



Best Practice Guidelines (WP 2.1)



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Introduction

In the framework of a research phase preceding all other MASP project activities, MASP partners identified and analysed ten good practices of cities/regions and enterprises that promote work-life synergy as well as employability and labour market integration of (future) parents, including unemployed (future) mothers. A part of these practices had to be found in Italy, another part in other European countries.

Project partners sought to strike a balance between practices from regions, provinces, cities and enterprises differing in type and size.

Practices were selected and analysed based on the following criteria:

- Effectiveness/Impact
- Innovation
- Sustainability
- Reproducibility/Transferability
- Involvement of mothers&fathers/employees and other stakeholders

In some cases partners decided to retain a good practice even if it had come to an end because of its innovative approach or methodology.

I. Best Practices

Gideons Bende/City of Amsterdam (NL)

Title of the best practice

Gideonsbende

Practice analysed by: REVES aisbl

Name and organisation of the interviewee: Bernadette Verheggen, City of Amsterdam (Netherlands)

Role of the interviewee in the implementation of the best practice: Co-initiator

Summary of the best practice and context

The Municipality of Amsterdam has circa 13,000 employees and one out of five of its employees has informal care tasks.

Gideonsbende emerged spontaneously thanks to a group of employees that shared the same concerns regarding work-life balance. All of them faced challenges linked, on one hand, to the everyday organisation of care for children or other family members (in some cases with disabilities) and, on the other, to a lack of flexibility on the part of their manager. This happened at a moment when responsibility for care services was decentralised from the Dutch government to municipalities. The objective of the group became thus to bring in their personal experiences (also with bureaucracy) and to contribute to improving policies and practices in Amsterdam.

At the very beginning, a group of eight employees simply started to meet up and to share their own experiences in order to discuss what could be improved in the care system and how this could be achieved. The aim of the group was then to launch a dialogue with colleagues in charge of the relevant subjects and share with them experiences of what existing care policies meant 'in real life'. In 2015 the group of employees continued its activities under the name of "Gideonsbende" (Gideonsbende – Gideon's gang in English - is the name for a small group of activists that work at the forefront of a larger group), but did not set up a specific juridical structure.

Main objectives of Gideonsbende are:

- a) to use experiences and problems shared by employees in concrete policy recommendations addressed to the city government and/or various municipal departments;
- b) to create a stronger awareness – in all sections of management structures – on the problems employees with informal care tasks are facing in order to develop a ‘lifecycle-proof’-human resources policy;
- c) to encourage solidarity between employees with and without informal care tasks;
- d) to act as a contact for city employees and provide peer advice.

Beside its interaction with employees, management and policy-makers, the group set up the “Gideonsdagen” initiative which gives every employee of the city Amsterdam the opportunity to donate, on a voluntary basis, (a part of) his/her remaining hours and days off to a colleague who would need them more due to informal care duties.

Furthermore, Gideonsbende is implementing participatory measures in order to update and enrich its activities and priorities according to the employees’ needs. This is possible thanks to a dedicated intranet page which the city of Amsterdam agreed to set up and in which employees can find all the activities of the group.

In addition, Gideonsbende organises, in cooperation with other players, yearly activities on/around the “Day of Informal Care”, aiming at sensitising and increasing the awareness on the topic through specific activities such as movie screening followed by debate. In 2018, the group teamed up with a filmmaker to create a documentary.

Other activities envisaged for the future are an app that matches diverse needs of informal caregivers with voluntary assistance/support by their colleagues; the inclusion of a workshop on informal caregivers and work-life balance issues in the summer course organised by the Municipality of Amsterdam or an internal managers’ training on informal care.

Gideonsbende involves and develops activities for all type of employees confronted with informal care - regardless their gender or contract. The initiative does not target persons who do not work for the city of Amsterdam. Yet, it intends explicitly to also have an effect on them because of the exemplary role the City of Amsterdam has as an employer and because of its responsibility concerning good governance in organizing and delivering care for vulnerable people.

Impact

Gideonsbende had a great success within the city administration of Amsterdam. Launched initially by two employees, the ‘steering group’ quickly grew to eight employees willing to develop different kind of initiatives to help peers, promote awareness-raising particularly

among managers, encourage solidarity of employees without informal care tasks with their colleagues and push for changes in policies having an impact on the daily life (private or work) of informal carers.

When the group proposed first open meetings to discuss challenges and possible solutions with other employees of the city Amsterdam, more than a hundred of city employees attended – among them also managers in rather high positions experiencing challenges regarding informal care for children or dependent adults.

The city government and management at the very highest administrative level became more attentive to the initiative and the needs of its employees. They signalled openness to discuss possible improvements regarding not only work organisation, but also and in particular policies and practices on which it had an impact. An example reported by Gideonsbende initiators are the public school bus services (managed by the city) for children with disabilities which caused problems to parents (and their employers) due to a lack of punctuality.

Moreover, as high level officials became more aware of the problem and decided to cooperate, other managers at lower levels also changed their attitudes and started to accept more flexibility regarding the work organisation of employees with informal care tasks.

The City of Amsterdam decided to support the group in its communication and dissemination activities, e.g. by providing funds to set up such activities, through the opportunity to establish a specific intranet site and by circulating every year a message to all employees reminding them of the possibility to donate unused holidays to colleagues with informal care tasks.

The *success of and demand for* the activities of Gideonsbende, next to the activities of other groups of employees (e.g. young employees or LGBTI) that were also set up to counteract discrimination, to further inclusion and to strengthen solidarity and cooperation led the city of Amsterdam to reflect on the creation of a specific HR position providing further support to these groups.

Strengths and weaknesses/challenges

One of the main strengths of the initiative is certainly the fact that it emerged on the initiative of employees directly concerned by the challenges of informal care tasks and related work-life balance issues and the bonds of solidarity created between these employees and others. Many seem to have taken ownership of the initiative.

Fundamental for its success is also the objective of Gideonsbende to go beyond peer discussions around individual problems and search for the systemic causes of discrimination and/or unnecessary bureaucracy. Individual reports on experiences and challenges are

transformed into concrete recommendations on how to change different policies having an impact on work-life balance (e.g. public transport issues and others) and how to improve work organisation within the administration.

In addition, the initiative allows employees being informal caregivers to speak up without the need of an intermediary, such as employees' representatives or trade unions. Gideonsbende is accepted, by the city of Amsterdam, as a direct interlocutor, which makes it possible for the group to have an ongoing dialogue with the managers.

A strength is certainly also the willingness of the city administration to support communication activities.

One of the elements which some might also consider a weakness is that the initiative is based very much on the willingness of employees to volunteer. The core group of Gideonsbende is composed of employees who are at the same time informal carers, some of them being confronted with additional challenges (e.g. disabilities or illnesses). Beside willingness and interest to play an active role in the initiative, they also have to dedicate time, which might not always be possible given their professional and private situation. However, so far, the continuity of the initiative, its dynamism and the engagement of employees could be ensured. From time to time, employees involved in a more active way have to stop their deeper engagement due to their private or work situation. At the same time, others have joined the group.

An obstacle Gideonsbende had to deal with at the very start of their activities was a certain bureaucratic mentality. While the idea of donating holidays/hours to colleagues appealed also to the city administration, the latter found this initially rather impossible to realise due to the differences in salary depending on the position of the employee. In the end, however, the Gideonsbende group was able to convince management not to distinguish between "cheap" and "more expensive" hours.

Regarding the fact that the Gideonsbende was developed and is mainly run by employees based on their own initiative, some might argue that there is a risk of employers and policy-makers not feeling obliged anymore to take own initiatives promoting work-life balance, delegating responsibilities completely to the individual. This does, however, not seem to be the case in Amsterdam where government and administration have become rather attentive and supportive.

Sustainability

The initiative is built on the engagement of employees and to some extent on the willingness of the municipality to support it (e.g. through communication activities, Intranet). In the case

of the city of Amsterdam, however, the core team of Gideonsbende and dynamics in general remained stable.

New initiatives are foreseen for the years to come, even though their realisation depends inevitably also on the availability of the employee: a person, for example, who had proposed to develop an app matching needs of the informal carers and possibilities of support by their colleagues, was facing some private challenges and could not finalise the initiative for the time being.

The objective of the group to target from the very beginning policy-makers and the higher managerial levels in the city administration alike, contributed to a change of knowledge and mentalities at the top, which finally also had an impact at lower organizational levels.

With regard to finance, the initiative is fairly 'independent'. The group is organised on a voluntary basis – members do not receive any financial compensation. The city of Amsterdam provides support with regard to communication (intranet, mailing etc.).

Additional support of the group (and other groups fighting discrimination) by the HR department is currently being discussed.

Innovation

It is in particular its bottom-up approach which makes the initiative rather unique.

In a number of cases, work-life balance initiatives are conceived and implemented by human resources departments, sometimes in cooperation with trade unions or other type of bodies representing the interests of employees. In Amsterdam, a small group of employees facing similar challenges took the initiative and invested what was and is already a scarce resource for them: time.

Innovative compared to other initiatives is also the fact that, from the very beginning, Gideonsbende did not have the objective to remain a mere self-help peer group. The objective, next to mutual advice, has always been to go beyond a 'treatment' of individual cases and formulate concrete recommendations on how to change policies and practices which might influence everyday life and work of informal carers.

Exemplary for many other cities/regions and enterprises are also the spontaneity of certain activities, the bonds of solidarity the initiative helped to develop among co-workers and the effort of public administration to overcome some bureaucratic hurdles and thinking.

Replicability/Transferability

The initiative appears to have a rather high degree of replicability. Yet, several conditions have to be fulfilled if an initiative similar to Gideonsbende was to be realised in other cities and regions:

First of all, (a group of) employees should be willing to take the lead and invest additional time – this is not evident for informal carers and even less for those whose family members might face additional problems (health problems, for instance). In Amsterdam, however, it is a core group of 5 to 6 persons which keeps the initiative alive since 2015.

What might have been an additional factor favouring the success of the initiative in the case of the city of Amsterdam is also the critical mass of employees (more than 100!) Gideonsbende succeeded to mobilise in the framework of open meetings. This is obviously easier achieved in a city administration with almost 14.000 employees than in smaller municipalities, where donations of holidays/hours or certain awareness-raising measures might still be possible, but where a limited number of persons experiencing challenges linked to informal care might find it harder to be heard at the political level.

According to one of the co-initiators of Gideonsbende, a basic condition for making the initiative a success has also been the capacity of city administration not to let the initiative (and in particular the donation system) become an inflexible “bureaucratic system”.

At the same time, initiators and core group themselves do not seem to set themselves objectives that might be difficult to reach and finally lead to frustration, as there is awareness of the fact that everybody might be confronted with situations which make active participation at least temporarily impossible.

Another factor that should not be under-estimated is (administrative) culture and mentality. In the case of Gideonsbende, high level officials of the city of Amsterdam showed themselves willing to cooperate with the group, discuss proposals for the improvement of the work and policy framework and support the initiative in different ways (communication, making ‘donations’ of holidays and hours possible etc.). All this required a certain level of trust between employees and (high level) management – an element not to be taken for granted in every administration.

In this regard it appears worth to mention that, according to the OECD, the Netherlands were the best performing country in the field of work-life balance in 2018 and even in the previous annual reports they are always ranked high. This connotes a cultural element that may not be present in other contexts, making the success of the initiative less probable or less impactful.

Strategy for the promotion of equal opportunities between women and men/City of Vienna (AT)

Title of the best practice: Strategy for the promotion of equal opportunities between women and men

Practice analysed by: REVES aisbl

Name and organisation of the interviewee: Laura Wimmer, City of Vienna

Role of the interviewee in the implementation of the best practice : Deputy Head of Unit, Magistratsabteilung 57

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Summary of the best practice and context

The City of Vienna is Austria's federal capital city, Austria's largest municipality and at the same time a federal province with 1,9 Million inhabitants. Vienna City Administration counts seven administrative groups including 57 municipal departments and three enterprises (Vienna Hospital Association, Housing in Vienna and Vienna Wastewater Management).

The City of Vienna has been developing policies for the promotion of women and for equal opportunities inside and outside the city administration for more than 20 years.

A specific law and programme for equal opportunities within the city administration contributed to an increased awareness of civil servants and policy-makers of challenges women (and parents in general) are confronted with and actions in different policy fields and departments.

The Executive Group for Organisation, Safety and Security includes a specific Section for Gender Mainstreaming.

