between the countries regarding general well-being compared to well-being at work and family well-being. This appears to relate partly to economic and material conditions.

The qualitative stages of the research helped to flesh out and understand some of the questionnaire findings and provide a more in-depth, nuanced insight in the experiences of working parents in different national and workplace contexts.

The Organisational case studies: issues in conceptualising organisational well-being

The study showed that it is important to conceptualise organisational well-being in context specific ways. What is perceived as positive in one sector or one country may be very different in another context. The particular form of organisational change taking place and the ways in which this is managed, influences **needs** and **expectations** and hence **feelings about the organisation**. However, there is a question of whose perspective to take on needs as the perspectives of managers and subordinates often diverge. Participants' evaluations of the organisation in meeting their needs are influenced by their values, subjective and cultural expectations and sense of entitlement to organisational support. Expectations and evaluations of well-being in an organisation are also affected by processes of social comparisons. Parents compare their situations with social referents within and beyond their organisation. Different employees have different needs. In particular, parents often need very different organisational supports than non-parents. Needs can also change over time.

The conceptualisation of organisational well-being remains problematic, not least because of the difficulties in disentangling the notion of organisational as distinct from, and at times opposed to, individual well-being, as well as distinct from national, social, political and economic context. There are also issues about defining organisational well-being since well-being tends to be associated with departments or units more than the "organisation". It may be more useful to conceptualise well-being in organisations, which permits multiple perspectives at different organisational levels.

Common factors contributing to well-being in organisations

Notwithstanding these critiques, it is possible to identify some common factors described by parents in the study as contributing to well-being in organisations (as opposed to the more problematic concept of organisational well-being) in both private and public sectors. These include: permanent or relatively secure work contracts and flexible working time and leave policies that are well implemented and respected. In describing organisational cultures various discourses emerged. However the common base is that management support and understanding, and colleague support and solidarity are considered crucial for well-being. Good salaries and challenging work are mainly mentioned as important factors influencing well-being in the private sector. In the public sector the prevailing factors are trust, autonomy, cooperativeness and the absence of after hours work. Caring organisations tend to be conceptualised differently in the public and private sectors. The ethic of care is more likely to be regarded as conflicting with the ethic of business in the private sector, although this is also emerging in the public sector with modernisation.

Barriers to well-being in organisations

In general more factors limiting well-being are mentioned in private sector compared to the public sector organisations. Most often mentioned are: increase of temporary work contracts, organisational climate that prioritises efficiency, competitiveness and task orientation over people, and poor or inefficient communications. However, those in private sector employment are usually better paid than their public sector counterparts, who can positively affect aspects of well-being in terms of housing choices, childcare and transport options.

There are some common barriers to positive well-being mentioned in both sectors. These are: the changing nature of work in terms of intensification, overload and changing work demands, growing actual and/or expected job insecurity, inflexible working practices and managerial discretion/insensitivity, all of which undermine the social sustainability of work. Even if an ethic of care, gender equity or a dual agenda rhetoric of effectiveness though supporting employees is incorporated into organisational practice, 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 paid work and parenting.

Well-being, time and the life-course

A biographical interview guide was developed for exploring well-being in relation to various dimensions of parents' lives, taking a temporal aspect of narrative into account. The interviews demonstrated that well-being is not a static state, but a multi-faceted process situated in time and dependent upon the different layers of context in which life is embedded. The biographical interviews demonstrate the importance of exploring well-being across everyday and life-course time and within many layers of context. Context influences perceptions, which influences expectations, which in turn influence judgement/appraisal and feelings of well-being that can fluctuate even over a typical day. It is also clear from the interviews that positive and negative well-being are not mutually exclusive. The interviews illustrate ways in which work-family boundary strategies and options for young parents are related to the different layers of context within which they live their lives and that well-being for new parents remains a gendered experience, albeit operating in complex and diverse ways across contexts.

In addition, both context and life-course phase are significant in relation to perspectives of having, loving and being as aspects of well being. For example, many mothers are happy to have and love and leave personal 'being' until a later life phase, or achieve 'being' through loving (parenthood) or through having meaningful but not necessarily well remunerated work. However, economic context matters although parents in less affluent contexts find different ways of coping, have lower expectations and do not necessarily have a poor sense of well being. Other values also matter. For example, some mothers were prepared to spend more time in paid work than they considered ideal from a family perspective, in order to provide more material benefits for their children.

Well-being and work-family relations

Work-family relations were explored in relation to opportunities for flexibility in managing work-family boundaries provided by organisations and later in relation to the individual and household strategies parents use to combine work and family life. Part-time work and flexible working schedules/hours options were most often offered in Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and to some extent also in the UK. These options are quite new in Portugal, Slovenia and Bulgaria. In particular, options for part-time work were more often constrained by parents' financial situation and rigid management in the latter countries, compared to organisations in Scandinavia and Netherlands. However, the impact of opportunities for part-time or flexible work can be double edged. They can contribute to positive well-being in the short-term, helping parents, to manage work-family boundaries at the individual and household level. However part time work tends to limit career opportunities. Moreover, part-time work in the context of efficiency drives result in colleagues having to take on extra work. This can result in lowered morale and/or feelings of guilt among part-time workers. Flexible working can increase the permeability of work-family boundaries, but in the context of intensified workloads can result in work intruding on family time and lead to overwork. The impact of policies on parents' experiences of well-being is therefore complex.

In the biographical interviews strategies were discussed for managing the following boundaries:

      a) psychological, i.e., cognitive and emotional;
      b) spatial;
      c) temporal.

In coping with transitions from work to family and vice versa parents use various individual strategies taking into account public policy and organisational options. The setting of boundaries is the process of learning influenced by the stage of life cycle, gender and life priorities. The work-family strategies that parents described varied from complete segregation to integration. The permeability of work-family boundaries is more problematic for mothers than for fathers in our study, as, generally, the mothers not only

carried out only more of the informal family work but were also, typically but not always, more emotionally engaged. In this study, fathers were more likely to separate the world of paid work and family life. Neither integration nor segregation work-family strategies were found to automatically lead to greater or lower levels of reported well-being in a simple way. More important for well-being appeared to be whether a parent has a choice and some control over temporal and spatial flexibility. Being able to successfully achieve the preferred strategy tended to be associated with more positive well being.

Well-being and policy-making

Policies addressing diverse objectives, for example, gender equality and the reconciliation of employment and family life, health, fertility issues and citizenship, as well as socially sustainable work and corporate social responsibility, ultimately address well-being, implicitly or explicitly. Could a more explicit focus on well-being in policy-making contribute to these objectives and if so, how? In this respect this study raises as many questions as it answers. We have argued that well-being is complex, multi-faceted, fluctuating over time and influenced by the many layers of context in which individual's lives are embedded. There can therefore be no simple answers to questions about how policy can enhance well being for working parents. There are no quick fixes. However, there are a number of issues arising from this study that are relevant for policy-makers to consider.

1. At the most basic level of being able to work and care, or "have " and "love" in Allard's model, some policies and supports that are crucial for the well-being of most working parents, for example some form of childcare. Our study points to the importance of identifying the most vulnerable parents, who are most likely to need support in achieving positive well-being. Policies that would help such parents include not only childcare but also, for example, affordable, good quality housing in big cities especially for key workers in social care and health services. The availability of high quality, affordable childcare, together with fully paid parental leave for similar amounts of time across Europe, and the right of parents to be supported when their children are ill are crucial, although such policies are ineffective if they are not fully accepted by management and integrated into workplace practices. Gaps between policy (national and/or workplace) and practice were evident in all the case study organisations. Parents' experiences of well-being in organisations depends on fundamental requirements in terms of not just policies, but also culture and practice and especially the day to day support of line managers.

2. Beyond meeting basic needs, a focus on multiple layers of context as well as dimensions of time point to the need for a multi-layered approach to policy-making to enhance well-being. Different layers of context are important for enhancing parents' well-being. For example, we have seen that changes in legislation alone are of limited value for enhancing well-being of new parents without shifts in organisational, family and community values and practices. Policy-making to address well-being would therefore need to be integrated and collaborative at many levels. For example, different areas of public policy such as educational, health, work and employment and fiscal policies need to be integrated and to be supported on different societal levels.

3. A frequently recurring theme across the countries is the ways in which gender shapes experiences of parenthood and well-being, albeit in complex ways and makes motherhood different from fatherhood both in everyday family life and in workplaces. The transition to parenthood appears to be a critical 'tipping point' on the road to gender equality and therefore a crucial focus for policy-making at different levels to address the well-being of parents. However, while the transition to parenthood affects both mothers and fathers, the different experiences and starting points of mothers and fathers, which also vary across national contexts, still needs to be acknowledged.

4. There are significant questions to be considered about whose well-being is to be addressed, at what point of time, in what context. A life course approach would involve

focusing on the potential long-term as well as short-term impact of polices and practices on well-being in given contexts. For example, there is a dilemma that policies that meet parents' currently articulated needs – for example part-time work for mothers, can enhance mothers well-being in the short-term but also reproduce gender inequalities and potentially undermine well-being in the long-term, unless change occurs in workplace values and practices such as the gendered construction of organisational commitment in terms of full time work. This again points to the need for interrelated changes at many levels.
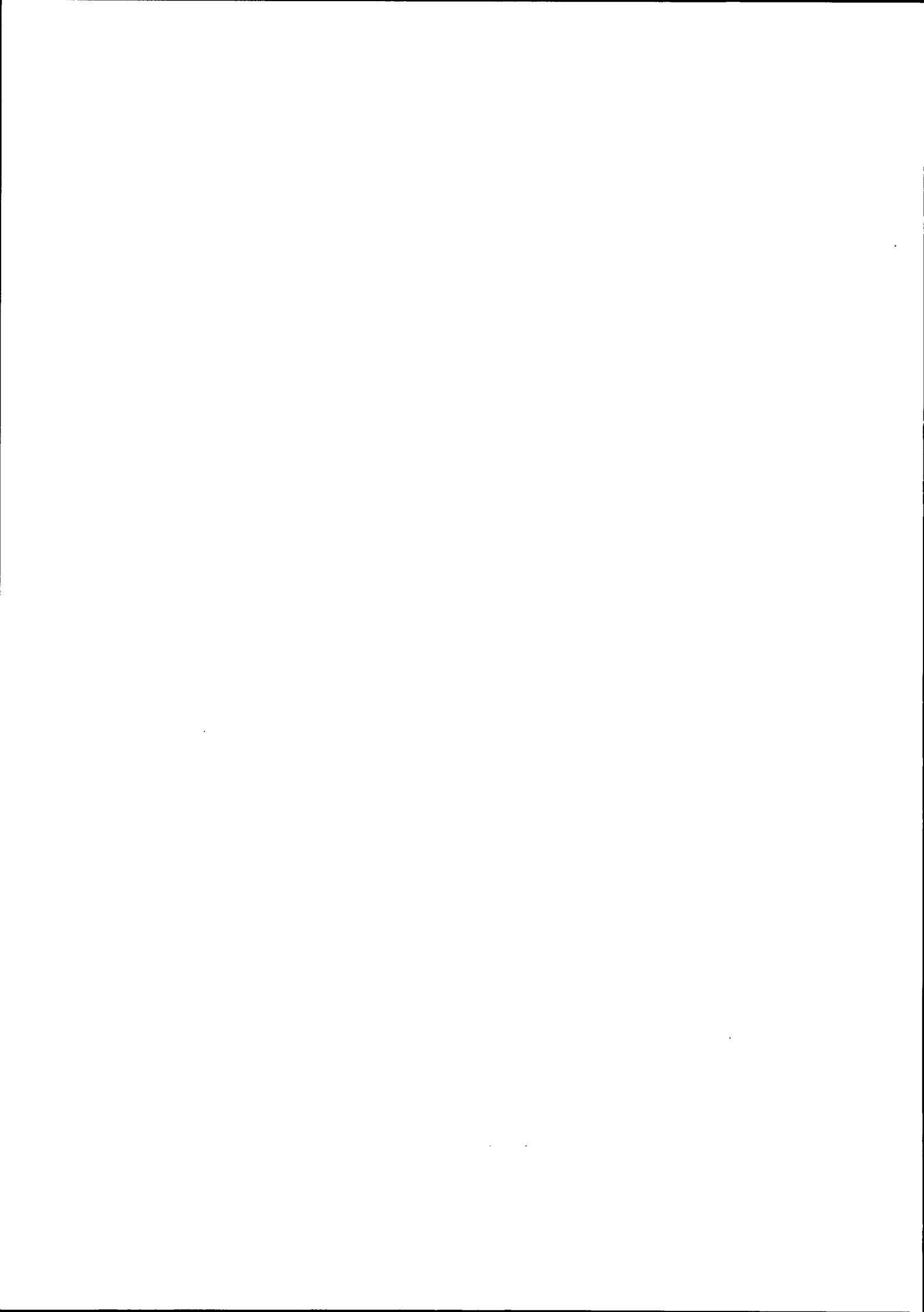
5. Policies that aim to bring about fundamental social changes towards what is considered to be a common good, may also affect well-being negatively for some people in the short-term, albeit aiming for long-term positive consequences. For example, our study demonstrates that policies that address gender issues, such as the father's quota in parental leave in Norway and Sweden may create short term tensions in some families, but such couple tensions may be necessary for progress to occur and in the interest of long term well-being in families and societies. Similarly this study shows that rather low expectations of organisational support for managing work and family life may be more easily met in less affluent societies especially where gender equality ideology is not yet widely established. On the other hand the resistance to organisational change to enhance parents' well-being in less affluent societies could be greater. Low expectations may more easily generate well-being, in contrast to the higher expectations of support among parents living in societies with higher standards of gender equality and greater affluence. But again, raising expectations and unsettling people may be necessary for change, with the potential to contribute to enhanced well-being in terms of longer terms opportunities for positive experiences in work and family, and for having, loving and being.

6. The dynamics of change have to take into account the contextual and historical options because drastic changes even with the aim to create positive social changes could create resistance and seriously delay the positive effects.

Overall this project indicates that rapidly changing conditions in European workplaces in the global market require the ongoing evaluation of the impact of a range of policies and practices on the well-being of individual parents and their employing organisations, taking both short term and long-term perspectives, and taking into account of the roles of the most relevant actors: state, employers, trade unions and workers.

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INTRODUCTION

This report explores the notion of well-being in relation to the transition to working parenthood for new mothers and fathers in this cross-European study.

In Section 1 we briefly discuss the national contexts for the study before introducing, critiquing and developing various strands of research on well-being in the social sciences, which form the basis for an exploratory framework for studying well-being among new parents and within organisations in the *Transitions* project.

In Section 2 we describe some of the project's findings and analysis, using this initial exploratory framework.

In Section 3 we discuss some of the implications of the project for research on well-being, and for policy and practice to support working parents.

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SECTION ONE

National contexts, review of relevant literature on well-being, and development of a conceptual framework

1.1   National Contexts

The Context Mapping Report for this study (Fagnani et al, 2003) developed a framework of six categories for describing mothers' labour market pattern and the different ways in which working parents combine a job and family life in the diverse countries (see Table 1). The countries also represent a range of economic contexts, ranging from Bulgaria and Slovenia – both making the transition to a market economy (with Slovenia admitted to the EU during the period of the project) – and Portugal, to Norway, the most affluent (see Table 2 in Appendix 1).

Table 1 below outlines the patterns for combining employment and family, and the economic backgrounds of the countries in this study. As economic growth and GDP alone are not necessarily associated with well-being beyond a certain threshold (Layard, 2003), we explore well-being qualitatively as well as quantitatively, in these diverse contexts for reconciling parenting and employment.

1.2.   Review of the well-being literature in the different national contexts and the development of a conceptual framework

1.2.1.   What is well-being?

The state of the art literature review for this project (den Dulk, Peper and van Doorne-Huiskes et al, 2003) demonstrates that current research on well-being is approached from very different perspectives, through a host of different concepts, sometimes overlapping and sometimes quite distinct. The focus varies from research on living conditions, poverty, social exclusion/inclusion to studies on stress, quality of life, and a variety of feelings or emotions such as happiness, joy and flow. The term well-being is often used interchangeably with the term quality of life.

TABLE 1

MOTHERS' EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS AND DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH WORKING PARENTS COMBINE A JOB AND A FAMILY LIFE, PLUS ECOMONIC CONTEXT

Country	Employment Patterns	Combining Work and Unpaid Work	Economic factors[1]
NORWAY SWEDEN Egalitarian model	Long part-time or full-time jobs Short parental leave (one year)	Extensive use of Public schemes supporting Working parents (Subsidised child-care arrangements, paid parental leave, flexible working hours…)	Relatively high GDP
FRANCE Dual-earner model or the "working mother"	Long part-time or full-time jobs. Long parental leave (3 years) for less qualified or low paid	Extensive use of Public schemes supporting Working parents (Subsidised child-care arrangements, paid parental leave, flexible working hours…)	Relatively high GDP
UK NETHERLANDS Modified male breadwinner	Short part-time jobs (as long as children are under school-age)	Reduction of Working time Kin/Voluntary/Market for child-care Family-friendly Flexibility at the Workplace	Relatively high GDP, more income inequality in the UK
PORTUGAL Dual-earner model	Full-time jobs Long working hours for both partners	Reduction of the number of children Kin/Market for child-care	Relatively low GDP
SLOVENIA Dual-earner model	Full-time jobs Long working hours for both partners	Family or informal care for children under 3 years. Use of public schemes supporting working parents (Subsidised child-care arrangements) and Reduction of the number of children	Undergoing transition to market economy Relatively low GDP
BULGARIA Dual-earner model	Full-time jobs for both partners	Reduction of the number of children Long (2-3 years) parental leave for mothers	Undergoing transition to market economy Lowest GDP

1 For more details on the economic context see Table 2 in Appendix 1, on GDP per capita, inequality of income distribution and HDI in the Appendix (from Fagnani et al, 2003, Context Mapping Report)

The concept of well-being is used increasingly frequently in some countries (especially the UK and other English speaking countries), is emerging in research and national debates in the Netherlands and Sweden, whilst being rarely or never used in others countries (Bulgaria, Slovenia or France). The term is difficult to translate in a simple way in Norway (See Smithson et al, 2005).

For these reasons, the development of a framework for studying such a variably used and differently understood concept is particularly challenging, especially in a multi-lingual, multi-disciplinary research team using a multi-method approach. Nevertheless, the multi-layered approach used in the *Transitions* project has the potential to enhance understanding of the complex and and contextualised nature of the concept of well-being.

1.2.2. Individual, and organisational well-being

The *Transitions* study aimed to look at the well-being of new parents in European organisations. Well-being in relation to work, or work-family issues, is usually conceptualised at an individual level. Much less attention has been paid to the notion of well-being at more collective levels, such as the level of the organisation. This project aimed to extend the notion of well-being, and especially positive well-being, to organisational contexts, focusing on collective interpretations of well-being.

Our original aim was to examine the collective interpretation at the family as well as the organisational level. However collective notions of well-being are always problematic because they can obscure different perspectives and experiences. We therefore chose to focus on organisational well-being because our methodology enabled us to focus on multiple levels (in contrast to families where, for example the children in our study were too young to interview), and because of complex issues of individual versus family well-being within families.

1.2.3. Approaches to well-being contributing to a conceptual framework

In conceptualising well-being we considered several dominant approaches, drawing on the literature and research traditions from several countries and disciplines.

The approaches which most explicitly informed the project's conceptualisation of well-being, from individual to organisational approaches, include at the individual level:

- Positive Psychology approach
- Scandinavian sociological approach (Allardt: Having, Loving, Being)

and at the organisational level:

- Ethics of care approach
- Organisational culture approach
- Concepts of healthy organisations and socially sustainable work

These are described briefly below.

Positive psychology approach

In the rapidly-growing field of Positive psychology, there is a distinction between the earlier focus on negative well-being or stress and conflict associated with the reconciliation of work and family, and on positive well-being and happiness. This approach focuses on the concept of subjective well-being, defined by Diner et al, (1999) as a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfaction and global judgement of life satisfaction.

Positive well-being incorporates the concept of "flow" or optimal experiences, that is, enjoyable, challenging experiences (Haworth, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi and Le Fevre, 1989). Flow can occur in a range of activities, but is often associated with work that challenges and stretches people's abilities, providing the conditions where work can feed

into a sense of self and accomplishment. The aim of this project was to focus particularly on the sources of positive well-being in the transition to parenthood.

Scandinavian sociological conceptualisation of Welfare

There has been a long tradition in the Nordic countries of studying "Welfare", which has some overlap with the newer, more anglo-centric research on well-being. This was considered particularly relevant by the *Transitions* research team, drawing as it does on the social/societal/structural aspects of life, which are centrally important to the study of new parents and organisational environments.

The Comparative Scandinavian Welfare Study (Allardt, 1995), followed the basic needs approach developed by Norwegian Johan Galtung (1980) and distinguished between material and non-material needs: Having, Loving and Being (Allardt, 1995:89-91):

> *"Having" refers to those material conditions which are necessary for survival and for avoidance of misery. It covers needs for nutrition, air, water, for protection against climate, environment, disease, etc. For this group Allardt proposes the following measures: economic resources, housing conditions, working conditions, health, education, and measures pertaining to biological and physical environment.*

> *"Loving" stands for the need to relate to other people and to form social identities. The level of need satisfaction can be assessed by indicators denoting: attachment and contacts in the local community, with the fellow members in associations and organizations, attachment to family and kin, active patterns of friendship and relationships with work-mates.*

> *"Being" denotes the need for integration into society and to live in harmony with nature. The positive side of being may be characterized as personal growth, whereas the negative aspects indicates alienation. The following indicators belong to this group: participation in decisions and activities influencing an individual's life, and opportunities for meaningful work, family and leisure-time pursuits and for enjoying nature.*

Allardt's framework has been used in different ways in Sweden, Norway and Slovenia, but provides a potentially useful way of characterising the diverse national approaches to well-being discussed in the national literature reviews, which incorporate concepts of objective and subjective well-being at individual and collective levels, ethics of care, and positive well-being.

Ethics of Care

The well-being concept is also often associated with the concept of care, which relates particularly to the "loving" aspect of the Scandinavian model. This approach has particular relevance for the *Transitions* project which considered care of family and compares parents working in "care-oriented" organisations (social services) with those working in commercial sectors.

Tronto (1993:103) defines care as "a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible". Care is regarded as a continuous social process consisting of four phases in which the perspectives of all involved should be taken into account (Tronto, 1996:147):

- *Caring about* means the recognition that there is a need for care.
- *Taking care of* assumes the willingness and capacity to take the responsibility to do something for the need in question.
- *Care-giving* is the practical activity related to the satisfaction of need(s).
- *Care-receiving* is the interaction between the care-giver and care-recipient.

At a collective, organisational level, from a care ethic perspective, labour relations would be interpreted not only as mere market transactions between individuals or institutions but as "co-operative relations which create 'moral relationality', that is, sets of specific responsibilities and obligations between the parties concerned." (Sevenhuijsen, 2003: 28). An approach to the ethics of care in organisations (Sevenhuijsen, 2003) focuses on the importance of care, responsibility and trust within organisational cultures.