Municipal department 57 « Vienna Women's Affairs », created in 1991 and assigned to the responsibility of the Women's Commissioner (city councillor), has the objective to support the city of Vienna in fighting inequalities between women and men and to help girls and women leading a secure, independent, self-determined life free from discrimination. Services are delivered by a staff of 37 female persons with profiles ranging from social workers, economists and political scientists over lawyers to psychologists and communication specialists. Apart from elaborating proposals for mainstreaming of gender equality and women empowerment into local policies, the department manages financing for smaller projects and annual grants for associations that are active in the field of equal opportunities/gender equality etc.

(<https://www.wien.gv.at/english/administration/organisation/authority/>)

Despite the policies and actions already in place and significant improvements in a number of fields, women in Vienna still face challenges (gender pay gap, informal care delivered mainly by women and therewith an unequal distribution of unpaid work, backlashes regarding the fight against discrimination linked also to changes in society, etc.).

Therefore, the City of Vienna set up a strategy which includes a very diverse set of measures aiming to promote equal opportunities/work-life balance and (re-)integration of women into the labour market.

Among these measures are the following:

- Through studies, toolkits, publications and campaigns targeting, for example, enterprises, the city promotes the integration of women/(young) mothers into the labour market.
- An important instrument for the promotion of work-life balance is the Vienna Employee Promotion Fund (Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds (waff) which offers specific (financial) support for employed women and men.
- The programme „Maternity/Paternity Leave and Return to Work“ („Karenz und Wiedereinstieg“) supports employed mothers and fathers before, during and after their leave. Up to 2700 EUR are made accessible for advice and training allowing employees to take up their work again and *advance in* or *change* their career path after a break linked to maternity/paternity leave. WAFF is also an ESF intermediate body and therewith responsible for management of ESF funding.
- Since 2010, empowerment of women, gender equality and equal opportunities in general are also stimulated through public procurement. A specific working group was set up initially to that purpose and several pilot schemes were carried out in an ever increasing number of fields. Elements regarding the promotion of equal opportunities and work-life balance more specifically can be found in execution and award criteria as well as criteria considered in needs analyses. Businesses have to commit to implement a minimum out of a catalogue of possible measures. At the same time, the city developed guidelines for enterprises and instrument helping them to assess the state of the art of equal opportunities within the enterprise and to implement measures such as those taken up in the aforementioned catalogue. In addition, civil servants receive specific training, checklists etc.
- Already from the early 90s, the city of Vienna implemented a number of projects to make city planning respond better to the needs of girls and women (including working mothers). The urban planning team includes a specific ‘Gender Planning Expert ‘.
- Specific campaigns and publications were developed to encourage men/fathers within and outside the Vienna City Administration to take over child care tasks – also in the context of paternal leave. Examples are the publication « FAIRteilt! – Hausarbeit fair geteilt » (Homework fairly distributed) or the « 4 Wände 4 Hände Campaign ». The latter includes an App (2012) and has the objective to stimulate couples to work on a fairer distribution of housework and care.
- An initiative with specific European added value, taken by the city of Vienna, is the launch of the European Network FemCities which has the objective to promote the exchange of best practices of local and regional policies fostering women empowerment and gender equality and push for the development of related policies at EU level. The network is coordinated by the department for women’s affairs. It was launched in 1997 – at that time under the name „Milena“ – for the exchange with Eastern and Central European countries. Today the network is open to cities from all EU Member States and associated countries. Best practices discussed also include examples for the promotion of work-life balance.

- A specific homepage « Allein Erziehen in Wien (Single Parent in Vienna) » was developed for single mothers and fathers. It provides Information on topics such as child care, education and training, etc.
- The city of Vienna is also aware of the important impact language can have on women empowerment and equal opportunities. This is why it developed specific guidelines for a gender-equitable and non-discriminatory language to be used within the city administration.

Impact

More than 20 years of policies aiming to empower women and create equal opportunities led, according to Vienna city administration, to a number of clear improvements in a number of fields:

Civil servants at all levels, but also employers and other players outside the city administration show a higher awareness and knowledge of challenges women (and parents) are faced with, coupled with a greater willingness to act.

The fact that different kind of municipal departments were involved in the elaboration and implementation of the strategy for equal opportunities *from the very beginning* further intensified this change of culture within the administration.

Changes of mentalities and culture in the private sector were triggered also due to measures such as the obligations introduced in public procurement procedures which forced enterprises to improve their performance with regard to equal opportunities and work-life balance.

Vienna records the highest rate of women's employment among cities and regions in Austria. Even though the gender pay gap could not be fully eliminated, it is smaller in Vienna than in other parts of Austria.

An element which might have had a positive impact on women's employment rate in Vienna is the existence of childcare services which show a great availability and flexibility with regard to opening hours etc.

Finally, Vienna closely *cooperates with* and *provides financial support to* a number of civil society organisations which contribute to shaping local policies, on one hand, and which play an important role in spreading awareness and triggering cultural changes within society, on the other.

Strengths and weaknesses/challenges

In the framework of its gender mainstreaming policy, the city of Vienna has been striving, from a very early stage (early 90s) for a holistic approach, involving a large variety of city departments into the preparation and implementation of different measures.

The policy is backed by the political level through a specific women's commissioner (city councillor), a specific Section for Gender Mainstreaming within its Executive Group for Organisation, Safety and Security and a dedicated municipal department in which the city invested considerable resources (37 staff members).

Exemplary is certainly the manual « Gender Mainstreaming made easy. Practical advice for more gender equality in the Vienna City Administration » developed *by* and *for* the city administration by the Section of Gender Mainstreaming of the Executive Group for Organisation, Safety and Security. The manual was designed with a view to be used by the employees of the city administration in their everyday work. It provides very practical advice on a variety of topics, including the use of gender-sensitive language, gender budgeting, gender statistics, a gender-aware organisation of events, the promotion of equal opportunities/diversity in public procurement, the management of subsidies. Different type of city administration departments had been consulted and involved in the preparation of the manual. Vienna's policy can thus be considered a policy going beyond the adoption of a set of related policies and measures, as a number of efforts have been made to also stimulate a change of culture and way of thinking among those designing and implementing policies that impact the life of (working) women.

At the same time, the city developed a number of measures stimulating gender mainstreaming and the promotion of work-life balance also *outside* city administration, in economy and society. To date, public procurement is based on criteria promoting gender equality, (re-)integration of women into the labour market and work-life balance of women and men. What is important to highlight here is the fact that this kind of « expectations » towards other stakeholders such as enterprises are often accompanied by other measures to support the latter in improving their performance in terms of gender equality/promotion of work-life balance. Examples here are a number of publications/guidelines and tools developed to help enterprises creating the conditions satisfying relevant criteria in public procurement. At the same time, the city of Vienna pays attention, in its expectations, to the specific typology of a call/contract (size/duration) and the type of enterprise (size).

Furthermore and partially also thanks to its 'gender mainstreaming' in different policy fields, Vienna succeeded to link its policies for the promotion of gender equality and work-life balance with a number of other programmes and instruments, including those related to the European Social Fund (example: Vienna Employee Promotion Fund - waff).

A challenge, however, is still the lack of data allowing the city of Vienna to fully monitor the state of the art of equal opportunities and the full impact of all measures which have been developed and implemented over time. Efforts are made for example with the « Wiener Gleichstellungsmonitor » (« Vienna equal opportunities monitor »), which is published every three years and covers 12 topics and 123 indicators. However, civil servants still find it difficult to find and/or receive, on a regular basis, relevant and recent data.

Sustainability

Many of the measures and initiatives mentioned above have been ongoing and were developed further during several years.

A main element ensuring this continuity is certainly a strong political willingness to work on the topic of women empowerment and equal opportunities which becomes evident in the appointment of a specific Women's Commissioner – Member of the City Council.

Moreover, with a specific section within the Executive Group for Organisation, Safety and Security, a dedicated municipal department and the allocation of a specific budget the policy has been 'institutionalised' and rooted also within the local administration.

An important aspect contributing to the sustainability of the policy is also the fact that measures have been developed and mainstreamed in a diversity of fields – from labour market policies over public procurement to childcare, etc.

Moreover, by drafting different type of guidelines for its employees, including guidelines on gender-equitable and non-discriminatory language, the city has sought to encourage a change of culture and mentality within the city administration. Important here is also to notice that a variety of departments have been involved already in the preparation of policies and guidelines.

Also, through smart linkages, different measures have become a part also of other programmes and policies (e.g. European Social Fund-related activities).

Apart from promoting gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities within the city administration, the city of Vienna also designed measures to explicitly encourage and incentivise other (non-public) stakeholders to take action within their own organisation/enterprise. Social considerations in public procurement are just one example here.

Finally and not to be under-estimated as a condition for the sustainability of actions: Vienna invested in training measures, educational programmes, communication campaigns and other kind of support for a successful implementation of its policy in-and outside the city administration.

Innovation

Even though, in recent years, the necessity to promote women employment, women empowerment, work-life balance and equal opportunities in general has received more (political) attention in a number of cities and regions (whilst in others, this attention seems to decrease), a comprehensive approach such as the one taken by the city of Vienna is still rather hard to find.

Measures have been taken in a broad range of fields, including not only labour market measures or childcare services, but also public procurement, urban planning, budgeting, use of language within the city administration and many other. 'Gender mainstreaming', in this

case, did not let gender equality issues 'disappear', as often criticised, but has found its place in a number of policies.

Moreover, promoting work-life balance is not understood as a policy which should target women only and therewith leave it the sole responsibility of the latter to combine both work and family life. For the city of Vienna is also means mobilising its own male employees and other men/fathers to take a more active part in sharing (child) care and household tasks, including through paternity leave.

Also when it comes to integrate aspects of women empowerment, equal opportunities and work-life balance in *public procurement*, the city of Vienna has been and probably still is among the leading cities in the European Union. First pilote projects started already in 2010 and included relevant criteria in contracts of a certain amount. Gender-related aspects, including women empowerment and work-life balance have also become part of the needs analysis preceding public procurement procedures. The initiative of the city of Vienna does not stop with the introduction of criteria in the text of calls. Training, as well as guidelines, check lists and other tools are made available to civil servants in order to provide them with the necessary knowledge and capacity. At the same time, the city developed tools for enterprises to support them in creating the conditions that would allow them to respond positively to the expectations and criteria expressed in the calls.

Replicability/Transferability

Cities/regions wishing to replicate in the short or medium term a comprehensive strategy such as it has been developed and implemented in Vienna would need to meet certain criteria:

An important fundament for the gender mainstreaming policy of the city of Vienna, including measures to facilitate work-life balance, is the strong (continued) political commitment by the city council.

The fact that elections never led to significant political change (one progressive political party has always had the majority and therewith major positions in the city government) certainly contributed to this continuity of the policy.

Another aspect which a number of local and regional authorities might have difficulties to replicate is the establishment of a whole and well-staffed department contributing to the development and implementation of gender mainstreaming policies. Many cities and regions lack the necessary (financial) resources and/or the political will to dedicate a part of the administrative budget to such a department or unit.

With regard to financial resources and an integrated approach as such, cities and regions wishing to launch a policy similar to the Vienna example should be able to perceive and create interrelations between measures promoting women empowerment and equal opportunities and topics promoted through other programmes and funds such as programmes related to the European Social Fund (e.g. employment, training, creation of services, etc.).

The horizontal character of questions related to equal opportunities and work-life balance necessitates a culture of cooperation and coordination between departments. Will and interest to integrate aspects such as women empowerment and equal opportunities into one's own work is one factor, but the ability to perceive links with other policies and to coordinate activities is yet another and additional one.

The city of Vienna undertook a number of efforts to create favourable conditions within the city administration – e.g. through training, campaigns and hands-on guidelines conceived in cooperation with persons from different departments.

According to a representative of Vienna city administration, another important condition, if one wishes to create a larger impact, is not to build on good will only. With regard to enterprises Vienna had therefore chosen to integrate specific clauses in public procurement procedures.

Finally, it appears to be fundamental to use and strengthen cooperation with « allies », such as civil society networks, social economy, chambers of commerce, but also other cities/regions seeking to realise similar policies, as this might help increasing the acceptance for such policies in society and at (higher) political level.

At a time, when a number of cities, regions or whole countries are confronted with - sometimes heavy - backlashes regarding progressive values and principles, such cooperation is considered more necessary than ever.