Organisational culture approach

Subjective well-being at a collective, organisational level can refer to aspects of workplace culture, for example mutual trust and group morale (Veenhoven, 1991). There are three fundamental levels at which organisational culture manifests itself (Schein, 1999): 1) **artefacts**, which might include for example work-family policies (as opposed to practice) 2) **values, strategies and ideologies**, which would be indicated by the ways in which such policies are implemented, and by outcomes such as trust and morale, and 3) **underlying assumptions** that are taken for granted and underpin resistances to change, for example assumptions about ideal workers.

The Organisational culture approach is relevant to the *Transitions* project as it deals with values and assumptions that can influence workplace practices affecting parents' experiences of organisations. Employees are more likely to identify with organisations that they perceive as promoting values congruent with their own, although processes of employee identification more often occur at the group/department level than on the more abstract level referring to organisation as an entity.

One aspect of organisational culture that has attracted a great deal of attention in the (mainly quantitative) research on work and family is perceived organisational support, operationalised as perceived support from "the organisation", managers and employers. (Thompson, Beauvais and Lynes, 1999; Allan, 2001). Quantitative research shows that perceived organisational support predicts well-being (in terms of, for example, reduced work-family conflict) better than the mere availability of policies. However quantitiative measures of perceived organisational support do not take account of meanings and expectations of such support which are particularly important in the context of different national policy frameworks (Lewis and Smithson, 2001).

Concepts of healthy organisations and socially sustainable work

There are a number of exceptions to the prevailing individual approaches to well-being, including the notion of healthy organisations, developed in the UK (Newell, 2002; McHugh and Brotherton, 2000), as well as in other English speaking countries. Although the literature on healthy organisations sometimes focuses on economic health, which is not our main concern here, other research emphasises the need to address a dual agenda (Rapoport et al, 2002) of employee well-being in the reconciliation of work and workplace effectiveness, conceptualising individual and organisational health as interdependent (McHugh and Brotherton, 2000). A related concept is that of socially sustainable work (Brewster, 2004: Webster, 2004), which takes account of long term needs of organisations, individuals and societies. As reproduction of citizens and workers is essential to sustainable societies and workplaces, we assume that socially sustainable workplaces are those that support working parents in working and caring or do not impose conditions that make working parenthood very difficult, which might be reflected in low birth rates.

This approaches contributes to the exploration and conceptualisation of possible collective notions of organisational well-being. The essence of this approach is that it positions employing organisations within wide social contexts, with wide social responsibilities, for mutual benefit. This includes an ethic of care, although such links are not always made in the literature.

1.2.4. Well-being research in relation to different national concerns and debates

The focus of well-being (or quality of life) literature in each country tends to reflect specific national concerns, as well as research traditions and histories. Well-being in terms of "Having" (enough resources) is the main focus in the less affluent countries in our study, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Portugal, where research tends to be concentrated on living conditions and quality of life. There is however, an interesting asymmetry between objective and subjective well-being in Portugal, where objective indicators such as low wages are not reflected in studies of subjective well-being which indicate high levels of supportive values and satisfaction. This challenges a purely economic or material view of well-being.

In the Netherlands and Sweden, where there is currently much concern about sickness rates (see Smithson et al, 2005), although research tends to focus on subjective well-being beyond "having", there is also much concern about stress and conflict. Much Norwegian research on well-being centres around surveys of living conditions although there is some literature on positive well-being and happiness, mostly from international surveys on which Norwegians tend to score highly.

In the UK, there is a long tradition of research on stress, which currently tends to focus on the impact of long working hours and increasing job pressure on subjective well-being, and the negative effects of contemporary working practices on personal and family life. There is now also a growing research theme in the UK on happiness, "flow" and positive well-being, in the Positive psychology tradition. This is sometimes framed in terms of "work-life balance", reflecting both a positive aspiration, and a need to avoid blurred work and family boundaries and the time squeeze, typical in contemporary advanced economies.

A new debate about well-being in the UK considers the social phenomenon of increasing ideological emphasis upon the 'care of the self' and the practices and techniques whereby we manage ourselves and produce well-being – *being* in positive ways (Haworth et al. 2005). This is also linked with consumerism, taking *"having"* to a new level, beyond "enough", the idea that consumer goods and services are becoming constituent parts of forming personal identity as well as a frame of reference for evaluation of quality of life. Another emerging but minority discourse, comes from the New Economics Foundation in Britain which argues that as economic growth is not associated with a growth in well-being, government policy should be aimed at enhancing the well-being of citizens by for example, taking actions to reduce working time, discourage consumerism and encourage community participation (NEF, 2005), and thereby addressing all levels of *having, loving* and *being*.

1.3 Developing a framework for exploring well-being

Building on and developing previous conceptualisations and research, the project aimed to explore the notion of well-being in the following ways:

- **Exploring how different contextual levels, particularly social policy and organisational and family context, are interrelated regarding well-being;**
- **Specifically, the *Transitions* project explored well-being in the transition to parenthood in the context of:**
  - national context: social policy and economic context (see Table 1)
  - organisational context: sector, organisational change, policy, culture and the practice and ethic of care
  - individual and family: resources and supports for reconciling parenthood and work.

National social policies (see Fagnani et al., 2003) and related national debates (Smithson et al, 2005) represent the context influencing the options and functioning of organisations, communities, families and individuals. Policies that support the reconciliation of work and family, economic factors, and current national debates related to working and caring are likely to be particularly salient for the well-being of new parents. However, other trends such as fertility rates could also be indicators of well-being, more broadly defined. It is clear from the literature review that the impact of national social policies relating to the transition to parenthood depends on implementation at the workplace level, and resources and relationships within families. Organisational context and experiences in families are therefore also important for understanding well-being in the transition to parenthood.

This framework permits the exploration of the inter-relationships between the different levels of context of well-being, taking into account the multiple evaluations and perceptions of individual working parents together with managers' perspectives in the organisational context.

In taking account of the impact of organisational context on individual well-being, it is important to note that there are often multiple and sometimes conflicting perspectives on well-being. The *Transitions* study explores multiple perspectives at the organisational and family levels, including these:

- employers/managers
- employees/parents
- parents /spouses

- **Attempting to conceptualise organisational as well as individual well-being during processes of change and transition;**

At its most simple level, organisational well-being could be conceptualised as a collection of individual feelings about well-being at work. However this would not take account of organisational processes and dynamics. We were interested in whether and how organisations managed change while also caring about or supporting employees with young children, building on the notions of organisational culture, healthy and sustainable organsiations and the ethic of care.

- **In exploring developments in individual well-being during the transition to parenthood, within a socio-historical and biographical framework;**

Aspects of well-being shift over the life course. Organisations, people's needs and desires, and their material and social conditions change. For this reason we took a life course, biographical approach in our individual interview study, to locate the well-being of employed parents of young children within a life course perspective.

- **In combining *different methods* in the study of well-being.**

An organisational case study approach
In order to examine the impact of organisational context and change on well-being, eleven organisational case studies were developed in public and private sector organisations in seven countries.

Questionnaires, document analysis , interviews, and focus groups
The specific, multiple methods employed to explore well-being in the case studies included: questionnaires, document analysis and manager interviews (to explore organisational context), and focus groups with parents. Questionnaires and interview and focus group guides were developed collaboratively, to explore individual and organisational well-being, drawing on the very different paradigms described in Section

1.2.1. For example, managers and parents were asked if they felt theirs was a caring organisation, particularly in the context of workplace change, and the ways in which they interpreted "caring" were explored in interviews and focus groups. Questions also addressed perceived organisational support from "the organsiation", managers and colleagues. This framework reflects the different aspects of well-being as well as the multi-disciplinary, multi-level approach (see Appendix 2, and the Case Studies Summary Report, das Dores Guerreiro et al, 2004).

Individual biographical interviews

Aspects of well-being shift over the life course. A life course, biographical approach was taken in the individual interview stage, to locate the well-being of employed parents of young children within a life course perspective. New parents who had participated in the focus groups, and, where possible, their partners, were interviewed in their homes to gain a fuller picture of well-being in the transition to parenthood in the context of individual and family: resources, supports and constraints for reconciling parenthood and work.

Further details of methods used to explore well-being are provided in Appendix 2.

Summary of the innovative *Framework* for exploring well-being of parents of young children and organisational well-being, in the context of changing workplaces

1. Conceptual foundations: explores individual well-being drawing particularly on Positive psychology and Allardt's approach, and also explores a notion of organisational well-being based on the ethic of care and organisational culture approaches, and concepts of healthy organisations and sustainable work.

2. Explores well-being in context: national (especially social policy and economic context); organisational (sector, organisational change, policy, culture and practice and the ethic of care); and individual and family: resources and supports for reconciling parenthood and work. Also explores the inter-relationships of levels of context in relation to well-being.

3. Takes account of multiple perspectives on well-being. These include the perspectives of employers/managers and employees/parents on organisational well-being, well-being in organisations and the perspectives of parents/spouses on individual well-being in the transition to parenthood.

4. Explores developments in individual well-being during the transition to parenthood, within a socio-historical and biographical framework.

5. Employs multiple methods.

SECTION TWO

Findings on well-being from different parts of the study

Below we explore some of the **project findings and analysis** on well-being, using the conceptualisations and methods discussed so far, in three stages. In **Section 2.1** we look at individual well-being in organisational and cross national contexts, drawing on the results of the well-being questionnaire.

In **Section 2.2** we consider some of the findings on well-being from the focus groups and manager interviews and implications for conceptualising organisational well-being.

In **Section 2.3** we discuss some insights into well-being in the transition to parenthood in diverse contexts, emerging from the biographical interviews.

2.1 Findings from the well-being questionnaires

Questionnaire development: The majority of studies of well-being use questionnaires and quantitative analysis. A questionnaire was therefore developed by the cross national team to provide a link with previous research in which to root our developing qualitative framework. The well-being questionnaire (WBQ) measures the individual's perception of subjective well-being in work, family and life in general, further divided into subtopics. Questionnaire items were selected from various empirical studies, drawing mainly on psychological paradigms, including positive psychology and organisational culture approaches (Argyle, 1989; Bryce & Haworth, 2002, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Kahneman, Diener and Schwartze, 1999; Warr, 1987, 1990) and recognised through group evaluation by members of the *Transitions* research team as relevant for well-being.

Well-being at work was measured with four items including feelings about the workplace, job/work, managers and work colleagues. There were also three items on experience of climate in the department as trusting, friendly and supportive, relating to well-being at a working group/department level. Items indicating family well-being covered relations with family members, the extent to which parental roles are experienced as personally fulfilling, and family material circumstances. General well-being measures included aspects of positive well being: experience of happiness, enjoyment of life, satisfaction with life and feelings regarding the future. Respondents answered each question on five-point scale (1- could not feel better, 5- could not feel worse). Points one and five were also illustrated with smiling faces (see attached questionnaire).

A number of language issues arose in developing the questionnaire. For example, there are a number of different words for happiness in Norwegian, and there was much debate about meanings. Questionnaires were translated into each language and back translation was used to ensure appropriate meanings and comparability. Questionnaires were administered to focus groups participants and managers in all the case studies.

The results of the WBQ in terms of percentage of positive answers (marks 1 and 2) for each item together with descriptive comparison between countries are discussed in the *Transitions* Research Report#4, Report on Phases 1 and 2, Lewis and Smithson 2004. Some of the main overall findings are briefly discussed below.