“Young Mothers” Project/City of Bern (CH)

Title of the best practice: Project « Young Mothers »

Practice analysed by: REVES aisbl

Name and organisation of the interviewee: Annina Kienholz, City of Bern, Kompetenzzentrum Arbeit

Role of the interviewee in the implementation of the best practice : Coordinator of and Coach at the project « Young mothers »

Website/Social media links: <https://www.bern.ch/politik-und-verwaltung/stadtverwaltung/bss/sozialamt/kompetenzzentrum-arbeit/angebote/angebote-fuer-jugendliche-und-junge-erwachsene/projekt-junge-muetter-1>

Summary of the best practice and context

Bern, capital of Switzerland, is a city with 140 000 inhabitants (Bern agglomeration counts around 420 000 inhabitants).

The programme « Young Mothers » has its roots in a pilote project carried out in 2011 in the city of Bern. In 2010, 66 young mothers without (completed) vocational training were registered with the social welfare office (Sozialdienst). The « Kompetenzzentrum Arbeit/competence centre employment Bern » (KA¹), which is part of the social welfare office of the city of Bern, therefore developed a pilote offer consisting of different coaching, training and work modules which could be combined in different ways. Main objective of the programme was to empower women, provide them with training and help them find employment on the first labour market so as to make them, finally, independent from social assistance and less likely to fall into greater poverty. Due to its success and high demand the offer has been further developed.

Until today, the « Young Mothers » initiative targets young mothers aged between 16 and 30 that receive social assistance and have not yet completed vocational training. Inhabitants of the city of Bern have direct and prioritised access. However, also persons from the surrounding region Bern Mittelland can be accepted under certain conditions.

¹ Kompetenzzentrum Arbeit (KA) (« competence centre employment Bern ») promotes social and work integration of persons without employment and/or training who are provided with job or training opportunities in external enterprises or in internal enterprises and workshops belonging to the city of Bern (e.g. Velo Station Bern, Glasdesign Bern).

The programme is built around a strong work-life balance perspective, as it takes the family situation of the person and related arising needs into account. Depending on her specific personal case, a young mother has the opportunity to receive coaching, take part in vocational training measures or start a job.

Main elements of the initiative are:

- a) a clarification of (career) interests of the person;
- b) a clarification of professional/career perspectives, taking into consideration the double role of the person as a mother and a worker/employee;
- c) the provision of parental education courses;
- d) networking with specialist and advice centres for women;
- e) measures to close knowledge gaps and promote general education;
- f) compiling an application package and develop/practice application skills;
- g) identifying opportunities for women to gain work experience and develop their potential through work placements in public work integration enterprises (as a temporary solution and spring board) and/or job search on the first labour market.

The offer is designed in a way to be as flexible as possible with regard to time schedules. Participants have the possibility to take part in the programme and use the offer to varying degrees (10%-100%). Modules are composed in accordance with the individual needs of the person. Also the length of the time span during which a woman takes part in the initiative is determined by her individual situation. The programme runs in cycles of three years. On the average, most participants take part 14 months.

Throughout the duration of the initiative, interest and demand for the services offered increased, also and in particular on the side of young women with a migration background.

The « Young Mothers » programme was integrated in the Action Plan for Equal Opportunities (Aktionsplan zur Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern)² and the Strategie for the Promotion of Professional and Social Integration of the city of Bern. The plan/strategy addresses different causes for difficulties faced in particular by women/mothers when trying to get (back) into the labour market. It brings together approximately 40 measures touching on topics such as (re-)integration of women/mothers into the labour market (in cooperation with social partners), specific measures regarding young mothers and single parents, improving the childcare offer, more specific measures for men taking on care responsibilities, equal representation of women and men in decision-making bodies/commissions, applying equal opportunities and promotion of work-life balance-related measures also within public administration, etc. Objective 2 – « Women and Men in Bern are able to fulfill in all phases of their working life care tasks for children or other family members » - places a specific focus on persons with care responsibilities, in particular on young and single mothers (but also fathers/men with care responsibilities).

² Following signature, in 2007, of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (CEMR), the city of Bern has been developing Action Plans for Equal Opportunities since 2009.

Impact

The « Young Mothers » programme was evaluated, in 2017, by scientists of the Hochschule Luzern (Luzern University of Applied Sciences and Arts).

According to the evaluators, the initiative succeeded in developing different models that respond to the specific needs of young mothers, on one hand, and to the needs of enterprises providing vocational training and/or employment, on the other.

Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of all participants that took part in the project (37 in total) were able to enter a professional path. A third of them started vocational training, a fifth found a job on the first labour market (retail, care services).

Particularly the measures aiming to clarify possibilities for professional development, to tackle knowledge gaps and to increase the familiarity of the women with expectations and rules of the world of work seem to have improved – next to a stable family situation – opportunities of participants to (re-)enter training and/or employment.

The division of the offer into different modules and the capacity to tailor measures to the individual needs of each women contributed to a large extent to its success.

Programme evaluators suggest to use the potential that became visible in the initiative to also address women that are not recipients of social assistance, to target women that are in touch with the Kompetenzzentrum Integration (Competence centre for Integration) and to further increase the age limit for beneficiaries.

In its pilote stage and initial phase, the offer triggered a high demand within the population and the target group. Later on, however, demand decreased. The latter was due, in the opinion of evaluators and project managers, to a marked decline in the birth rate. However, a high potential for the interest and participation of other women (those that are not recipients of social assistance and not in contact with the social welfare office, including other profiles of migrant women) became evident.

In the course of the years, the results of the « Young Mother » programme finally also stimulated discussions, at regional and national level, around the necessity to introduce « part-time (80%) apprenticeships » in particular for young adults with care responsibilities.

Strengths and weaknesses/challenges

« Young mothers » focused on a group which is still fairly often neglected when it comes to policies promoting work-life balance: The group of those unemployed mothers that are likely,

due to their young age, to have had less opportunities to gain work experience or that had, for various reasons (including early motherhood), difficulties to continue education, training and/or employment.

Not only does the programme offer vocational training and labour market-related services and opportunities. It seeks to address the complexity of the situation of life of young mothers. Professional perspectives are discussed taking into account also the participant's role as a mother. Modules and schedules are flexible enough to develop an offer adapted to the specific needs and possibilities of the young mothers.

« Young mothers » receives increasing attention also by young migrant women – a group which often has to deal with challenges linked to unemployment and/or the lack of a recognised qualification.

The flexibility with which different coaching, training and work modules can be combined, the possibility to take part in the programme to varying degrees and the opportunity to prolong and/or repeat certain parts of the programme contributed to the *success of* and *demand for* the offer. This flexibility and high degree of individualisation proved to be of advantage in several – sometimes unforeseen – situations, including financial problems, unresolved family circumstances or language problems.

« Young mothers » is based on a very good cooperation and coordination of activities between different departments and services (e.g. the young adults service, the service providing maternity and paternity advice, the service for binational couples etc.). Other services organise their courses at the premises of the Competence Centre Employment to make their clients aware of the initiative or take part in designing the offer for the target group of the « Young mothers » programme.

Despite good cooperation with other services it still remains, however, a challenge for the programme to root a tailor-made and flexible model of participation in the current administrative culture and rules (with labour market programmes usually expecting a rather 100% participation of the beneficiary etc.). One of the solutions found is not to label the initiative as a labour market programme, but as « individual coaching with group elements ».

A change of thinking is necessary also on the part of participants themselves who should not expect a « school » or other measures prescribing a « take away one size fits all » model, but a process encouraging them to take responsibilities, make choices and become experts of their own life.

A specific follow-up and accompaniment of participants after they left the programme did not exist at the time of the evaluation of the initiative, but would be considered useful, given the important changes (including possible difficulties) that might come along with the entry into vocational training or a job.

Moreover, the promoters of the programme stated a need to further improve the existing organisation and offer of care possibilities for children whilst their mothers are following modules of the programme. Often, participating women found places in kindergartens available on Thursdays and Fridays only. A part of the modules and services that are part of the programme have thus been organised accordingly, but this is not possible for the whole offer (also and in particular when it comes to vocational training and work opportunities).

A main strength and reason for success of the project « Young Mothers » seems to constitute to a certain degree also a weakness: the flexibility with which the offer is organised. Modules and schedules are composed mainly according to the needs of the young mother. This flexibility, however, showed its limits and backside often when women started traineeships and work placements. Moreover, it might have raised expectations on the part of the young mothers which would then remain unfulfilled by the future employer or company providing apprenticeships.

Finally, the city of Bern stated a decrease in the use of other specialist and advice services once the young mothers had left the programme and taken up training and/or employment – this might, however, also be linked to a lack of time of the young mother.

Sustainability

A first pilot of the initiative was carried out in 2011 to test demand and success. Due to its success, the programme was further improved and launched once again in the framework of the Strategy for the Promotion of Professional and Social Integration and the Action Plan for Equal Opportunities of the city of Bern. The programme is ongoing and in its third cycle (2018-2021).

A main question linked to the sustainability of the programme relates to demand. Whilst being very strong at the time of the pilot and the initial phase of the following cycle of the programme, it decreased later on. The limitation of the target group to recipients of social assistance and the significantly decreasing birth rate are seen as a main reason.

An evaluation of the initiative by Luzern University of Applied Sciences confirmed the high potential and success of the scheme and proposed, for its continuation, to extend the programme inter alia to persons that are not recipients of social assistance and/or are not at all in contact with the social welfare office and its services, as well as to other age groups and other groups of migrants.

Another condition for a successful continuation and extension of the programme is the improvement of child care opportunities to enable women to fully take part.

Bern's participation in [jungemutter.ch](http://www.jungemutter.ch) (www.jungemutter.ch), a network of public services from four Swiss cities (Basel, Zürich, Bern and Luzern) which developed a similar offer for young mothers without qualification certainly stimulates the continuation of the programme also in the future. Civil servants involved in the implementation of the programmes in the four cities regularly meet for an exchange of expertise.

Innovation

The « Young Mothers » programme creates an offer that did not exist before in Bern and other Swiss cantons:

First of all, it addresses a target group which has hitherto still very much been neglected in discussions and policy measures around work-life balance: young mothers without employment and professional qualification.

Moreover, the project enables participants to acquire knowledge, competencies and capacities that should prepare women for the labour market, equipping them at the same time with capacities and knowledge which enable them to combine work with family responsibilities.

In addition and maybe most importantly : « Young mothers » takes crises situations which might lead, in other cases and programmes to the drop-out of participants, as « occasions to make a change ».

This is not at least made possible through the flexibility with which modules can be combined and the varying degrees to which young mothers can take part in the programme. Moreover, during the qualification phase of the young mother, modules can be prolonged or repeated, which is of advantage if ever the participant faces (unforeseen) difficulties.

This flexibility is what makes the « Young mothers » programme unique compared to similar services for young mothers that exist in other Swiss cities.

The programme and its highly individualised offer give young women a possibility to enter a kind of 'transition zone', allowing them to become more familiar, get used to and know how to deal with the double role of being a mother and a worker/employee.

Finally, approximately 41 % of all beneficiaries of the programme had a migrant background – « Young Mothers » responded thus particularly well to the needs of young migrant women with children, which might often face even greater or additional problems and limits when it comes to combining training/work and family responsibilities. The flexibility of the programme was once again of particular advantage here.

Replicability/Transferability

For the Bern case to be successfully replicated, certain conditions have to be met.

Political support combined with a clear decision to allocate necessary resources to the programme are obviously a main point of departure. The wish to help persons become independent from social assistance is shared by policy-makers in a number of cities and regions in countries where such social assistance schemes exist. In order to set up a programme such as « Young mothers » it should come along, however, with the willingness to *invest* in such kind of initiative.

In the case of the city of Bern, the existence of a specific unit, within the social welfare office, which focuses on young adults has certainly been an advantage for the creation of the service. Persons belonging to the target group and the general challenges they were facing were already known by the social workers, but also by other persons within the social welfare office.

In cities where such a specific unit does not exist, the willingness and ability to cooperate and coordinate activities between different administrative departments and services would be crucial for a successful implementation of similar programmes.

Such coordination, coupled with a change of mentality within public administration, is all the more necessary if a city/region wishing to replicate a similar service would like to apply the same degree of flexibility and individualisation. The possibility to take part in a programme from 10% to 100%, to have modules and learning units combined according to the specific needs and/or availability of the person, as well as the opportunity to repeat or prolong modules requires a high degree of adaptability and cooperation *by* and *from* different services.