General individual well-being
Self reported positive well-being was highest among the Scandinavian respondents: in the Swedish and Norwegian social services and Norwegian private sector organisation (there was no Swedish private sector case). Reported general well-being was lowest in **Portugal** in the public sector and in **Bulgaria** in the private sector.

Family well-being

Overall family appears to be the most important source of individual well-being in all the case studies. Aspects of family well-being were evaluated most positively by respondents in Slovenia, and the least positively in the UK social services while in the private sector feelings about family well-being were most positive in the Netherlands and least positive in Bulgaria.

Parenthood is an important aspect of family well-being in all cases. Feelings about being a mother or a father were evaluated most positively of all items related to family well-being in the public and private sector organisations in all countries. This was experienced most positively by respondents in Sweden in the public sector and the Netherlands in the private sector.

Feelings about family life and family relationships and about caring for children also tended to be evaluated positively by respondents in all countries, indicating the importance of family life for individuals' subjective perspectives of well-being. However this can be undermined by material circumstances. Respondents tended to feel least positive about the material circumstances for family life in Slovenia (public sector) and Bulgaria (private sector).

Well-being at work

In general, evaluations of positive feelings regarding different aspects of work in the public sector tend to be higher than in the private sector.

Overall reported feelings of positive well-being at work were highest in Sweden and lowest in the Bulgarian public sector. In the private sector respondents evaluated the various aspects of well-being at work most positively in Norway and least positively in the Netherlands.

The job and work itself contributed more to well-being among respondents in Sweden, Portugal and Norway than elsewhere.

Relationships at work appear to be a major source of positive well-being, although more so in the public than private sector organisations. Feelings **about work colleagues and friendly climate in department** were the **most positive** of all items related to well-being at work in all countries, with the exception of Bulgaria.

There is much variation in feelings about managers with the most positive feelings reported in Norway, the UK and Sweden in the social services, and Norway in the private sector. Once again this is experienced least positively in Bulgaria and also in the Dutch (private sector) organisation.

In terms of workplace climate, respondents felt most positive about the friendliness of the workplace, than about trust or support, except in Slovenia (public sector) where a trusting climate prevails, and the Bulgarian public and private sectors where a supportive climate prevails.

Conclusions from the questionnaire study

Thus the results of the questionnaire which measures well-being in work, family and life in general indicate that the **most significant sources of individual well-being are in family life**. Being a mother or a father contribute most to the positive experiences of well-being. However there are differences between countries, as expected.

Work is also an important source of well-being and is particularly so in the Scandinavian countries, which might relate to supportive social policy and its implementation in workplaces. Parents report feeling least positive about their experiences of work in Bulgaria (where public policy is supportive for parents, but is not always implemented at workplace level) and also in the Netherlands, where family appears to be a much stronger source of well-being.

The greater variations between the countries regarding general well-being compared to well-being at work and family well-being appear to relate partly to economic and material conditions. However. drastic changes in the private sector might also have a rather negative impact on family life in countries situated at the end of EU-15 GDP scale. Variations between the countries regarding positive feelings in work and family life are greater in the private sector compared to the social services. For example, in Slovenia and Portugal parents in the public sector express the most positive feelings regarding their family life while this is not the case in private sector.

This interpretation of the well-being questionnaire permits a broad overview of some aspects of individual well-being in the different countries, and demonstrates some of the systematic indicators and constraints for well-being for new parents within these organisations. A number of factors might underpin the differences across countries and in some cases, sectors, including the nature of the sample groups, the public policy context, the nature of organisational changes and economic factors. The qualitative stages of analysis help to unpack some of these general findings.

2.2. Developing concepts of organisational well-being from the organisational case studies

The organisational case studies examined well-being in a group setting (focus group) within an organisational context, thus feeding into our developing concept of organisational well-being. Specifically, the case study phase focuses on factors contributing to positive well-being and explores a collective notion of "organisational well-being" from the perspectives of employees who are parents, as well as their managers.

Use of well-being concepts in the research instruments

Organisational well-being was approached in an exploratory, open-ended way in this study, with focus group schedules and manager interview guides, using concepts from the various conceptual approaches discussed above, but with a particular focus on the more collective frameworks, i.e., the ethics of care, workplace culture and healthy organisations. For example, questions related to whether the organisation was perceived as a caring organisation, and aspects of workplace culture, such as perceived support, sense of trust and sense of community. Participants were encouraged to talk about ways in which they felt that the organisation met their needs as working parents and whether this had been sustained throughout the organisational changes (healthy organisation approach). We also attempted to explore participants' understandings of positive well-being by asking directly at the beginning of the focus group what words came into their heads to describe a sense of positive well-being – a process that many participants found difficult, since positive well-being was not a part of common discourse. Notions of having, loving and being were also explored in relation to feelings about aspects of the organisational context including pay, social relations at work and opportunities for challenging work.

Table 2: Average percent of positive marks of different aspects of well-being for each country in public sector

Public sector						
Country	WB at work		Family WB		General WB	
	Rang	%	Rang	%	Rang	%
Sweden	1	85.1	4	79.1	1	89.8
Norway	2	73.8	3	80.6	2	75.0
UK	4	65.1	6	64.0	4	63.3
Portugal	5	60.3	2	82.3	6	45.8
Slovenia	3	67.5	1	85.6	3	67.3
Bulgaria	6	58.2	5	73.1	5	53.3
Max-min		26.9		21.6		43.0
Average M		68.33		77.45		65.75

Source:; Černigoj Sadar and Gnidovec, 2004; Černigoj Sadar and Kersnik, 2004.

Table 3: Average percent of positive marks of different aspects of well-being for each country in private sector

Private sector						
Country	WB at work		Family WB		General WB	
	Rang	%	Rang	%	Rang	%
Norway	1	82.9	2	86.4	1	83.3
Netherland	6	49.8	1	87.9	2	75.8
UK	3	60.3	3	73.9	4	61.0
Portugal	2	69.6	4	72.9	3	70.8
Slovenia	4.5	50.7	5	69.0	5	50.0
Bulgaria	4.5	50.7	6	51.8	6	44.6
Max-min		33.1		36.1		38.7
Average M		60.67		73.65		64.25

Source: Černigoj Sadar and Gnidovec, 2004; Černigoj Sadar and Kersnik (2004).

Well-being in the case study reports

In analysing and writing up the national organisational case studies, national teams – each with a specific area of disciplinary expertise, as well as a unique national context – were encouraged to consider well-being in ways which seemed relevant to them. There are therefore both similarities and differences in the ways in which organisational well-being is conceptualised in the national well-being reports.

All the reports address the question of the ethic of care or the organisation as a caring employer, and all discuss the impact for well-being of external factors that contribute to the changed nature of work and organisational changes as well as internal organisational characteristics such as organisational culture, organisational climate and communications in organisations all of which which were addressed in the focus group and interview frameworks. In addition some specific approaches to organisational well-being emerged from the case study data grounded in the specific organisational context. These included conceptualising (organisational) well-being in terms of:

- parents' and managers' perspectives on the success of the explicit objective of achieving business goals through attending to employees' needs for flexible work arrangements (UK private company),

- the relationship between autonomy and sense of control (UK and Norway private company),

- the values espoused by employees' (UK Social service),

- the importance of corporate values and communications (Netherlands private company) and

- the question of gender equity as an important aspect of well-being (Netherlands private company and Sweden public social service).

In the consolidated organisational case study report, the Portuguese team (Das Dores Guerreiro et al. 2004) summarised the findings relating to organisational well-being by differentiating between **four groups of indicators:**

- material conditions (physical aspects, wages, available technology),

- organisational climate (sense of identification, team spirit, sociability),

- time course (job security, expectations) and

- organisational policies and practices.

Das Dores Guerreiro et al (2004) also suggests that there may be **two stages** of what might be termed organisational well-being, related to national context and employee expectations or sense of entitlement to support. At the first stage organisational well-being, from parents' perspectives, may be related to the employers' compliance with regulations (national and workplace policies); while the second stage could be conceptualised in terms of particular practices promoted by the organisation to encourage parents to take advantages of formal policies.

Issues in conceptualising organisational well being

An overview of the different approaches to the conceptualisation of organisational well-being in the case study reports indicates that it is important to conceptualise this in context specific ways. What makes a "healthy" organisation in one sector or one country may be very different in another context. The particular form of organisational change taking place and the ways in which this is managed, influences needs and expectations and hence feelings about the organisation.

It is difficult to evaluate organisational well-being in terms of the organisation's role in meeting parents' needs as there is a question of whose perspective to take since the perspectives of managers and subordinates often diverge. Moreover, participants' evaluations of the organisation in meeting their needs are influenced by their values,and subjective and cultural expectations and sense of entitlement to organisational support. Expectations and evaluations of quality of life in an organisation are also affected by processes of social comparisons within the organisation and outside organisations. For example, an intensification of work, reported in all the case studies, could undermine feelings of well–being, but did not always do so, if, for example, parents perceived themselves to be better off than others with whom they compared themselves. In the Bulgarian private sector, for example, parents compared their situation with that of employees in smaller organisations and felt relatively well treated and satisfied despite deteriorating conditions.

The conceptualisation of organisational well-being remains problematic, not least because of the difficulties in disentangling the notion of organisational well-being as distinct from, and at times opposed to, individual well-being, as well as distinct from national social, political and economic context. There are also issues about conceptualising organisations as well-being tends to be associated with departments or units more so than the "organisation", which is also difficult to define overall, given the prevalence of agency or other peripheral workers in most cases.

Common factors associated with well-being in organisations

Notwithstanding these critiques, it is possible to identify some common factors described by parents as contributing to well-being in organisations (as opposed to the more problematic concept of organisational well-being) in both private and public sectors. These include: permanent work contracts, flexible working time and leave policies that

are respected. In describing the organisational culture, various discourses emerged. However the common base is that management support and understanding, and colleague support and solidarity are considered crucial for well-being. However there are also some common barriers to positive well-being mentioned in both sectors. These are: the changing nature of work in terms of intensification, overload and changing work demands, growing actual and/or expected job insecurity, inflexible working practices and managerial discretion/insensitivity, all of which undermine the social sustainability of work.

Below we discuss findings about well-being as they emerged in the private and public sector organisations studied.

2.2.1. Well-being in private sector organisations (Slovenia, The Netherlands, Norway, UK, Portugal and Bulgaria)

Employees' perceptions of their organisation as being caring or family-friendly, in the context of organisational changes such as mergers and acquisitions, restructuring, downsizing and the transition to privatisation vary across different case studies.

The private sector case study organisations in Norway and the Netherlands are largely perceived as "caring" employers, while in the UK there are mixed feelings: some parents regard the organisation as caring – defined as being supportive to parents – an image that management is trying to promote, while others do not, largely depending on departmental sub-cultures, line managers and to a lesser extent colleagues, The management discourses in the private sector case studies in Norway, the Netherlands and also the UK, refer to a package of employment terms for their employees that go beyond compliance with legislation, and there is a management discourse of the importance of caring for employees. However formal policies and related intentions are just the beginning for the creation of organisational well-being. Parents talk about how managers play a decisive role in implementing formal organisational policies and informal work place practices related to parent's needs.

In the Slovenian, Portuguese and Bulgarian cases, employees in general feel that their organisations are family-unfriendly, mentioning such problems as daily work pressure, disrespect of schedules and lack of specific measures promoting a better work-family balance. Employees expected, at best, compliance with regulations – corresponding to Das Dores Geurreiro et al's (2004) idea of a first stage of organisational well-being (described above). This is related to low sense of entitlement as neither employees nor managers perceive it to be an organisational responsibility to care for their employees or to ease work-family boundaries. When asked about whether theirs was a caring organisation, managers and parents talked about implementation of state policies, ensuring social and economic security, or referred to regular income and safety of employment. The focus is on *having*.

> To have that basic things, that you don't have to worry for tomorrow, what it will be.
>
> (Man, aged 30, Slovenia)

The positive feelings about the Norwegian private sector case study organisation are consistent with and help to explain the questionnaire findings, as do the relatively unfavourable feelings about the Slovenian and Bulgarian employers. What is less consistent and more difficult to explain are the positive feelings about the Dutch company, which was rated the least positive of all the private sector organisations in the questionnaire. However, the Dutch questionnaire respondents felt the least positive, overall, about their managers which might partially explain this. It is also possible that the Dutch participants derive more overall well-being from family than work and therefore express less satisfaction with work in a questionnaire despite describing their organisation as caring.

In all the case studies the implementation of work-family policies differs widely between departments and managers. Managers mediate between organisational policies and the daily practical needs of employees. A lack of manager support and communication about ongoing reorganisations can seriously threaten feelings of well-being at work. For example, in the UK the system of flexible working time appears to break down in instances where managers are not enthusiastic about flexible working, when there are tight deadlines to meet, or when employees feel they cannot reasonably make requests, which are essential to their family well-being. This illustrates the difficulty of conceptualising one overall notion of organisational well-being, when "the organisation" tends to be experienced in fragmented ways. This would be even more so if it had been possible to include agency and other peripheral workers in the study, further begging questions of what is an organisation.

Caring or family friendly organisational climate and culture, socially sustainable work processes, supportive colleagues, and particularly supportive managers are crucial factors contributing to individual and more collective feelings of organisational well-being. Much depends on managers and their efforts to create such climate at the level of individual units.

2.2.3. Well-being in public sector organisations: social services (Norway, Sweden, UK, Portugal and Bulgaria)

A key source of insecurity, threatening well-being for employees in this part of the labour market, is the ongoing process of 'modernisation' of the public sector, and the reorganisation and merging of services in this sector, as well as a tendency towards privatisation of some of the services. Some types of work are handed over to private sector companies that promise to deliver services with more efficiency and at a lower price.

Employees who have temporary work contracts and those in administrative positions with lower educational qualifications feel insecure in their jobs. This is reported in organisations in Norway as well as in Portugal and Bulgaria. Although the public sector managers in Bulgaria and Portugal seem to be more understanding regarding parents' needs than their private sector counterparts, they also appear to be less supportive than public sector managers in the Nordic countries, at least when it comes to developing and sustaining practices to support organisational well-being that are not mandated by law. As in the private sector, family matters are treated as a private responsibility in Bulgaria and Portugal although public sector managers seem more sympathetic regarding leaves in the case of illness. This is consistent with the questionnaire findings. As in the private sector, the evidence from the Portuguese and Bulgarian social services case studies confirm the importance of the local manager's role in supporting parents. However, in the Portuguese organisation the managers rotate their positions faster than employees, so they have little influence on workplace climate, which might contribute to the lower percentages of positive responses in Portugal, relative to Slovenia, where the trusting aspect of organisational culture were evaluated much more positively, suggesting good relations with managers.

A discourse of caring organisations regularly emerged among social services managers of all levels, especially in the Nordic countries and in the UK where managers talked of trying to be understanding of parents' needs (as some managers did in the UK private sector organisation, albeit within a more explicit business rationale). However, although the managers and employees agree that the organisation should care for social service employees (carers), there is much discrepancy in the evaluation of its implementation, as in the private sector.

Many people in all the countries feel that working in a public service is synonymous with bad working conditions, lower wages, fewer chances for promotions, and in some cases a rigid and bureaucratic environment. However, they also consider that, in comparison to working in a private sector, it is safer and friendlier, and the work environment is not so

stressful and competitive, which facilitates personal life and work balance. So, general evaluation is ambivalent, also varying with type of activity and local agency within each country. Among the employees and managers in social services three sets of values – commitment to work, trust and caring among colleagues – were more often highlighted than in the private sector case studies These aspects of local organisational climate are discussed as crucial for sustaining well-being in the face of organisational changes. Feelings of commitment are also often embedded in motivation to work in the social services sector – often discussed in terms of a desire to help other people, to undertake valuable and meaningful work or to build on caring experiences from their own families. This suggests that loving and being, or opportunities for optimal experiences of "flow" may be especially important to these public sector workers and "having" better material situations less important than in the private sector. The intrinsic motivation and satisfaction derived from much public sector work, despite the many difficulties encountered may partially explain why overall the questionnaires suggest more positive well-being in public sector contexts.

An ethic of care is central to the very activity of social service work and people employed in this sector evaluate the social service organisation according to it. The changes in the public sector focus on the efficient use of resources and the values derived from the business ethic which is often perceived as being in opposition to an ethic of care. With the constant reorganisations of modernisation, workloads can become very demanding which can undermine the image of a caring organisation and the well-being of parents of young children.

Some overall conclusions from the organisational case studies

Multiple methods

- The qualitative data are largely consistent with, and explain and expand upon, the questionnaire findings. The Dutch private company is an exception as the organisation is described as caring in the focus groups, but satisfaction with the organisation is rated rather low in the questionnaires. Possible explanations include more variation in employee's experiences of managers, or that work experiences may be less central to well-being than family for Dutch participants.

Conceptualising organisational well-being

- A number of problems and issues emerged in conceptualising organisational well-being, which appears to be largely context dependent and subject to multiple interpretations within organisations. The notion of the organisation is also problematic, because experiences tend to be fragmented. Managers are crucial in influencing organisational culture and mediating policy and practice, so collective feelings of well-being would be better considered at departmental or unit level than at the level of a large "organisation". It is also difficult to disentangle individual and organisational well-being. It may therefore be less problematic to consider well-being in organisations, rather than organisational well-being, permitting multiple perspectives to co-exist.

Well-being in the public and private sector organisations studied

- Caring organisations tend to be conceptualised differently in the public and private sectors. The ethic of care is more likely to be regarded as conflicting with the ethic of business in the private sector, however with the process of modernisation, this is also emerging in the public sector. Only in the UK and Norway private sector cases is there an explicit discourse of a dual agenda – enhancing business by caring for employees (not always put into practice).

- There is a gap between policy and practice to some extent in all the workplaces Organisational culture and practice, and particularly the support or lack of support

from line managers are crucial in relation to parents' experiences of well-being in both the public and private sector organisations.

- Even if an ethic of care, or a dual agenda rhetoric of effectiveness though supporting employees, are incorporated into organisational practice, pervasive current organisational trends such as the intensification of work can create difficulties for parents in managing work and family boundaries. However the impact on parents' well-being depends partly on expectations and sense of entitlement to organisational support, as well as other expectations and contextual factors that are explored in more depth in the biographical interviews.

2.3 Developing concepts of individual well-being through the biographical interview study

We began our explorations of well-being using the conventional approach in well-being research: a questionnaire survey. This indicated some inter- and intra- national differences, but was decontextualised. We then moved on to explore well-being qualitatively, at individual and collective levels, within organisational contexts. We now turn our focus back to individual parents – employees in our case study organisations – and their partners, and introduce a further conceptual framework for exploring well-being. In this third phase of the project we explored in more depth experiences of well-being in the transition to working parenthood, with a major focus on time and the life course, within the biographies of individual parents in the different national contexts.

The Biographical interview

(See Nilsen et al, 2005 for more details)

A biographical interview guide was developed, for exploring well-being in relation to other dimensions in parents' lives, taking temporal aspects of narrative into account. This drew on previous research undertaken by members of the research team to offer a different, complementary, contextualised perspective on well-being among working parents. Time is a structuring element of the interview guide. The interview starts with an open question to encourage a summary narrative of the participant's life. From there, questioning opens up the **present** and enables a focus on current concerns and issues of well-being related to family and work. This is followed by a focus on the **past**. The section about the past starts with a question that asks the informant to think back to when he or she was aged 20. In reminding the interviewee of the actual year, the interviewer jogs the interviewee's memory by bringing back key events on the news in that particular year. Experiences from other studies have proved this a good strategy for opening up a retrospective account of events in the person's past life. Moving on to questions about the **future**, the same specific temporal instruction is given in that the informant is asked to think about his or her future ten years from now. This timeframe was chosen to provide a long-term view which can help the informant reflect in a broader way about his or her life in general, and with respect to work and family in particular. Finally, we returned to everyday time and looked at space as well as time, and in particular at strategies and practices relating to the negotiation of boundaries around and between work and family life and how well-being is talked about in this context.

Time was approached conceptually in three ways in the interview: everyday time, biographical life course time and generational time. Everyday time was explored in terms of the way time is organised in caring for children and the way parents schedule their work, care and household work time, and how this is gendered, as well as time in relation to friends, leisure, community activities and so on. This included a focus on people's *experience* of time in relation to work intensification and other experiences of time. Biographical time focuses on the life course – its structure and transitions (education, work, relational, parental; their timing and ordering and meaning). Generational time refers to the timeframe within which parents in our study were born

between the mid 1960s and the late 1970s, which might influence normative aspects of well being.

Changes in the workplace and in the nature of work itself, especially the intensification of work experienced in all the case studies creates pressure upon workers to blur the boundaries between paid work and family. In the everyday time section of the interview we explores how parents organise work and care and the boundaries between the two in terms of time and feelings of well-being at different times during the day. In exploring with parents 'a day in their life', we discuss what times of day are the most stressful or relaxed , which relates to well-being in the present. This and other questions in the guide helped us understand that well-being is not a static state, but a multi-faceted 'process' situated in time and dependent upon the different layers of context in which life is embedded.

Parenthood, gender and well being

The interviews, like the questionnaires indicate that the primary source of positive feelings for most working parents seems to be parenthood itself, although this phase of the research shows that this depends on the priorities, supports and constraints each individual parent has in his/her life and highlights the gendered nature of parenthood and well-being. Mothers are more likely to express ambivalence about parenthood than fathers; particularly feelings of guilt and inadequacy, though much depends on partner, extended family and social network support. Parents of small children often feel that they need to postpone their leisure time in this specific phase of their lives, although fathers often feel more entitled to have time for themselves and their friends than mothers. There are also some extreme examples where mothers feel too guilty to take time for themselves.

Some workplace practices can enhance parents' – and especially mothers' – well-being, reducing feelings of time squeeze, but their impact on well-being is rarely straightforward and tends to reinforce and reproduce gender inequities.

These are, however, rather broad trends. The interviews extend the findings from earlier stages by demonstrating the complexity of experiences of well-being in the transition to parenthood across time and place.

Work-family boundary strategies and options for young parents are related to the different layers of context within which they live their lives

The ways in which families adapt to combining work and family is important for their feelings of well-being. However, this phase of the research demonstrates how work-family boundary strategies and options for young parents are related to the different layers of context within which they live their lives. In the report on the interview phase (Nilsen and Brannen et al, 2005) cases were selected from each of three regions of Europe to compare how particular mothers and fathers experience parenthood.

For example, the analysis illustrates that feelings of well-being depend partly on the resources available to parents ("having", in Allardt's framework) but also on reference groups with whom they compare themselves, and on sense of entitlement. Thus the report shows how mothers working in social services in Portugal and Bulgaria, emerge as relatively content in relation to their more "advantaged" peers in Sweden and the UK, because they have different expectations of support as well as differing levels of family support.