Another key condition making similar programmes – and in particular their training and work modules - a success is certainly cooperation with enterprises and social partners in general. Ideally, this should go beyond a simple exchange logic « placement service against job ». Partnering enterprises should share a belief in the added value of the programme, understand the complex situation young mothers find themselves in and be willing to contribute to the process of integration, taking into account – at least to a minimum extent – the needs of the person.

Cooperation with social economy enterprises, where economic activities are based on principles of democracy, participation, solidarity and empowerment, might be an important partner among others.

The existence of public enterprises which might employ young mothers in the context of similar initiatives might be an advantage if they continue to provide orientation and are used, where possible and appropriate, as a spring board into the private labour market (avoiding chronic dependence from public support schemes).

Finally, cities/regions wishing to set up a similar initiative should ensure the existence of a proper childcare offer and/or other support measures, enabling young mothers to take part in the programme to the largest possible extent.

Mary Poppins Initiative/Province of Arezzo (IT)

Title of the best practice: Mary Poppins

Practice analysed by: BIN Italia

Name and organisation of the interviewee: Donato Panessa – Centro Pari Opportunità – Provincia di Arezzo – Italy

Role of the interviewee in the implementation of the best practice: Collaboratore Ufficio del Responsabile, Dr.ssa Nocciolini

Website/Social media links : <http://www.didonne.it/>

Summary of the best practice and context

This experience was designed in 2004 by a network of local services and promoted by the Province of Arezzo (Department for Training and work policy) and Equal Opportunity Office. Funded by the European Social Fund, the initiative entitled "INNOVATE AND QUALIFYING - Participatory construction of a system of accreditation of home services for minors" was born from the dual need to favor, on the one hand, the presence of employed women at work, giving them the possibility of take advantage of an additional childcare assistance service compared to the traditional ones and, on the other hand, to favor job opportunities for unemployed women, through the assignment of service vouchers. In those years a lot of work was done to build synergies between institutional and territorial actors. The goal of the intervention was to implement integrated social policies and to achieve a real convergence of the needs of the various players in the area, contributing to the growth of a system of offers that is attentive to quality, user-oriented and at sustainable costs. In the previous two years, representatives of local associations and social partners were involved in defining the requirements for the new Mary Poppins figures in charge of childcare and the construction of criteria for access to vouchers. Precisely thanks to this process the main objectives and targets have been defined: offer unemployed women, with precise training requirements, a job opportunity in order to carrying out services for the families that receive the voucher; offer women with children from 0 to 13 years a concrete support to better combine family and work commitments.

ESF funding made it possible not to exclude any woman from the lists of applicants and this certainly helped the project to have good visibility and credibility. An initial communication campaign addressing women and carried out in the main places dedicated to services for children such as schools was realised. At the same time, a centralized information desk was set up which made it possible to inform and guide final users, to solve emerging problems and to adapt formula in the course of the initiative in order to further facilitate mothers' access to the service. Once having been assigned the vouchers, the families contacted a person from the public list of Mary Poppins, and chose the contractual form with which to regulate the employment relationship. From this moment on, the role of the public administration was to guarantee the quality of the service by monitoring the operators' skills. The excellent professionalism of the women who had attended the training courses and who were therefore on the Mary Poppins list, led to a high confidence of the user families.

The services offered were designed to be as functional as the needs of working, resident and / or domiciled women in the Province of Arezzo with children up to 13 years. The cost of the service was € 7.00 per hour and there is a contribution in the form of a service voucher worth € 4.00. Each working mother could request up to:

- 300 service vouchers for a child;
- 400 vouchers for two children,
- 500 service vouchers for three or more children.

Service vouchers could be used exclusively for the services of accredited operators finding themselves on the list that was given to women together with the vouchers.

From the first call in 2004 to the last one in 2013 (end of the funding period), hundreds of mothers applied for and received the voucher. As emerged from the evaluation, and in particular from the judgments of the mothers interviewed, the decisive success factor was that it was a completely new service in the panorama of interventions for children which intercepted a real need of mothers / workers.

Before, many had deplored the lack of a service that could be more flexible than those already present in the territory, often considered by the workers to be insufficient and not adequate to their needs, especially with regard to the hours. A proof of this is that the service, *aimed at* and primarily *designed for* women with a precarious work and economic situation, attracted also the interest of families with greater economic possibilities who asked for qualified care support for their children.

Mary Poppins demonstrated how to create not only favorable conditions for a sustainable conciliation policy in a territory, but also job opportunities, within a welfare model in which the public body promotes the free choice of women.

Impact

Approximately 500 operators have applied to the lists, among whom 210 had all the requisites required and were directly registered in the lists, while others had to carry out supplementary training activities. Thanks to the trust that the Mary Poppins project has built and to the good professionalism acquired by the operators, but also due to the guarantee provided by the institutions, the impact has been on several fronts.

Besides, the initiative had an important impact on women employment because the list continued to function as a reference for families seeking care services for their children even after the end of the project and Mary Poppins operators continued to work. For families and women with children it had a significant economic impact, bringing real and concrete relief for several years for both women who worked and those who were looking for a job. Moreover, public institutions gained a lot of trust from the citizens. Finally, the initiative had an equally positive impact on the capacity for dialogue and planning among the services themselves.

Strengths and weaknesses (challenges)

Among the strengths of the initiative are the participatory planning of the service; the ability to reduce the distance between citizens and institutions; a reinforcement of the guarantee

function of local institutions and the re-establishment of social relationships between people with different needs that can be a resource for one another.

These strengths have had a real resonance for several years even after the end of the project but other elements – among them political uncertainties and limited funding - have contributed to weakening of the experience.

Sustainability

Despite (funding) difficulties, citizens took ownership of the initiative: the Mary Poppins list still exists and is used by families also today. However, the financial sustainability of the voucher system represents a crucial point and the excessive dependence of this project on European funding was certainly an obstacle.

Innovation

The work methodology used involved a process of analysis and definition of the actions carried out in the framework of a participatory process which took place in several phases. This allowed, in addition to the detection of specific problems and the identification of solutions that respond to local needs and resources, for the activation of dialogue between local actors.

Replicability/Transferability

Problems linked to funding, political uncertainties and organisational restructuring have been obstacles for the continuation and replication of the initiative in (other) municipalities of the Province of Arezzo.

In the case of the Province of Arezzo, some municipalities tried to keep the initiative ongoing also after its end, even though to a limited extent.

Original version: Italian

Work-life balance strategy/Social Cooperative FAI (IT)

Best practice title: From listening to the needs of employees to Family Audit Certification

Practice analysed by: API

Name and organisation of the interviewee: Arianna Pasquali/Elisa Giuseppin, Coop. Sociale FAI Onlus Servizi Socio Sanitari ed Educativi

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Summary of the best practice and context

FAI is a social cooperative class A, which has been operating since 1985 in the social, health care and educational field in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto pursuing the purpose of the general interest to integrate elders or disable or mentally ill persons in the community.

Its staff is made of 87% of women working in shifts 365 days per year. Through the years an exponential growth has been recorded; for example in 2017 the staff including the members and the employees was composed of more than 500 units (518 units: 418 members and 86 employees).

The Board of the Cooperative decided to make an investment on good practices to improve the work environment and to reduce the turn over, as well to improve the dialogue with the partners.

Therefore, after a survey on the reconciliation needs of the company's staff (children ecc.), the focus was placed on the greater needs and on the areas of intervention (policies) more in line with members' needs.

Macro-areas of policies adopted:

- **WORK ORGANIZATION:** absences: parental leave, compassionate leave; working time: shift work, flexibility, extended holidays, part-time; work processes: job rotation; places of work: teleworking, special spaces for workers.
- **CORPORATE CULTURE:** Managers' competencies: managers' know-how and skills in conciliation management, trainings/awareness programmes, business philosophy, staff development.
- **COMMUNICATION:** Tools for information and communication.
- **BENEFITS AND SERVICES** for members, their children and families (Sport – Wellness- Financial- Credit- Tourism- Services- Cinema- Music- Personal Services).
- **TERRITORIAL WELFARE:** Corporate Social Responsibility: Meetings, Social Budget; Collaboration with the Equal Councillor of the Province; Participation in Gli Stati Generali delle Donne Women FVG; Convention ecosystems of life and work – Le nuove Frontiere del Welfare- 24 March 2017 Vittorio Veneto (TV); business matching Provincia di Trento- Family Fest 2017, 29 November 2017; Participation in the project

“Strengthening female entrepreneurship through corporate social responsibility, Animaimpresa and FVG ired, April 2018

- CORPORATE WELFARE

These are the main actions taken by FAI over the years:

- In 2010: participation in a Family Friendly Call financed by the FVG Region and the European Social Fund for the realization of a window to accompany the conciliation.
- As of 2011: opening of a Family Friendly Desk for female and male members with the aim of: 1) informing about the opportunities linked to the work-life reconciliation and 2) supporting the members after the maternity leave or for any other family needs.
- In 2012: training course for sector managers on the theme of corporate welfare and conciliation policies.
- As of 2012: monthly schedule attached to the payroll on the updated opportunities of conciliation of the territory; communication campaigns have been activated through newsletters, house-organ, website, fb, twitter, dedicated blog, meetings in a plenary information structure, individual meetings, telephone contact. Meetings in the territory.
- As of 2012: ownership of the conciliation sector with the appointment of a contact person (Conventions: Sport –Wellness- Financial- Credit- Tourism- Services- Cinema-Music- Services to the Person), presence in communication channels: Social Report and Shareholders' Assemblies.
- 2012-2013: activation of an intergenerational Green Point reserved for workers' children during school holidays (Christmas-June–September) action present in the territory.
- 2012-2013: diffusion of the good practice of the desk to the Municipal Administration of Delizia “Informadonna”, which deals with front office information on labour issues, conciliation, training and coordination of tables with gender associations for awareness-raising events on equal opportunities and against violence against women.

In 2015 FAI joined the Family Audit Certification obtaining in 2017 the Certificate for 1° annuality and in 2018 the 2° annuality Family Audit from the Province of Trento, certification body of the standard.

The certification sets a standard for those organisations that intend certify their commitment to conciliation policies and it triggers a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement, introducing innovative organisational solutions for work flexibility and for the culture of conciliation.

FAI is the first organisation in the FVG Region that joined the certification.

The FAI application process required a period of three and a half years: 6 months of internal audit/design/evaluation leading to the elaboration of the Business Plan through the management group and the operating group. Three years of implementation of the actions planned.

The certification path is monitored by two accredited professionals: 1 consultant who supports the organisation in the analysis and 1 evaluator who verifies the congruity of the process to the Family Audit standards.

The costs of the activated policies were supported through an investment of the cooperative and participation in calls for funds.

The operational impact of the initiative made necessary to identify in the internal structure a sector contact who acted as spokesperson and mediator for the requests for conciliation among the various operators (sector managers, personnel office, management etc.).

Interested parties were involved in both cultural change path to strengthen the working environment and also at motivational level (parenting desk).

In order to overcome the difficulties encountered, it was necessary:

- to define a priori a time limit for requests for conciliation (e.g. Job rotation a part-time request could be granted with a change of structure);
- to assess accurately the feasibility of each request involving different profiles such as sector managers and reconciliation referent;
- to put in practice the good practices of conciliation in order to achieve the application for the Family Audit certification in 2015.

With regard to the Family Audit evaluations, a working table composed of Family Audit contact persons, sector representatives and coordinators for the collection of data on conciliation, coming from more than 20 operating structures, met. The survey focused on: flexible hours, facilities, job rotation, motivational enhancement.

The main results of the second certification year are as follows:

- **ORGANISATION OF WORK/CONCILIATION:** 61 applications accepted out of 58 (shift work facilitation, requests and p/time renewals, leave, extended holidays, final annual data)
- **JOB ROTATION:** 35 applications accepted out of 39 (2018)
- **COMMUNICATION:** guide to work-life balance measures for FAI members
- **WORKPLACE:** training room for members
- **WELFARE COMPANY:** parenting desk for members; benefits and services for people with (child-)care responsibilities: over 20 new conventions in the areas sport – wellness – financial – credit – tourism – services – cinema – music - services; intergenerational green point for the children of FAI members free (2012-2013); activation of the women's information desk for the Administration of the Municipality of Casarsa.