The impact of layers of context and differing expectations on well-being is also illustrated by comparing the contributions and experiences of fathers; men from three contrasting countries – Norway, The Netherlands and Slovenia working in higher status jobs in the private sector (Nilsen and Brannen, 2005). These men work in similar jobs but live in very different societies. Their experiences and practices of fatherhood and fathering and

current feelings of well-being reflect those contexts. The Slovenian father emerges as doing the least childcare and is the most content. In a society in which material expectations have been relatively low with the sharp transition from a planned state economy to a market economy, having a job, a car, a wife, children and a house gave this father a feeling of considerable achievement – they were enough. In contrast to the Norwegian father (and the Dutch father both also discussed), issues of gender equality had yet to touch Slovenian men, while his children's grandparents provided the major childcare support and absolved him from childcare responsibilities.

In contrast, the experiences of the Norwegian father reflects the national context that promotes a gender equal ideology. His marriage is the most egalitarian of the three in terms of sharing childcare and housework and he took a more or less equal share of parental leave. However he is the least content. He feels penalized by his private sector employer for taking so much parental leave. He also complains about his wife not pulling her weight with the child nor at home. It seems that parental leave targeted at men does not necessarily enhance well-being if organisations retain gendered notions of commitment and gender roles in the family are in flux at a particular point in the evolution of gender equality. The impact of policy on well-being is at best complex, and the changes encouraged by policies may be associated with short-term or transitional stress while a range of social institutions "catch up".

Similarly in the context of rapid, constant change, employees can become resistant to change, even if they recognise that it is necessary. There is a danger that "change fatigue" may create barriers to the implementation of policy. This may be particularly pertinent for Bulgaria or Slovenia which have undergone dramatic societal transformation over the last 15 years.

Navigation between work and family: strategies to enhance well-being

Since time is a key aspect of well-being in this study, opportunities to organise time in a way that facilitates the reconciliation of paid work and family are important for the well-being of parents. National policy and organisational practices influence the ability of parents, within their diverse contexts, to organise their time according their needs as parents and employees, and thus enhance their well-being. However, it is important to note that the effect of policy and practice on well-being is not straightforward since well-being in one area of life (e.g. being able to spend more time with the family – an important source of emotional well-being) does not always translate into well-being in other areas (e.g. career stagnation).

In most countries the most common household strategy after the transition to parenthood was for mothers to work part-time – only Bulgarian, Portuguese and Slovenian mothers have low levels of part-time work. Part-time work for new mothers was particulary common in the Netherlands, where it is more or less taking for granted and is viewed positively in the context of a strong ideological commitment to the role of mothers in early child care.

Although part-time work is viewed as a life course phase "choice" by some mothers in the Netherlands, the UK, Norway and Sweden, it affects career prospects since management positions tend to be full-time. In the UK private sector case study, for example, it was common for mothers in management or supervisory roles to be demoted on reducing their contracted hours. Whilst some mothers, like their counterparts in the Netherlands, accepted this as an inevitable consequence of their (gendered) role as mothers, in some cases it caused frustration in terms of career opportunities, and thereby had a negative affect on well-being.

Some of the Norwegian mothers talked about being unhappy about losing out on benefits and career opportunities available to their full-time colleagues, again illustrating how increasing well-being in one area of their life (being able to spend more time with their children) can have a negative effect on other aspects of their life, especially where their

desires and expectations in terms of career had not declined with their transition to parenthood.

Another negative aspect of part-time work relates to work load and colleagues. In a context of work intensification, part-time work does not always lead to an appropriate reduction of work, which can be stressful. In other cases colleagues have to pick up the slack from those who haved moved to part-time work, which can result in mothers feeling guilty about colleagues, leading to negative feelings in the workplace. This was evident for example in the Swedish social services.

The long hours culture in the UK, particularly relevant for supervisors and managers in our study, can make part-time work a more attractive prospect for new mothers. However this is not unproblematic as the ideal of long or intense hours to "do a good job" is often internalised. Some higher status mothers reported feelings of guilt on not being able to put in longer hours at work. The transition from regularly working over contracted hours to working very clearly defined reduced hours can be difficult. Morever, when partners are continuing to work long hours, gendered divisions of household work are increased, which can be a source of frustration and create familial tension.

Another strategy for managing parenthood and employment is to use flexible working arrangements where they are available. This can reduce the stress of multiple roles, particularly for mothers, who take responsibility for most of the caring tasks in all the countries. Parents in the private company in BIC in Norway, for example, all highlighted the importance of flexibility in allowing them to better organise their time, illustrated by the following comment by one mother: *"If I had a job from nine to five, I just wouldn't cope. Because of traffic jams, commuting would take me 3 hours then. For me it's crucial. Luckily they understand that"* (a Norwegian mother working flexible hours in a private sector company). However, flexible working and the corresponding autonomy that sometimes goes with it can be double-edged (Purcell, Lewis, Smithson et al, 2005) and is sometimes associated with stress and lack of well-being in other areas. Making work-family boundaries more permeable can help parents to organise competing time demands but it can also result in work intruding on family time. Some parents work harder or longer hours in exchange for flexibility and autonomy. Stress at pick-up times at creches can be replaced by stress related to excessive workloads and tight deadlines.

The time-squeeze is most acutely felt where there are few options for part-time or flexible working. Whilst intergenerational support plays a crucial role in facilitating paid work and employment, parents in Bulgaria, Slovenia and in some cases in Portugal, still express negative feelings related to their inability to spend more time with their children. A Bulgarian mother, who described herself as a happy mother, expressed guilt at not talking and playing enough with her son – a situation she compared to her "happiest years", which she considered to be the three years when she was on parental leave.

Shifting boundaries between work and family

Work and family represent different spheres of life which tended to be seperate after the Industrial Revolution. These now increasingly outdated assumptions that the two spheres are separate and gendered, and that "ideal" workers do not need to modify work for family can threaten the well-being of new parents (Lewis, 1997; Rapoport et al, 2001). The blurring of boundaries can be positive, expanding opportunities for a range of work-family strategies for parents and households. Blurring of boundaries, however, can also exacerbate stress, particularly in the context of intensified workloads. Some parents prefer to keep work and family firmly segregated while others find an integration strategy works best for them and contributes to positive well-being. An important element of well-being appears to be the ability to establish desired boundaries and strategies.

It is possible to conceptualise work-family boundaries as three-dimensional:
1. Emotional: whether employees talk about the family at work (or vice versa)
2. Spatial: whether employees take work home or maintain strictly seperate spheres

3. Temporal: whether the employees have rigid work hours or whether there are possibilities for flexibility
    (Source: Doorne-Huiskes, Dulk and Veldhoen National Well-Being Report, the Netherlands, 2004)

The first can be an important source of well-being. This was the case for a mother in the UK private sector company who, as a dissatisfied low-status mother, found being able to talk about her children with colleagues, one of the best aspects of her worklife.

Likewise, whilst taking work home can appear to be a convenient way of combining work and family, heavy workloads which spill over into the home can be negative for well-being, especially for parents who are already expressing guilt for not being emotionally available enough for children despite being physically available. This inability to be emotionally available was expressed by a father in the financial organisation in Portugal who find it difficult to feel calm and relaxed at work and on arriving home in the evening was unable to "turn off the button":

"Sometimes I'm completely tired, after a working day and I'm not very patient with my children... but I have to control myself because it's not their fault."

Temporal flexibility, which includes the ability to leave work when emergencies arise, is usually essential for well-being. However, in Bulgaria, where general flexibility is not common and is perceived as the imposition of unsocial hours (such as weekend working), rigid work hours which lead to clear temporal boundaries are a source of well-being.

Parents may well use a mixture of strategies, combining permeability in one of the dimensions with impermeability in another, according to their specific contexts and needs/desires. The interview study indicates, however, that the transition to parenthood does alter the way in which parents manage their boundaries. In most cases, work-life boundaries tended to be more permeable before parenthood, particularly for high status parents. The UK interview study (private sector) showed that parents initially tried to maintain a permeable boundary, but experience led them to a more segregated balance of work and family.

Being able to succeed in establishing clear boundaries once this becomes the preferred strategy is an important source of well-being. The Slovenian interview study highlighted this as a learning process and one which can become inevitable by the demands of family life – activity that is absorbing is in itself a boundary. However, when the demands of paid work and family become overwhelming, such "natural" boundaries can come crashing down: workplace worries can interfere negatively with parenting and vice versa.

Work-family boundary strategies remain highly gendered in all the countries. The permeability of work-family boundaries is more of an issue for mothers than for fathers since mothers not only carry out most of the informal work in the family but are also more emotionally engaged in parenthood in most cases. Mothers are often living in the world of work and in the world of the family simultaneously, obliged to maintain a "double-presence" due to the dual-role society imposes on them.

Feelings of well-being fluctuate during a typical day

Feelings about parenthood and work are very complex and multifaceted as demonstrated by the case of Charlotte, a 24 year old mother who was a customer service "consultant" at the UK private sector company, Peak, and pregnant with her second child at the time of the focus groups, but employed elsewhere by the time of the interview. The complexity of her feelings can not be encompassed by questionnaires, and equally, a focus on experiences in the workplace alone do not provide a holistic picture of the range of feelings she experiences within the national, workplace and family contexts that she inhabits.

Unequivocal enjoyment of motherhood but often tired and stressed

Charlotte talks a great deal about how much she enjoys motherhood. She often uses terms "happy" and "enjoy" in her interview, but also talks of being unhappy and stressed. She appears to totally enjoy time with her children, while work is mainly instrumental for her, and she finds it very stressful being away from her daughters. Her current well-being is mitigated by being very tired looking after two babies.

> "It's just very, very tiring. There's some days when you just can't keep your eyes open past 7 o'clock and you've still got baths to do, and get everybody to bed."

Charlotte says of expectations of being a working parent:

> "I knew it was gonna be hard work but I didn't think I would be coming in and not being able to keep my eyes open at night"

Finding working motherhood very difficult

While she loves being a mother, Charlotte found being a full-time working mother very demanding. She talked in the focus group about enjoying many aspects of the job at Peak, especially the socialising, and the training in new skills but her experience of being a working mother was however dominated by the stress and guilt she experienced at leaving her daughter in childcare she was not happy with.

> "It was awful, coming back, I'm being a bad parent, I'm abandoning her and leaving her with someone else and I'm her mother and I should be doing it and that's what I went through, and I went through hell with it".

New job – pleasant environment but still finding working motherhood very hard

At the interview, just returning from her second maternity leave to a new job, Charlotte is more resigned to her childcare arrangements, and finding her new job less stressful.

> "And I think I'm at the minute, I'm quite happy, I'm quite happy at the.... [new workplace], so there's nothing to be... no niggly things that I'm, you know, worried about or anything like that and the staff there, like I say are really really supportive"

Charlotte talks about the new job as affirming her sense of identity and providing a sense of purpose. It appears to affirm the "being" aspect of well being.

> "Because it sounds funny, but I matter at the school because it's such a small office and everybody knows one another. I'm known by my name rather than a number, and being at like Peak or in any call centre, it's like being a battery hen, and you don't really matter but being within a team and having to work in such a small team then I matter to the school so ..."

Nevertheless Charlotte's enjoyment of her new job is still tempered by strong feelings that she wants to be at home with her daughters.

> "It comes down to the fact that I'm Mum, and somebody else is dealing with my child and I just ... I feel as if it's been taken off me."

Charlotte's case exemplifies the complex nature of well-being for working parents. She has experienced many difficulties in the transition to parenthood, related to working patterns, and management support at Peak, as well as childcare and finance issues. These negative experiences have impacted on Charlotte's well-being. However, at the time of the biographical interview, like most of the other parents, in particular mothers,

parenthood is an important source of positive well-being. Charlotte's case also demonstrates the way in which feelings of well-being change over time, either as a consequence of adjustment or of strategies to overcome negative experiences. In Charlotte's case, resigning from Peak and finding a new position, which allows her to manage her life as a working parent in what she experiences as a more family-friendly workplace has helped. She appreciates that her new job affirms her sense of identity although she still has pangs of guilt about ot being at home full-time.