In the field of TERRITORIAL WELFARE the following actions were developed at institutional level:

- collaboration with the Equality Councillor of the Province;
- Participation in the General States of Women FVG;
- Convention ecosystems of life and work – Le nuove Frontiere del Welfare- 24 March 2017 Vittorio Veneto (TV);
- Company matching at Provincia di Trento - Family Fest 2017, 29 November 2017;
- Participation in the positive action project "Strengthening female entrepreneurship through corporate social responsibility, Animaimpresa and FVG ires, April 2018

Impact

Important results have been achieved: Only in 2019, 100 requests out of 105 received were accepted, testifying an effective process of managing conciliatory policies known by the employees (about 550 to date). This means that, in 2019, almost one-fifth of the workers benefited from the organizational arrangements aimed at facilitating the reconciliation of work with personal needs.

Worker members had positive reactions from the outset: about three years ago, in fact, a survey to analyse the care needs of their members in order to propose initiatives that were useful and consistent with the results was circulated among the workers. The response rate was very high, proving a positive attitude of the target group that showed a great interest in initiatives to be developed.

Subsequently, no specific evaluation phase of the actual results was fixed as it was not a project with a deadline but the rationalization of a series of policies which have been implemented for some time and which the cooperative intends to continue to implement in the future. The opening of a conciliation desk has, however, facilitated the monitoring of validated requests for conciliation - an important number that demonstrates the workers' members positive view of the possibilities of conciliation.

The Cooperative in 2017 decided to apply for “Family Audit” – a useful occasion to quantify the data related to the different initiatives implemented.

The result was very positive. This was also a surprise to the cooperative leaders who had hitherto applied measures facilitating work-life balance in a rather unstructured manner.

Another unexpected positive result has been the activation of the so-called “Intergenerational Green Point” designed to assist worker members in childcare during periods of school closure (for example Christmas, summer period, etc.). This service was made possible thanks to the funding received from the Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Innovation

Looking at the context, both in terms of the sector and of geographical location, the cooperative realises a variety of initiatives which, combined, include an important level of innovation.

The company established a job profile entirely devoted to conciliation policies and a conciliation desk which evaluate the requests received by the workers taking into consideration the workers' needs, the team and the peculiarities of the work. In addition, the use of job rotation, flexibility regarding work place and working time, in addition to the contractual improvements introduced and the dissemination of an illustrative guide to all members, demonstrate a very high level of sensitivity to the needs of the worker members.

Strengths and weaknesses/challenges

The main challenge faced by the cooperative was to rationalise all the existing activities and initiatives and, in parallel, to give a structure to a process of analysis and response to the workers' personal needs that had not been rationalized until then.

Very challenging was also the process of achieving the Family Audit certification that has led to the consideration of all conciliation initiatives carried out until then and the design of the forthcoming.

This has to be considered in combination with the daily difficulty to organise the demands of the worker members so as to not adversely affect the services that the cooperative must provide to its interlocutors.

Notwithstanding these challenges, all initiatives proposed have the following objective in common: to strengthen the dialogue with the worker members in order to improve their satisfaction and to diminish the turnover of staff. The sum of the numerous initiatives is thus intended to promote a positive climate and a listening attitude.

Sustainability

In the case of the "Intergenerational Green Point", its sustainability is guaranteed by the participation in a regional call that for two consecutive years has guaranteed financial support and the continuity of the service. In the future, the cooperative hopes to keep providing the service with the support of other funding(s).

Compared to other initiatives, the presence of a person in charge of conciliation policies and the permanence of a conciliation desk has been included in the budget.

Replicability/Transferability

The proposed initiatives are not closely connected to the local context even if the collaboration with some local public institutions means that they are known also at the local administrative level.

The conciliation initiatives described are very much linked to the features and type of work carried out by the cooperative, a welfare activity aimed at users with special care needs such as the elderly and disabled people. This sensitivity to the person also has a positive influence on the level of attention to the needs of the worker members which, probably, might be difficult to find in other (business) contexts.

In the FAI cooperative, the proposed initiatives are also aimed at mothers *and* fathers: regardless the family role, every individual member can request conciliation measures that are evaluated taking into consideration tasks and the specific features of the entire team.

Initiatives such as those realised by FAI are replicable in other contexts, as long as resources are available to effectively manage and analyse the requests received and to reorganise the work of the team accordingly.

Original version: Italian

Work-life balance strategy/Social cooperative “Lo Scrigno” (IT)

Best practice title: Work-life balance strategy Lo Scrigno

Practice collected by: API

Person and organisation interviewed: Liliana Ghiringhelli, LO SCRIGNO COOPERATIVA SOCIALE

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Description of the best practice and context

The initiatives promoted by the Cooperative are mainly aimed at taking care of the wellness of its workers, as a strategic factor for the organization. The final purpose is the proper functioning of the Cooperative thanks to a greater involvement of the workers.

The initiatives have started in 2018 and they are still ongoing.

The context in which the initiatives have been developed is closely linked to the day-by-day mission pursued by the Cooperative.

The mission can be described as composed of two elements: one related to the wellness of the community in which the Cooperative works and to the integration of the citizens through the management and fulfillment of social-health care and education services, and one related to the wellness of the associates by taking care of the level of employment and also with activities *ad hoc* related to social life.

The involvement of the beneficiaries took place through many meetings with the workers. Later, meetings took place with the different teams to present the actions and listen to suggestions. The debate that took place has been enriched thanks to the surveys realized to satisfy the needs of the workers. The trade unions have been involved for the purpose to guarantee the greatest possible participation.

The initiatives started in 2018 with a first phase of assessment planned for 2020. They include:

1. **COMPLEMENTARY HEALTH CARE:** easier access to health care. The Fondo di Assistenza Sanitaria Integrativa Welfare Milano (Fund for Supplemental Healthcare) was established with Mutua Cesare Pozzo. Beneficiaries are workers and relatives of cooperatives and the Consortium SIS.
2. **ARRANGEMENT WITH ATM AND TRANSPORTS REFUND:** arrangement signed by Cooperativa Lo Scrigno Servizi with ATM to promote a sustainable lifestyle through encouraging the use of public transport. Workers have the opportunity to benefit from a reduction of the cost of subscription, financed by the company. Employees are also given the opportunity to divide the cost in 12 instalments.

3. INCOME SUPPORT Seiwelfare e Familydea: membership to the portal Seiwelfare offers services to the workers.

4. IN-COMPANY COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT:

A labour agreement has been signed which includes:

Area Parenthood:

- Playgrounds and recreational spaces: Playgrounds and recreational spaces have been organized free or at discounted prices especially in summer when the schools are closed (in July, August and September 2018/2019), on winter vacations or other holidays (2018 and 2019), for children at the age of 5 to 14 years.

Area flexible work organization:

- Smart Working: based on voluntary agreement.
- Part-Time Work

Corporate Area:

- Commercial agreement for the provision of time-saving services: The cooperative allows the workers to receive personal packages or letters at the headquarter and guarantees the reception.

5. MATERNITY PROTECTION: Also in 2018 the company has chosen to integrate the supplement the compulsory maternity leave pay by 20%. In 2018 four workers finding themselves in maternity leave received 100% of their salary.

6. CONCILIATION SERVICES: The project "Per un "tempo giusto": alleanze strategiche per un welfare di comunità" ("For a 'fair time' – strategic alliances for a community welfare") was realised. The project offered 10 conciliation services in the city of Milan, allowing Lo Scigno's workers to have free access to conciliation services in summer, winter, easter vacations when schools are closed.

After consultation with the municipal authorities, many of the services made available to workers in the cooperative can also be used by residents in that geographical area, including those who are experiencing unemployment or financial difficulties certified by a nationally defined indicator (ISEE).

Impact

Activities measuring the possible impact have not been initiated so far (planned for 2020).

Sustainability

The proposed initiatives were immediately sustainable as they implied mainly regulating and structuring practices already in use in the cooperative.

Moreover, the cooperative has managed to contain implementation costs thanks to the use of corporate welfare, which enjoys relief from social security contributions, and thanks to participation in public tenders.

Replicability/Transferability

The Cooperative builds on the relationships of collaboration and project sharing with other local actors and the city. Therefore the measures presented can be reproduced by other organisations rooted in the territory, with similar relationships and useful contractual power to reach advantageous agreements with welfare service providers (large companies).

Strengths/Weaknesses

The main strength is the diversification of the services, which provide the workers with an opportunity to choose in accordance with their personal needs.

The adoption of a second-level contract has led to a more effective formalisation and structuring of processes and structures already in place, preparation of the help desk and optimization of formal and informal procedures. Reactions of employees were positive. The new modalities of work organisation seemed to have a clear impact on the sense of responsibility at all levels.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to make smart working opportunities accessible to all. Employees fulfilling specific tasks such as educators could not be involved.

Original version: Italian

Campaign “Enfants Admis”/Association Amazone (BE)

Title of the best practice

#EnfantsAdmis

Name and organisation of the interviewee

Virginie Tumelaire - Amazone asbl

Role of the interviewee in the implementation of the best practice

Staff member involved in implementing the initiative (research and documentation, editing of publications)

Website/Social media links :

www.amazone.be - <https://www.facebook.com/amazone.vzw.asbl/> -
https://twitter.com/amazone_be - <https://www.enfantsadmis.org/> -

Summary of the best practice and context

Amazone asbl is an association based in Brussels, Belgium, that supports gender equality and women employability. It was founded in 1995. Since that moment the association has fought for gender equality in all its elements, through an increasing range of activities and interacting with different actors and stakeholders. The mission of Amazone is threefold. It aims a) to set the right conditions in order to let women organisations work smoothly; b) to create a meeting place for women organisations and help spreading the movement and c) to design and promote initiatives for gender equality.

Moreover, Amazone set up a Documentation Centre (Centre de Documentation) on gender and gender equality policies. It is an official partner of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

Beside these activities, Amazone opened a restaurant and a catering service that employ vulnerable persons.

In 2015, the Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes (IEFH – Institute for Equality between Women and Men) stated that 4 out of 10 cases of discrimination in employment in Belgium are linked to pregnancy or to motherhood in general. Furthermore, the IEFH showed that women experience more discrimination and vulnerability during the pregnancy period and right after the maternity leave. These data called for action. Therefore Amazone launched, in 2016 and in cooperation with the IEFH and the Carrefour d'égalité de genre, the campaign

called “#enfantsadmis” (“children admitted”). It was complementary to a previous campaign called “Campagne Maman reste à bord” (“Mum remains on board”), which was launched by the IEHF in 2010 and which aimed at providing pregnant employees looking for a job and employed mothers with legal information, advices and strategies to prevent, avoid or fight discrimination at work.

The “#enfantsadmis” initiative had the objective to increase the awareness among mothers and fathers, whether employed or unemployed, about their rights in the workplace and at improving the sharing of employers’ positive and successful experiences on work-life balance policies or strategies. It was co-financed, inter alia, by the Brussels-Capital Region, Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and the Institut pour l’égalité des femmes et des hommes (IEFH).

The idea behind the initiative was that a greater visibility of successful policies and practices of employers could push others to replicate the same policy or follow a similar path, creating a virtuous circle. Furthermore, the campaign represented an important opportunity to highlight existing positive examples that are usually not known or hidden by negative policies and cases.

The initiative was composed of three progressive steps:

- the call to action to collect experiences and testimonies from employees and employers and to establish first connections and collaborations;
- the organisation of focus groups in which employees and employers, facilitated by a group of experts (e.g. representatives of trade unions, women organisations) exchanged experiences and opinions;
- the launch of the campaign with the slogan “Happy parents = happy employees = happy employers” and publication of a brochure that collects positive examples with the aim of inspiring employees and employers not involved in the previous phases.

A website was established (www.enfantsadmis.org – not running anymore) on which employers had the opportunity to describe their work-life balance practices, give advices to others or check the legal provisions on matters such as parental leave or gender discrimination. At the same time, employees and jobseekers were given a platform to share their – positive or negative – experiences.

Alongside with the website, Amazone created a label called “#enfantsadmis” which was given to enterprises with a “parental-friendly” environment. Among the firms that received the #enfantsadmis label were Accenture, BNP Paribas Fortis, Conseil des Femmes Francophones de Belgique, Deloitte, Durabilis, Ethias, Femma, Manpower and Savaco.

The initiative was possible thanks to a strong and comprehensive partnership with 33 organisations and personalities – among them Axelle, Be Feminist, Journal Intime de quartier, Unizo, Voix des Femmes) – which helped spreading the campaign.

The campaign ended with the end of the funding period of one year.

Impact

In the first phase of the initiative, Amazone launched the call to action in order to collect employees' experiences on work-life balance and discrimination and secondly employers' ones.

In order to reach as many employees as possible, Amazone, in partnership with cooperating organisations, sent newsletters to different mailing lists, posted the call in their social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn). This way, in the first stage of the initiative, the association collected 80 experiences that were reviewed, anonymised and published on the website.

The same procedure was repeated for the employers. However, here, the final outcome was less important: Amazone received 13 experiences. Participating enterprises were mostly – but not exclusively - large ones such as BNP Paribas Fortis, Accenture, Deloitte, Manpower Group or agencies such as Partena Professional.

Approximately 50 persons took part in the press conference organised for the launch of the initiative. During this event, also policy-makers – including a regional minister and a secretary of state – intervened and showed their support. The press conference also caught the attention of mass media and civil society: TV channels, radios, online newspapers and women associations released news about the initiative in French, Dutch and English.

In one year, the website enfantsadmis.org registered almost one thousand visits and the hashtag #enfantsadmis was used on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn more than one hundred times.

Finally, the initiative reached a great amount of employees and enterprises spread all over Belgium.

In addition, the parents-friendly label was given – though only temporarily - to enterprises willing to sign a letter of intent in which they declared their efforts to assess candidates on the ground of their competencies instead of gender and to ease parents' work-life balance.

The initiative showed a great potential of mobilisation thanks to the great interest of media, the organisations supporting the dissemination and the number of persons it finally managed to reach through social media and website.

Amazone continued working on the topic of equality at work. Among its activities in 2019 are, for instance, webinars on diversity at work which target specifically small and medium enterprises.

Strengths and weaknesses/challenges

One of the strengths of the initiative #enfantsadmis lies in the multi-stakeholder alliance that was built around it. In fact, the partnership included employees, employers, field experts, women organisations and other civil society actors, trade unions, policy-makers and others who were engaged in the different stages of the initiative - from the call to action to the campaign and label launch. This added value to the campaign not only with regard to dissemination and visibility of the campaign, but also because the campaign was able to thematise work-life balance from a diversity of perspectives.

Moreover, contrary to other work-life balance initiatives it also attracted the attention of men who took part not only in the role of employers, but also as fathers with their own experiences and needs.

Through the combination of different elements – focus groups, questionnaire, label, website, brochure and work with media – Amazone succeeded in engaging different type of stakeholders, give greater visibility to the topic, but also to the interest different stakeholders have in promoting work-life balance. The approach of the campaign which did not want to blaim but rather encourage mostly by showing positive examples contributed to creating a constructive platform for exchange between employees, employers and other stakeholders.

The challenge for the campaign was not to become a static tool for collection of experiences and good practices only.

An important element which turned out not to be feasible only after the initiative had been launched was the label. The label proved difficult to implement, as it would have required an important investment of human resources able to follow the labelling process, to carry out interviews and finally yearly controls. The financing Amazone had at their disposal to carry out the #enfantsadmis initiative did not cover this and the labelling process was stopped – even though enterprises which had already taken part and received the right to use the logo of the initiative were allowed to continue using it. Yet, the label and signature of the letter of intent related to it did not constitute, finally, a binding commitment for enterprises.

In the opinion of Amazone staff, signature of a Charter would have been a more feasible, though much less binding alternative.

Finally, mainly large enterprises responded to the campaign - most of them having a specific “Plan for the promotion of equal opportunities” (Plan d’Egalité), which is often not the case of SMEs that frequently do not have the means to establish specific services or have HR/consultants working specifically on gender mainstreaming.

Sustainability

From the very beginning, the duration of the initiative (and its financing) was limited to one year.

Moreover, it turned out that the Institut pour l’Egalité des Femmes et des Hommes (IEFH) had a similar initiative in preparation which was not known to #enfantsadmis initiators during the preparation phase of the campaign. After a year of campaign they decided thus not to continue an activity which might overlap with the initiatives of the Institute.

According to Amazone staff, #enfantsadmis might have had an even greater impact if the project would have had a duration of more than a year, as it could have benefited even more from the snowball effect the campaign had started to create (good practice cases of enterprises encouraging other enterprises to take part etc.).

Nevertheless, the initiative triggered others, such as webinars on diversity within the enterprise organised by Amazone specifically for small and medium enterprises.

Innovation

What makes this campaign innovative is, first of all, the plurality and variety of the stakeholders involved. In fact, #enfantsadmis had the peculiarity to bring together and mobilise different actors (employers, mothers, fathers, employees, trade unions, women organisations, employers’ representatives) to let them share their own experiences, suggestions and professional advice on work-life balance concerns.

In an environment in which a number of employers are still not even aware of the basic principles and legislation (licensing women on the ground of their pregnancy just being one of common practices) the campaign - accompanied by media and a diversity of other players – succeeded to set the topic on the public agenda.

Moreover, the diversity of the actors involved let different topics emerge. One of the topics highlighted by persons sharing their experiences – a topic which is still too often neglected in

other kind of campaigns and measures - was the stigmatization employed *fathers* have to deal with when they ask for parental leave, despite the existence of a legal framework that would make this possible. A problem here are not only employers, but also attitudes and reactions of other male colleagues. Here, #enfantsadmis stimulated discussions also on the cultural context in general in which work-life balance is still seen a responsibility and/or problem of women only.

Replicability/Transferability

A key condition for a successful replication of a campaign such as #enfantsadmis is the ability to bring together a large variety of players able to bring in different perspectives on the topic and willing to spread the campaign and act as its ambassadors. This would also include an exchange between different players around their own (possibly ongoing) activities regarding the topic so as to avoid overlaps and create synergies.

Cooperation with a broad diversity of civil society organisations and media is necessary in order to reach employees, if the collection of different experiences of working mothers and fathers is foreseen. Employees will be more open to women's organisations, family platforms and others than to the management of their own enterprises. They should feel at their ease about describing their experiences about discrimination at the workplace or their struggles in managing the daily routine as workers and parents/caregivers.

Amazone staff also recommends to use a variety of social media and audiovisual material instead of mainly written articles and messages to draw the attention of the public on the campaign and mobilise different kind of stakeholders.

With regard to enterprises, it appears to be useful to establish a core group of employers willing to act as ambassadors of the good practice. This could then create a snowball effect with regard to others. The #enfantsadmis experience, however, also showed a necessity to foresee enough time for the campaign to get underway and have its impact. One year might not be sufficient.

Another important point to take into consideration when mobilising employers are differences regarding the capacities to act of larger enterprises vs. SMEs. SMEs often do not dispose of specific staff/human resources department able to focus on the elaboration and implementation of an equality plan or of an own kindergarten etc. Examples such as those of a number of social economy organisations show, however, that this does not mean that they are unable to facilitate work-life balance. A smaller structure and more direct interaction between management and employees for example, including stronger participatory

approaches in enterprise management, can represent an advantage when it comes to develop tailor-made approaches to the need of individual employees.

A campaign including elements such as labelling could take these particularities in account. Consequently, it would also be recommended to develop communication tools adapted to the type of enterprise.

With regard to labelling processes one has to take into account the fact that they are both resource-intensive and time-consuming, not at least because labels require also follow-up controls. An alternative solution could be the signature of a charter, which would, however, not have any binding character and not include any obligations for the signatories.

Work-life balance strategy/Luxottica (IT)

Title of the best practice: Luxottica: the experience of a large private group in the field of employee welfare and work-life balance

Practice analysed by: BIN

Name and organisation of the interviewee:

Marco Catalani, EssilorLuxottica, Italian part of the multinational Group

Website/Social media links:

<http://www.luxottica.com/en>

Summary of the best practice and context

Luxottica has adopted an increasingly innovative model of welfare and worklife balance, in addition to guaranteeing its employees a basket of goods and services, with the aim of establishing the features of a so-called “participatory capitalism”.

Luxottica started adopting welfare measures to support its employees in 2009. The company proposed to the trade unions the creation of a corporate welfare programme for a total of over 8,000 recipients. Over time new institutions and services have been introduced. With regard to work-life balance, and in order to respond to the need to make work performance flexible based on conciliation needs, Luxottica and trade unions signed, in October 2011, a new agreement. The agreement introduces a series of pilot initiatives inspired by the need to guarantee work-life balance and participation in productive activities not only of the employee but also of his/her family members. The agreement was renewed in 2015.

During 2017 Luxottica decided to invest even more in the field of welfare. In fact, the company has allocated over 13 million euros to the territory and local communities. In particular, based on an agreement with the Municipality of Agordo (a town in the province of Belluno where Luxottica's historic headquarters are located), the company has chosen to upgrade the services of the municipal nursery, open until 6.00 pm and also on Saturday, and to open a center dedicated to elderly dependents with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. These new services - for which approximately 400 000 euros have been allocated for five years - did not exclusively benefit the 4000 employees of the Veneto office but were open to the entire local citizenship.

In June 2019, the Italian part of the multinational, EssilorLuxottica, signed a new supplementary agreement with the trade unions that strengthens the distinctive features of the group's industrial relations. A new reduced working time has been introduced, with higher hourly pay than in full time cases. A novelty that allows the stabilization of 1,150 temporary or “rented” workers.

Major work-life balance institutions introduced in Luxottica are the following:

- bank of hours: increase in the number of hours per year to 120 hours per capita leading to greater opportunities of reconciling work and private life;
- bank of hours to support future maternity/paternity: can be activated at the individual request of the employees concerned (without a limit of hours), in favor of greater attention to the need for work-life balance of employees and support to parenting;
- part-time: greater part-time concession, not only to mothers with children but also workers who assist elderly, not self-sufficient family members;
- family job sharing: it can involve the unemployed spouse, the child who is terminating or terminated studies or another family member. This initiative, aimed at maintaining capacity income of the family unit and to encourage the training of children, arises from the desire to protect the family of employees in those areas affected by the economic crisis in terms of employment.

The promoter of these initiatives was the company, in agreement with the union. The beneficiaries of the services and of different working time arrangements are the Italian employees of Luxottica, but in some cases inhabitants of municipalities in which Luxottica branches are located also had access to certain services (i.e. nurseries or rest homes).

Impact

Thanks to the latest agreement, signed this summer, the 1,150 new employees will work for eight hours seven months a year and for six hours a day for the remaining five months. The pay slip will, however, always be the same, linked to the average hours worked each week, that is, 37. The reduction in salary will be proportionally lower than the time reduction. Furthermore, the worker who chooses this formula will be able to count on 30 hours of additional free training per year. The purpose of these initiatives is to incentivize hourly flexibility and retain employees. Still on the subject of flexibility and work-life balance, the agreement entitles all workers - obviously on a voluntary basis - to reduce their hours. Anyone can then decide to adhere to the new flexible working hours by maintaining the fixed and substantially unchanged payroll, but being able to count on reduced hours during the low season.

Strengths and weaknesses (challenges)

The recent innovations planned by Luxottica highlight how the company is increasingly following the path of territorial corporate welfare. The investments for the nursery and for the construction of the center for the non self-sufficient elderly, are in fact an example of how a private company, through the collaboration with the local public subjects, manages to bring an added value to the territory not only in economic terms, but quality of life not only of workers but of citizens in general.

The human aspects of the life of the organization, the quality of relationships between people and the space made available for the expression and satisfaction of their needs impact on the daily functioning of the company and therefore on market performance.

Therefore, some invisible assets obtained thanks to conciliation policies, represented by the sense of belonging and the retention of human resources, must be underlined. Some of these elements are certainly recognizable in Luxottica's experience, including the virtuous link between the involvement of employees and a series of indicators related to organizational performance such as the reduction of the absenteeism rate and the increase in quality orientation in work.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the Luxottica system is guaranteed primarily by a global production, logistics and distribution organization (on December 31, 2018, the Group counted around 82,000 employees, of which 62% were to be found in the retail business, 5% in the business wholesale, 32% in productive and logistic activities. The remaining 1% works at corporate offices in Italy and the United States. Overall, in North America Luxottica counts 46% employees, in Europe 21%, in Asia-Pacific 24%, in Latin America 8% and in Africa and the Middle East 1%), which allows an efficient exploitation of economies of scope and scale, thanks also to organizational flexibility. The economic results of the group (2018 turnover: 9 billion euros) confirm this positive impact.