Thus Charlotte's experiences of well-being are dynamic and complex and should be understood within various layers of context and the interrelationships between them: national context (for example, lack of affordable non-family childcare), organisational context (demanding work and lack of part-time work in her first job, ethic of care and opportunities for "being" or identity affirmation in her new job), family context (childcare by her mother-in-law, which her partner views as unproblematic) and individual values and expectations (especially her ambivalence about being an employed mother).

Some conclusions from the biographical interviews

An approach to well-being that focuses on current experiences of work and family boundaries as they are embedded in the life course and everyday time, captures the complexity of well-being and experiences of parenthood, within the different contexts examined in the earlier stages of the research.

The interviews highlight the complex and dynamic nature of well-being, which can fluctuate even over the course of a typical day. They illustrate ways in which work-family boundary strategies and options for young parents are related to the different layers of context within which they live their lives. They also demonstrate that well-being for new parents remains a gendered experience, albeit operating in complex and diverse ways across different contexts.

SECTION 3

Conclusions

3.1 Conceptualising well-being

Crucial role of context

The organisational case studies revealed the complexity of organsational contexts within which parents across seven European countries manage work and family boundaries and some of the factors contributing to or undermining well-being in organisations. The biographical interview guide proved a helpful means to explore well-being in its many facets. Well-being in the transition to parenthood and experiences of and strategies for managing paid work and family need to be analysed and understood within the different layers of context in which individual lives are embedded. While an understanding of the national social and economic trends and the organisation case studies provide elements of context, there are other aspects of context, and the interplay of various contextual factors influence complex and muti-faceted feelings of well-being across everyday time as well as biographical time.

Context influences perceptions which influence expectations, which, in turn, influence judgement/appraisal and feelings of well-being. Yet appraisal of contexts often go unarticulated and moments of insight can become submerged in the flux of daily living. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Haworth, 2000). Parents tend to have little time to reflect on aspects of context that impact on their well-being.

Organisational well-being

One aim of the project was to explore the concept of organisational well-being, based on ideas of the ethic of care, supportive organisational cultures and healthy organisations that meet the dual needs of employers and employees. Although there were both generic and particular factors associated with well-being within the case study organisations, or in particular departments, problems arose in disentangling individual and organisational well-being, in dealing with diverse and often conflicting perspectives and in identifying what is the organisation. We therefore adopted the less problematic concept of well-being in smaller units within large organisations.

Well-being is complex and dynamic, fluctuating across everyday time

The interviews highlight the complex and dynamic nature of well-being which is sensitive to time and place. This compexity cannot be captured by questionnaires, nor even by interviews that focus on just one point in time.

Positive and negative well-being can coexist

In terms of our original conceptualisation of well-being, it is clear from the interviews that positive and negative subjective well–being can coexist and cannot be thought of in mutually exclusive terms. Again, the myriad of feelings about working parenthood cannot be divorced from contextual factors that can, for example, underpin feelings of guilt about being a working mother, or influence mothers' and fathers' expectations of support or lack of it and hence their feelings about this.

Having, loving and being and the life course

Life course phase is important in terms of having, loving and being. Many mothers in particular are happy to have and love and leave "being" until a later phase, or achieve "being" through loving (parenthood) or through having meaningful but not necessarily well remunerated work (see Charlotte above). However, while parenthood (loving) is a central source of well-being, "having" in material terms is also important. Economic

context matters, but parents in less affluent contexts find different ways of coping, have lower expectations and do not necessarily have a poor sense of well-being. In other contexts different, materialistic aspirations sometimes come into play (Sointu, 2005). For example, some of the mothers in the UK private sector organisation were prepared to spend more time in paid work than they considered to be ideal from a family perspective, in order to provide more material benefits for their children.

3.2 Well-being and Policy

Well-being policy and practice

Policies addressing diverse objectives, for example, gender equality and the reconciliation of employment and family life, health, fertility issues and citizenship, as well as socially sustainable work and corporate social responsibility, ultimately address well-being, implicitly or explicitly. Could a more explicit focus on well-being in policy-making contribute to these objectives and if so how? In this respect this study raises as many questions as it answers. We have argued that well-being is complex, multi-faceted, fluctuating over time and influenced by the many layers of context in which individual's lives are embedded. There can therefore be no simple answers to questions about how policy can enhance well-being for working parents. There are no quick fixes. However, there are a number of issues arising from this study that are relevant for policy-makers to consider.

1. At the most basic level of being able to work and care, (or "have " and "love" in Allard's model) some policies and supports that are crucial for the well-being of most working parents, for example, some form of childcare. Our study points to the importance of identifying the most vulnerable parents, who are most likely to need support in achieving positive well-being. Policies that would help such parents include not only childcare but also, for example, affordable, good quality housing in big cities especially for key workers in social care and health services. The availability of high quality, affordable childcare, together with fully paid parental leave for similar amounts of time across Europe, and the right of parents to be supported when their children are ill are crucial, although such policies are ineffective if they are not fully accepted by management and integrated into workplace practices. Gaps between policy (national and/or workplace) and practice were evident in all the case study organisations. Parents' experiences of well-being in organisations depends on fundamental requirements in terms of not just policies, but also culture and practice, and especially the day to day support of line managers.

2. Beyond meeting basic needs, a focus on multiple layers of context as well as dimensions of time point to the need for a multi-layered approach to policy-making to enhance well-being. Different layers of context are important for enhancing parents' well-being. For example, we have seen that changes in legislation alone are of limited value for enhancing well-being of new parents without shifts in organisational, family and community values and practices. Policy-making to address well-being would therefore need to be integrated and collaborative at many levels.

3. A frequently recurring theme across the countries is the ways in which gender shapes experiences of parenthood and well-being, albeit in complex ways, and makes motherhood different from fatherhood both in everyday family life and in workplaces. The transition to parenthood appears to be a critical 'tipping point' on the road to gender equality, and therefore a crucial focus for policy-making at different levels to address the well-being of parents. However, while the transition to parenthood affects both mothers and fathers, the different experiences and starting points of mothers and fathers, which also vary across national contexts, still needs to be acknowledged.

4. There are significant questions to be considered about whose well-being is to be addressed, at what point of time, in what context. A life course approach would involve focusing on the potential long-term as well as short-term impact of polices and practices on well-being in given contexts. For example, there is a dilemma that policies that meet parents' currently articulated needs – for example part-time work for mothers, can enhance mothers well-being in the short-term but also reproduce gender inequalities and potentially undermine well-being in the long term, unless change occurs in workplace values and practices, such as the gendered construction of organisational commitment in terms of full time work. This again points to the need for interrelated changes at many levels.

5. Policies that aim to bring about fundamental social changes towards what is considered to be a common good, may also affect well-being negatively for some people in the short-term, albeit aiming for long-term positive consequences. For example, our study demonstrates that policies that address gender issues, such as the father's quota in parental leave in Norway and Sweden may create short term tensions in some families, but such couple tensions may be necessary for progress to occur and in the interest of long-term well-being in families and societies. Similarly this study shows that expectations of support for managing work and family life may be more easily met in less affluent societies especially where gender equality ideas are not yet widely established. Low expectations may more easily generate well-being, in contrast to the higher expectations of parents living in societies with higher standards of gender equality and greater affluence. But again, raising expectations and unsettling people may be necessary for change, with the potential to contribute to enhanced well-being – in terms of longer term opportunities for positive experiences in work and family, and for having, loving and being.

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APPENDIX 1

TABLE 2: GDP per capita, inequality of income distribution and HDI

	GDP per capita in PPS* (2001)	GDP per capita in US dollars*** (2002)	Inequality of income distribution (income quintile share ratio)**** (1999)	Gini Index (1)*****	Human Development Index Rank (2000)******
Norway	143.2		3.3	25.8 (1995)	1
Sweden	102.3	25,315	3.2	25.0 (1992)	2
Netherlands	114.8	27,274	3.7	32.6 (1994)	8 .
UK	101.5**	25,672	5.2	36.8 (1995)	13
France	102.8	26,151	4.4	32.7 (1995)	12
Portugal	69.1	17,808	6.4	35.6 (1995)	28
Slovenia	72.4	17.367 (2000)a	3.2	28.4 (1998)	29a
Bulgaria	24.5		3.6	26.4 (1997)	60

* Source : Eurostat (2001)

** Forecast

*** Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators 2003

**** The ratio of total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income (top quintile) to that received by the 20% of the population with the lowest income (lowest quintile). Income must be understood as equivalised disposable income. Source : Eurostat, 2003.

***** Source: UN Development Programme, Human Development Report, 2002.

(1) The Gini Index measures inequality over the entire distribution of income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality and a value of 100 perfect inequality.

APPENDIX 2

Methods used to explore well-being

Content analysis of the documents in organisations explored aspects of the organisational context relevant to individual and organisational well being.

In the description of the organisational context the national case study reports take into account:

- – workforce profile
- – absenteeism and sickness rates, strike rates
- – trade unions and pay bargaining
- – recruitment and retention policy
- – employment contract
- – Workplace policies: equal opportunity policies, working hours policies, leave policies for parents, annual leave for employees, sick leave, childcare, other leaves.

Interviews with managers provided further contextual background and manager perspectives on organisational well-being, as well as data on their own experiences of work and family (individual well-being of those managers who were also parents of young children).

The manager interview schedule contained questions on:

- – Organisational changes;

- – organisational human resource policies and practices, work place policies related to parents, the managers perceptions of workplace practices and cultures

- – management practice of policies in relation to parents with young children and the communication and impact of organisational changes.

- – on organisational well-being

- – The implementation of national social policies to support the reconciliation of paid work and employment

- – Organisational culture, including manager perspectives on whether this is a caring organisation, support for parents and barriers to supporting parents

- – Managers' own occupational and parenthood biographies and experiences of parenthood and individual well-being and the negotiation of work-family boundaries.

The focus group schedule explored aspects of individual and organisational well being. ocus groups aimed to explore the feelings and perceptions of parents regarding working in organisation, work- family relations, the relationships between parents and organisation, formal and informal organisational practices and the processes that contribute to positive and negative well-being of parents.

Focus group guide includes questions related to resources on different levels that might contribute to or constrain well-being, cultural, social and organisational contexts in which the parents' experiences are created.

The focus groups began with a warm up exercise encouraging free association on: being a parent, being a working parent, work in this organisation; some teams added also: positive experience of self and well-being – through which we began to **discover the language of well-being**.

Discussions on support focused on receiving different kind of help on the one hand and on the other empowering people to become an active agent in creation of personal well-being and well-being for others. The focus group guide differentiated between the following supports:

- partner
- family members (same generation/ intergenerational support)
- social network in community
- formal leave policies
- public and other services for child care
- workplace concession

Regarding the implementation of workplace policies we wanted to know:

- -are the parents familiar with the options they have;
- do they feel entitled to receive support from the employer;
- what is the role of management on different levels;
- what is the role of colleagues.

In exploring the **organisational climate/culture** we paid attention to the following dimensions:

- security / insecurity
- task orientation vs. people orientation;
- business ethic, ethic of care;
- identification with work, identifications with work colleagues;
- commitment, loyalty, trust
- sense of community at work, social relation at work
- family friendly climate: can parents speak to get in touch with children; get support from colleagues and managers in resolving family problems

Organisational change. As one of the project's main aims was to explore the impact of organisational change on organisational and individual well-being the focus group guide explored what changes had taken place and their on the employees.