Innovation

The new agreement signed last June represents the first case of a reduction in working time for the same wage applied by a company in Italy.

The "bank of hours" was a very innovative experience. The paternity permit paid up to 5 working days. Moreover, the company showed greater flexibility in managing the presence and more recognition of part-time. However, the most significant change introduced by the agreement is the "family job sharing", a contractual and organizational case aimed at protecting the income capacity of the family unit and favoring the integration of young people into the world of work through the temporary replacement of the employee with a spouse or child. The employee, in adhering to the family job sharing, in fact, can suspend his / her working presence allowing the unemployed spouse or the child close to the conclusion of the studies to take over, at the end of the necessary training period.

Replicability/Transferability

The example represented by Luxottica could be successfully pursued by other companies as long as there are adequate productive dimensions and an innovative capacity able to compete at international level.

Initiative “Smart WoW”/Bayer S.P.A (IT)

Title of the best practice: Smart WoW: a new way of working

Practice collected by: Afolmet

Name and organisation of the interviewee: Katia Foglia - Bayer S.P.A

Role of the interviewee in the implementation of the best practice : Head of Local HR Operations

Website/Social media links: <https://www.bayer.it/>

Summary of the best practice and context

Bayer is a global company with key competences in the Health and Agriculture sectors. Products and services are designed to improve people’s quality of life. At the same time, the Group aims to create value through innovation, growth and high profitability. Bayer bases its activity on the principles of sustainable development and ethical and social responsibility. In 2017, the Group employed around 100,000 employees and had a turnover of 35 billion euro.

Bayer has three plants in Italy: Filago, with the pole dedicated to agropharmaceutical bio, Segrate where is located that of dermatological drugs and Garbagnate Milanese.

Smart Working initiative is part of a bigger change process started in 2015 that included other work-life balance experiences.

Bayer has launched a Smart Working initiative and more generally revised its organizational processes in order to make them more flexible on both worktime and workplace sides. The aim is to address the needs of work-life balance of its employees.

The first initiative was the «Flexpo» project, running from May until October 2015, at the same time when Milan hosted Expo, the popular world exhibition, very close to the Bayer headquarter. During this period, Bayer offered to the employees of the Milan Headquarter the possibility to work, five days a month, from co-working areas located in Bayer manufacturing plants. The objective here was to facilitate home-office commuting. The results and feedback were positive. For this reason the initiative was proposed again from May until October 2016 under the title «FlexSummer» and from May until December 2017 under the title «FlexJob».

During 2017 the project went on with a pilot experiment called «Smart WoW». This experience included 25 employees that had the possibility to work outside the Bayer offices from September until December 2017.

After these pilot experiences, the project Smart WoW – a new Way of Working – was born in January 2018 and launched on May 4th 2018.

Employees who join Smart WoW can work from home or other private locations for 5 days a month after having attended an ad hoc safety and cultural training, in alignment with their managers.

The project was sponsored by Management Committee, Country Leadership Team and Trade Unions. The project team was composed of persons with different functions: HR, Change Management, Labor Relations, Organization & Business Process, IT, Communication and HSE. Some external consultants were involved for communication and for the renovation of offices.

Implementation started between May and April 2018 and involved in the very beginning the top management. After a collective agreement with trade unions, the internal communication reached all the Bayer employees. This step was needed in order to collect all subscriptions in the headquarter offices and in manufacturing plants.

The second wave started in June 2018 for all the employees.

The initiative will last at least until 31.12.2021, expiration date of the collective agreement with the trade unions.

In parallel to the aforementioned initiatives, Bayer introduced a new flexible working hours policy. All the employees that work in the Bayer offices have a flexible entrance time slot (from 7.30 to 10.00 AM).

One of the most important features of the Smart WoW project has been the involvement and training of top and middle management before extending it to the other employees in order to help the former to become more aware and engaged. This step was crucial and extremely important for the entire project. A second important aspect is the clarification of who is eligible to work from home, what «working from home» means and which tools are required. From the Bayer point of view, «working from home» means that an employee can work from a private place. Open public locations like co-working areas are not accepted.

In order to work from home an employee needs to have some tools, such as a company laptop and a private internet connection.

Moreover, each employee has to be trained and sign an individual contract before starting telework.

Impact

Through an online survey sent to the smart workers, Bayer has evaluated the impact of this new way of working. The results are very positive from the employee point of view as well as from the manager's one. In one of the most frequent answers, employees confirm the positive effects of telework on concentration and the capacity to complete a higher number of tasks.

Today smart working is used by over 620 employees with an average of 3 days a month. An internal survey shows that almost all of them increase their engagement (99%) and more than

70% state that work organisation and planning has improved and that there is a considerable benefit for the balance between personal and working life. Significant results have been achieved also in terms of time-consumption and environmental impact. In three months, Bayer employees have reduced their mileage by 41,000.

Smart working positively influences the level of engagement of employees because it gives them a greater degree of autonomy and self-organization and they feel that they are the guardian's of the company's trust. They feel more productive because they have less interruptions and distractions; they experience moments of work serenity thanks to being in a personal context. It helps to calm the ever-increasing overlap between personal life and working life. For the success of smart working projects, however, it is essential to support the development of skills, communication and remote work systems.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The introduction of Smart Working was the result of a shared and slowly constructed path so that the impact on the organization was positive.

Before extending it to the employees, the managers who have been leading the way were involved in training measures first. Subsequently all smart workers participated.

The strengths consisted of:

- progressive change management through several pilot experiences,
- a project team composed of employees with different job profiles,
- smooth and rapid implementation within the whole company and
- strong sponsorship by the executive committee.

Smart working is one of the great challenges of our time, it is welfare understood above all as work-life balance. There have also been cases of unsatisfactory application of smart working.

In general, smart working requires a new way of conceiving the relationship with work and with the enterprise and a new model of governance whose fundamental axes are trust, responsibility and autonomy.

Sustainability

The results of the Smart WoW survey show that every month Smart WoW helps avoiding Bayer employees to commute for an average of 41.620 Km, resulting in 8.416 Kg of CO2 not released in the environment.

Innovation

One of the main innovative aspects of this project is the progressive involvement of employees in the productive plants.

The initiatives include elements of innovation, experimentation and digitalisation.

Replicability/Transferability

This initiative can be *reproduced in* and *transferred to* other medium and large companies, and with some adjustments also in/to smaller ones.

Original version: Italian

Smart Working/Stantec S.P.A. (IT)

Title of the best practice: A smart working programme to put people and the environment first and a tool to measure its benefits

Practice collected by: Afolmet

Name and organisation of the interviewee: Gloria De Masi Gervais - Stantec S.P.A.

Role of the interviewee in the implementation of the best practice : Communications Manager

Website/Social media links: www.stantec.com/it

Summary of the best practice and context

Stantec is a world leader in engineering and architecture design and consulting, with over 22,000 employees all over the world and 140 offices. The Italian branch, including a main office in Milan and another office in Rome, has always encouraged flexible working and work-life balanced practices.

Innovation and sustainability are the two key words of the company, which in its proposal of solutions combines community attention, creativity and customer relationship. Many forms of work life balance have been introduced in the company, enabling the standards of professional commitment to be maintained without compromising private life. In Stantec, for at least 10 years, the stamping of the card has been abolished; the female presence in both staff and management is close to 50% (for example, the Managing Director is a woman)- a high percentage for an engineering company.

In Italy, Stantec has been one of the first companies to introduce a smart working (remote working) programme.

Already in 2008, Stantec launched a pilot Smart Working programme for a number of Italian employees.

Its main objectives were :

- Support work-life balance, especially for working parents;
- Retain and motivate staff;
- Create an empathetic and collaborative working environment;
- Encourage a goal-oriented and trust-based culture rather than a control-culture.

In 2017, the programme was strengthened: All employees are encouraged to participate in the programme and work up to 3 days per week, or more if necessary, remotely.

A Smartworking Observatory composed of 10 people was created in order to boost the smart working programme. Members were representatives of several company functions and came up with official guidelines on smart working. Furthermore, an IT manager and a Senior Environmental Engineer involved in the observatory, implemented “**Smafely**”, an IT tool measuring how much money, time and polluting emissions can be saved thanks to smart working (and by reducing commuting).

Each time an employee submits a smart working request through Smafely, s/he automatically populates a database that, by aggregating data, shows the above mentioned savings.

The algorithm invented by Stantec's environmental experts has shown that, over 12 months, within a group of 120 employees who worked at least 1 day per week remotely, the company saved about 125,000 kilometres of commuting and 3,300 hours spent in traffic.

Total savings for employees amounted to approximately 19,000 euros.

In terms of emissions, it has been possible to avoid 58 kg of nitrogen oxides, 18 tonnes of CO₂ and about 8 kg of fine dust.

Specifically, Smafely is based on an algorithm that calculates the mass of seven compounds (NO_x, CO, CO₂, VOC, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) to be considered as pollution factors that are indirectly avoided by a day of smartworking (by not commuting to the office), along with personal factors of economic and time savings. It is a system that requires each user/employee to create a personal profile including parameters such as the distance between home and office, the kind of transportation normally used, etc. Every time he or she requests a day of smart working, relative measurement of the parameters of his or her profile will be activated. This personal profiling also includes a control of the parameters of safety and ergonomics of the worker.

The factors used to calculate polluting emissions, in particular, are based on official data of the Lombardy Region.

Another key to the success of the project at Stantec is the strength of the IT infrastructure which, at a global, as well as local level, allows everyone to work remotely and in collaboration potentially from anywhere on the planet. The use of Skype for Business as an instant messaging, conference call and video conference system makes remote work extremely efficient from any location, as long as it is equipped with a secure and fast Internet connection.

Today, Stantec smart working is open to everyone and aims to achieve an average of 3 days per week per employee.

Stantec makes no distinction between employees and does not enter into the merits of the type of commitments and extra-business interests of each. Stantec recognizes the value of each person's free time, whatever it is used for. Anonymous surveys conducted internally have allowed to appreciate the various opportunities that have been created: the time saved by

employees is not only devoted to the family, but also to volunteering, sport, relaxation, the study of languages...

All this is made possible by the sense of responsibility and the mutual trust between management and staff, as well as within the individual work teams. Some workers are also more reluctant to these changes, but it is a minority, also the use of smartworking is not compulsory, but happens on a voluntary basis.

In addition, to support the profound cultural change necessary to approach this new way of working, a new management role, the Culture Manager, has been introduced to carry out this project.

In 2019, Stantec has created a partnership with an innovative start up software house to implement a web-based upgraded version of Smafely (the tool created to measure social, economic and environmental KPIs connected with smart working).

For more information: <https://www.smafely.com/>

Impact

Stantec has regularly measured the impact of its Smart Working programme through internal surveys and, more recently, through focus groups led by the Culture Manager. The results have always been encouraging.

80% of all respondents think that smart working helps combining time for work and private life. 61% believe it helps reducing work-related stress factors. 60% think that it helps increasing the quality of their work.

Overall, smart working has several benefits for employees, the company and the environment/the community:

1. It creates a collaborative and inclusive work environment.
2. It helps retaining talents: in more than one case, Stantec has managed to retain people who would have otherwise left the company, for instance because they had to move to another town or they became mother/father, or suffered a heavy disease
3. It helps people to manage their time better by avoiding commuting, getting more organized and feeling less stressed.
4. It supports working parents, especially mothers: several times, female employees who had just become mothers have spontaneously decided to go back to work right after the 5 months of compulsory maternity leave , although they could have extended it by using additional weeks of voluntary maternity leave. Thanks to smart working they could start working again from home, normally fewer hours but in the interest of project continuity.
5. It increases productivity: staff tends to reinvest the time saved by commuting back in their work. 55% of people say they use smart working in order to concentrate more on work.

6. It ensures project continuity when an employee cannot commute for several personal reasons.
7. It helps increasing sense of belonging and pride for the company.
8. It contributes to saving pollutant emissions.
9. It saves money otherwise spent by staff in transportation, lunch, baby-sitting etc.
10. It helps saving money otherwise spent by the company, e.g. lunch tickets and rentable office space.

Strengths and weaknesses/Challenges

Strengths:

- It is truly conceived to increase people's wellness and create a better place to work in.
- It is addressed to people with a strong sustainability culture – most of staff are environmental experts.
- It has increased staff satisfaction and gender equality.

Weakness:

Smart working is a cultural process and there are still few people who have some resistance to it. A strong change management programme can help bringing these people on board, by showing the advantages of smart working, as a voluntary practice.