As far as **organisational practice** is concerned the focus groups discussed the possibilities for flexibility in working schedules, long hours and work intensification.

Discussions about **work-family boundaries** explored time, space and emotional permeability between work and family life (these were examined in more depth in the biographical interviews).

A **well-being questionnaire** addressed aspects of objective and subjective positive and negative well-being. Questionnaires were completed by managers and focus group participants, and explored different aspects of work and family life as well as the experiences of parental roles and material conditions of the family

Biographical interviews with parents (focus group participants and where possible their partners) addressed aspects of individual well-being in greater depth, with a particular focus on time (See Nilsen and Brannen, 2005)

Interviews began by generating accounts of the new parent's present life, then have moved to the past and finally to the future. Based on a life course approach the aim was to cover all life domains relevant for parents' well-being in different roles and domains of life. Interviews provided insight into the dynamic of personal context for the creation of well-being and the meanings of life course events, changes and turning points. It provided opportunities to explore the simultaneous presence of the positive and negative feelings in different life domains and what are the main sources of well-being in different life periods. Most of the interviews were carried out in parent's home. It has been reported that parents in home interviews appeared to be happier and more satisfied

compared to their feelings they have spoken about in the focus groups (Smithson and Lewis, 2005).

APPENDIX 3

TRANSITIONS: Gender, Parenthood and the Changing Workplace

This Questionnaire is part of a European study which is taking place in eight countries. The study is about how people manage their work and family lives.It is focussing upon new parents and parents with young children who work in two types of workplace - social services and the finance sector. The ..... part of the study is being conducted by researchers at

....

Please contact .... if you have any questions.

We would like to ask you some questions about your work and family life. Please tick the most appropriate answer.

1) Are you a -

Mother of a first child
Father of a first child
Mother to be - expecting a *first child*
Father to be – expecting a *first child*
Mother *expecting second/ third/ fourth child*
Father *expecting a second/third/fourth child*
Mother with 2 or more children
Father with 2 or more children
Other....

2) How old are you?
Age: ....

3) What is your present marital/ partnership situation?

Single, never married
Live with partner
Married
Divorced and cohabiting
Divorced and remarried
Divorced and not living with a partner
Other please state:...

4) At what age did you leave school (that is as a young person)?
Age:...........

5) What is your HIGHEST educational qualification?

....

....

6) How long have you worked for this organisation?
   Number of years...

7) What is your current occupation and job title?
Occupation:...

Job title...

8) Are you in a supervisory position?
   No

      Yes

      Other (for example supervises others but does not have the title of supervisor)

9) Are you employed by the main employer at this workplace or by another company?
      Main employer at this workplace
      Other company

10) Is your current employment contract

      Permanent contract
      Temporary/ fixed term contract
   If temporary, what is the length of your contract.........................

      Other kind of contract
   If other, please describe ....

      No contract
      Self-employed

11) What hours are you contracted to do in this job?
   Number of hours per week:...

12) What hours did you do LAST WEEK in your job – paid AND unpaid?

      Number of paid hours of work last week...............................
      Number of unpaid hours of work last week.............................

13) Does your employer allow you to work from home?
      No
      Yes, sometimes
         Yes, often
         Don't know

14) How many people live in your household at the moment including yourself and children?

Number of household members……………..

15) Who are the household members?
List each person in terms of their relationship to you, for example son or daughter
Give the age of each child

1. ……………………………………………………
2. ………………………………………………………………………………………
3. …………………………………………………
4. ……………………………………………..
5. …………………………………………………
6. ………………………………………………
7. ………………………………………………
8.…………………………………………………

If you are a *mother*, go to question 16
If you are a *father* go to question 18
If you are *expecting a FIRST child* go to question 23

16) Were you in work while you were expecting your YOUNGEST OR ONLY CHILD that is BEFORE you went on maternity leave?

No---→ go to question 18
Yes, part time
Yes, full time

17) How long before the BIRTH OF YOUR YOUNGEST OR ONLY CHILD did you leave work?

Number of months………………………weeks……………..

18)   When was your YOUNGEST or ONLY CHILD born?

Give the date:………………………

19) How long did you have off work (maternity leave/ parental leave/paternity leave) after the birth of your YOUNGEST or ONLY CHILD?

Number of months …………weeks…………………days……..

Did not take any leave
Was not employed then

.

20) Was your pension covered during any leave you took for your youngest/only child?

     No
     Yes
     Don't know
     Partly
     Did not take leave
     Not employed then

21) Since you have returned to work from leave for your youngest/ only child are you:

     Full time employed
     Part time employed
     Other (including a mix of part-time and full-time),
If a mix of hours, please describe ....

If you are a mother or father

22) Tick ANY of the following that you have done SINCE the birth of any of your children
You may tick as many as apply

     moved or been moved to a lower level job
     reduced my hours of work
     decided not to do extra hours
     decided not to go on a training course
     decided not to go on work-related travel or cut down on work-related travel

     taken unpaid time off for my child's sickness
     anything else - please describe....................................
....

If you are EXPECTING a first child OR you are expecting a FURTHER child

23) When will your child be born?

     Date:.....................

24) How many months and weeks do you expect to be off work BEFORE your child's birth?

     Number of months:..........................
     Number of weeks:...............................
       None

25) How many months do you expect to be off work AFTER your child's birth?
    Number of months:...............................
    Number of weeks................................
       None

26) If taking leave:
Do you intend to go back to work after the child's birth?
        No
        Yes
        Don't know

Now we would like to ask you a few questions about how you FEEL about work and family life.

1. How happy do you feel with your life as a whole these days?
Circle a number

            1   2   3   4   5

Very   Very
happy   unhappy

2. How do you feel about your job and the work you do?
Circle a number

            1   2   3   4   5

Could   Could
not feel   not feel
better   worse

3. How do you feel about your workplace?
Circle a number

            1   2   3   4   5

Could   Could
not feel   not feel
better   worse

4. In general how do you feel about your work colleagues?
Circle a number

     1   2   3   4   5

Could   Could
not feel   not feel
 better   worse

5. In general how do you feel about the managers and those who supervise your work?
Circle a number

     1   2   3   4   5

Could   Could
not feel   not feel
 better   worse

6. How would you describe the climate in your department/ work group?
Circle a number in each case.

6a

     1   2   3   4   5

Trusting   Distrustful

6b

     1   2   3   4   5

Friendly   Unfriendly

6c

     1   2   3   4   5

Support-   Unsuppor-
 ive   tive

7. How do you feel about your family life and family relationships?
Circle a number

☺   1   2   3   4   5   ☹

Could
not feel
better

Could not
feel
worse

8. How do you feel about your family's material circumstances (conditions) overall, for example money, housing etc.?
Circle a number

☺   1   2   3   4   5   ☹

Could
not feel
better

Could
not feel
worse

9. How do you feel about caring for your child/children?
Circle a number

☺   1   2   3   4   5   ☹

Could
not feel
better

Could
not feel
worse

10. How do you feel about being a mother/ father?
Circle a number

☺   1   2   3   4   5   ☹

Could
not feel
better

Could
not feel
worse

11. How satisfied do you feel with your life as a whole these days?
Circle a number

☺   1   2   3   4   5   ☹

Very satisfied

Very dissatisfied

12. How do you feel about the future?
Circle a number

☺ 1   2   3   4   5 ☹

Could
not feel
better

Could
not feel
worse

13. How enjoyable do you find your life these days?
Circle a number

☺ 1   2   3   4   5 ☹

Very
enjoyable

Not at all
enjoyable

Thank you for your help.
We would be most grateful if you would consider taking part in an individual interview about your experience as a working parent.
Please give your name, and an address, phone number or email where we can contact you – to discuss taking a further part in the study.
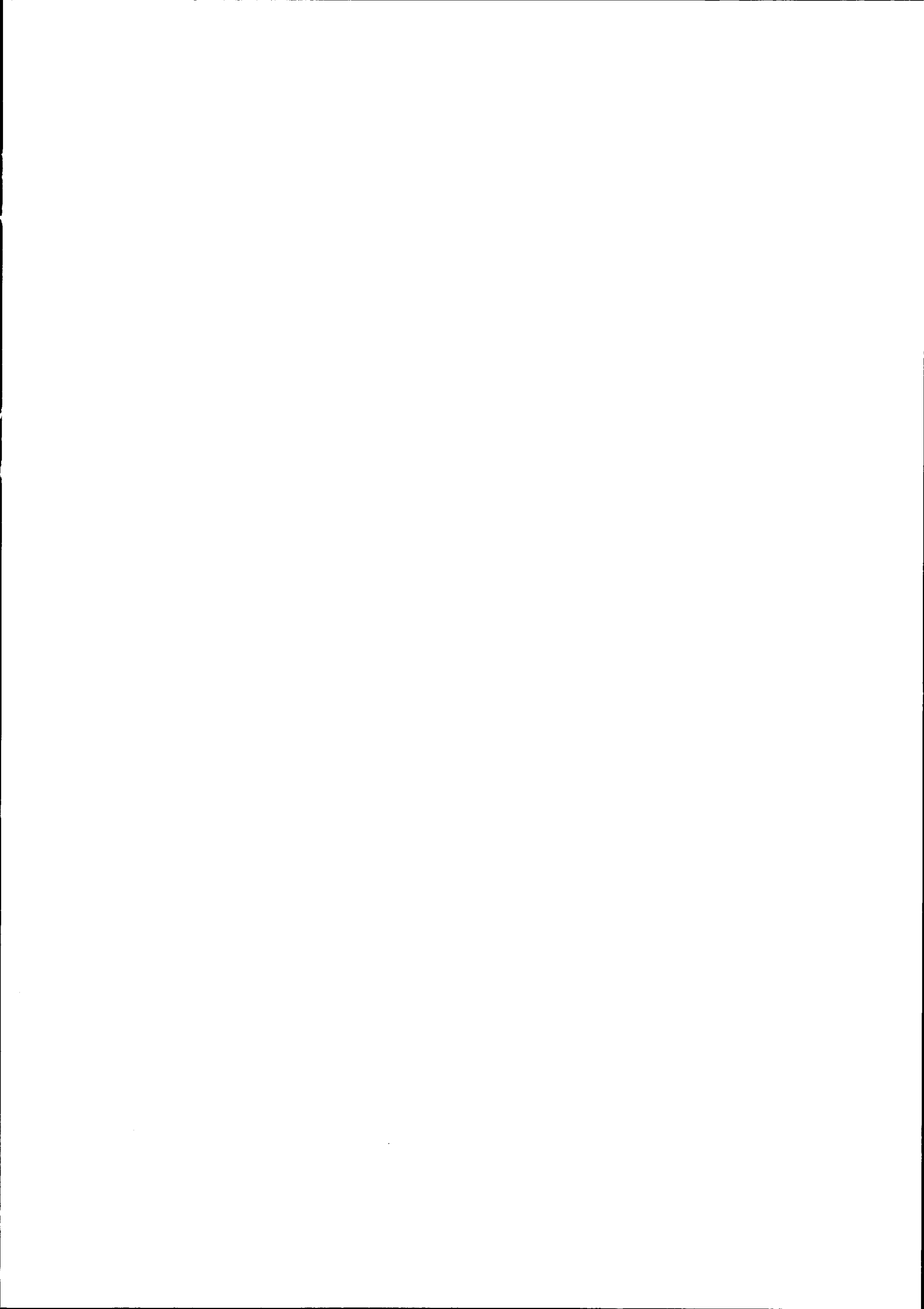
Name.

Address:

Phone number:

Mobile:

Email:

£5.00