Challenges:

Remote working, or smart working, strongly contributes to work-life balance and parenthood-friendly company policies. In addition, by reducing or avoiding long commuting between home and office, it can contribute to saving money, pollutant emissions and stress.

Thanks to a recent Italian legislation on smart working, several companies have been testing and applying it. Such a strong cultural shift is changing the approach to work and, probably, in the future, will also change the way offices, urban spaces and mobility are designed.

Sustainability

Allowing to measure the social (people), economic (money) and environmental (emissions) benefits of smart working, Stantec's Smart Working programme and its related tool Smafely are a perfect example of a programme contributing to the three pillars of sustainability.

Another important aspect is that, thanks to smart working and work-life balance policies, Stantec supports equal opportunities. In fact, it is one of the few Italian engineering/technical companies with almost 50% of women and men, also in top management.

Innovation

The most innovative aspect of Stantec's Smart Working programme is its scientific approach to the measurement of its benefits and the creation of Smafely, a specific IT tool to measure them.

Smafely was originally developed internally based on a Sharepoint platform and is currently been developed in a web-based version by Stantec and an innovative start-up company, with a view to improve not only Stantec's but potentially also other companies' capacity to measure smart working KPIs.

Smafely KPIs, specifically, are:

- kms saved by not commuting;
- pollutant emissions saved by not commuting;
- money saved by not commuting;
- health and safety conditions of each smart working session (e.g. ergonomics etc.).

In order to develop innovative technological projects, such as this new advanced version of Smafely, Stantec has created a R&D division led by a sustainability manager.

Another innovative aspect of the programme is the strong flexibility of smart working, since :

- all employees have access to it (in Italy, most companies tend to give access to smart working only to some people, e.g. working mothers);
- flexible working time: you can work « smart » beyond the normal 9am-6pm time, but no later than 9pm and no earlier than 7 am;
- employees can request longer smart working periods of time, for instance if they have just become a parent, are ill or have other personal issues;
- persons can request to work « smart » any day of the week, provided this fits with their team's needs (other companies have fixed days of smart working).

Replicability/Transferability

Both the implementation of the programme in its culture and change management process and the application/use of Smafely can be perfectly reproduced in other companies which have smart working policies or want to develop them, for instance through a coaching or training programme or a knowledge sharing approach. Specifically, the new web-based version of Smafely which is in the process of being finalised, aims to be customised and adjusted to different kinds of organizations.

Original version: Italian

Recommendations for local/regional authorities

MASP partners analysed a number of good practices, realised by cities, regions or enterprises, which contribute to work-life-balance.

A number of elements deriving from these practices might serve as inspiration for other local/regional governments and administration to improve policies and practices facilitating work-life balance – including but at the same time going beyond the implementation of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive³ - and therewith contribute to make major principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights become reality.

The suggestions below should not be considered as exhaustive policy recommendations, but rather as an inspiration and practical suggestions complementing (position) papers such as those issued by the EESC, CoR, COFACE, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and others.

1. Make the « Reality check » !

In case you already have (specific) policies and measures promoting work-life balance in place or you are about to develop them: What is the profile of the persons these provisions have been/are being designed for? Do they take into account different situations parents of your city/region might find themselves in and different family types? Do you have the right means/tools to reach different groups of parents?

Work life balance measures are needed not only for employees and parents living in a couple! Take a closer look at how reality for parents in your municipality/city/region looks like. Pay attention to particularly disadvantaged groups falling out of the typical profile of beneficiaries for which existing work-life balance measures may have been mainly designed hitherto:

The challenges faced by single mothers or fathers or re-composed families, on one hand, and unemployed persons (some of them without any professional qualification), self-employed, persons finding themselves in temporary employment relationships, newcomers in a territory with restricted rights and possibilities – to name just a few - vary and require different types of measures.

Specific assistance and more tailor-made services are also needed if other factors further complicate the situation (unstable family situation, disability, becoming a parent at a particularly young age with possibly still a strong dependence on other family members, drug addiction, etc.).

Initiatives such as the « Junge Mütter » (« Young mothers ») project in the city of Bern, which targets young mothers without a professional qualification, have shown the benefits

³ The EU Work-Life Balance Directive was adopted by the Council on 13 June 2019 and entered into force on 1 August 2019. More information: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1311&langId=en>

of programmes allowing participants to adapt schedules and the combination of modules to their specific needs and circumstances.

2. Fight discrimination by making rights of mothers and fathers visible !

A major, rather invisible obstacle hindering (prospective) parents, but most often mothers, to *enter* or « *survive in* » the labour market is discrimination. Discrimination might happen in different forms and at different moments - during the apprenticeship period, at the stage of application for a job, after information of the employer about an upcoming pregnancy, at the return of the mother or a father to the work place after birth, etc. It has its roots in cultures, coupled also with a lack of knowledge regarding (fundamental) rights, legislation and living circumstances of others.

Cities and regions should take a leading role when it comes to making different stakeholders aware of the challenges parents face, of their rights and of the benefits, for employers and society in general, of policies and practices promoting work-life balance.

Moreover, cities and regions can contribute to spread knowledge of legislation in force: In a number of European countries, studies show that many employers are not informed about current legislation and violate law, e.g. by licensing mothers after their return from maternity leave.

Beside raising awareness on rights and existing legislation, cities and regions should encourage different stakeholders to go beyond legislative minimum requirements.

Bodies such as gender equality or diversity committees which bring together public authorities, social partners and experts from civil society, for instance, could stimulate exchange and trigger stronger awareness of existing problems as well as a change of mentality among different stakeholders. An example for such kind of body is the Anti-Discrimination and Diversity Council set up by Actiris, Employment Agency of the Brussels-Capital Region, in the framework of the Territorial Employment Pact.

Other possible measures, among many more, are the support (and/or direct coordination) of campaigns such as the #enfantsadmis campaign in Belgium, publications, events such as those organised around the Equal Pay Day or activities at schools...

3. Take (prospective) fathers on board!

Fathers have an important role to play in the education of their children and for a fairer distribution of care responsibilities in everyday life. Taking this and their needs with regard to their double role as employee/apprentice/job-seeker, ... AND father into account is not only a question of legislation!

Legal provisions enabling and encouraging fathers to take paternity and parental leave, including provisions on non-transferable leave, are fundamental. They are a political sign and recognition of the important role fathers play *in education of and care for* their children as well as in a fair distribution of responsibilities/opportunities between women and men. Yet, they are not enough.

Experience has shown that men tend to take such leave and/or take over a higher share of care responsibilities also beyond this period most often when they feel this choice is accepted and encouraged also by their employers, colleagues and society more in general.

Enterprises can foster a new culture of thinking - and reap the benefits of it (less retention costs, attracting talents, increased productivity) - by engaging also and in particular managers to support prospective fathers in their choice.

Public authorities, together with (social economy) enterprises should become more proactive in raising visibility of the many benefits, proven in a number of studies, of fathers taking paternity leave and spending time with their children in general.

Local authorities such as the city of Vienna with its publications targeting their own male employees or the campaign « 4 Wände 4 Hände » (« Four Walls, Four Hands ») for a fairer distribution of paid and unpaid work have shown the example.

Training modules for heads of departments or heads of unit and other persons in higher managerial positions might also help changing existing patterns of thinking.

4. Counteract traditional role models!

Fighting stereotypes is fundamental for labour market access in particular of women/mothers also when it comes to another aspect: choice of professions.

Enterprises all over Europe, including the Nordic countries, are becoming increasingly active in attracting also and in particular women to professions that would still be considered « less typical » for them (more technical professions, transport, STEM, etc.). These efforts also include the development of more family-friendly employment offers etc.

Cities and regions can facilitate contacts between enterprises and their potential future female employees for example through networking events and seminars organised in cooperation with enterprises, universities, schools and other structures.

They might be able to advise enterprises – also and in particular those proposing ‘less typical’ jobs for women - on different possibilities to create a more family-friendly work environment.

Last but not least, public authorities with competences in the field of education are in a position to push for a questioning of prevailing role models with regard to professions and care tasks to become an integral part of curricula in schools and other educational institutions.

5. Do not forget about the impact of public procurement!

Gender mainstreaming and the promotion of work-life balance should not remain a question of good will and voluntary commitment only.

Public procurement which reflects values and principles of local policies, including equal opportunities and work-life balance, can be a strong instrument helping to spread respective practices among enterprises and in society more in general.

Examples such as that of the city of Vienna which has been applying criteria related to gender equality/women empowerment and work-life balance in its procurement practices for more than 10 years and in ever greater dimensions show that this is possible. Such criteria can be applied at different stages of the procurement process, but also in the pre-procurement phase (needs analysis etc.).

Apart from stimulating work-life balance policies within the enterprise, public procurement practices could also seek to trigger stronger cooperation between SMEs and the social economy – for example, but not only in areas where the execution of a specific contract requires additional training of (future) workers and/or employees. This could create further opportunities of labour market integration also for parents (i.e. young parents without professional qualification).

Civil servants should be trained on a regular basis in order to be able to correctly develop and apply social criteria related to the promotion of work-life balance, empowerment of women (and other domains).

Specific tools, such as concrete guidelines, including toolboxes and practice examples, opportunities for peer exchange, training measures, etc. might help *enterprises* – and in particular SMEs - to establish required practices.

6. Work-life balance and equal opportunities – a matter not only for social affairs departments or Women’s Commissioners!

Most actions promoting equal opportunities, work-life balance and women’s empowerment will only have a lasting impact if their continuity is ensured and if they are part of larger strategy integrating related objectives and questions into different policies and programmes.

Not every city or region might be able to establish a proper and well-staffed department and set up a specific budget line for equal opportunities. However, a broad range of other possibilities exist to make related topics and objectives a part also of other policies and actions. Examples are interdepartmental/interservice working groups and coordination meetings, internal code of conducts and guidelines – ideally already conceived with the contribution of a variety of departments and units, joint events and campaigns, etc.

A stronger cooperation between policy departments should not at least also be seen as an opportunity to mobilise additional resources.

Finally, to ensure the greatest impact of measures promoting equal opportunities, work-life balance and equal opportunities, cities and regions should seek partnership with other actors such as civil society organisations, social economy, chambers of commerce and others. The latter should be involved in the conception, implementation and monitoring of strategies, policies and actions. Moreover, they might be in a position to help public authorities evaluating the success of initiatives and provide necessary data.

7. Use opportunities provided by EU policies and programmes!

European policies, programmes and funds such as the European Social Fund (ESF) or the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) offer a range of possibilities to support equal opportunity policies and single actions.

Many cities/regions having access to the European Social Fund and other European or national programmes could use these opportunities much more.

An example here is the city of Arezzo which used ESF for an initiative linking the provision of childcare with the creation of employment opportunities for unemployed women.

With respect to European Structural and Investment Funds, of which ESF is a part, policy-makers should become active already at the programming stage (launched for the new funding period 2021-2027 at the time when these guidelines were written) and push for the inclusion of objectives and priorities linked to equal opportunities and the promotion of work-life balance in national and regional operational programmes.

Yet, not all cities have easily access to funds such as ESF - in particular smaller cities experience difficulties. Their needs have to be taken more seriously into account by (managing) authorities at national and regional level when it comes to the programming and implementation of relevant programmes and initiatives. Also capacity-building measures should be made accessible to authorities representing territories of different size.

8. Support Small and Medium Enterprises and the Social Economy in their efforts to promote work-life balance!

Unlike larger companies and corporates, small and medium (social economy) enterprises might not always have the means to have their own childcare services, training, HR advisors or other tools facilitating work-life balance of their employees. At the same time, studies show the potential of SMEs, due to their smaller structure and more direct relationships between management and individual employees, to develop tailor-made solutions to the specific situation of the employee.

Cities and regions have a number of possibilities to provide support:

Free Advice: Services that target specifically small and medium enterprises and offer free advice through specialised consultants have proven useful, as have programmes creating (financial) incentives for the establishment of a plan for diversity and equal opportunities.

Exemplary here is the offer developed by ACTIRIS, employment agency of the Brussels Capital region. It offers free consultancy for the establishment of a diversity plan. Beyond that, Actiris has established a label for enterprises having successfully implemented such a diversity plan.

Labelling might create incentives for enterprises, under certain conditions, to improve their equal opportunities/work-life balance policies and practices. Yet, related procedures should not be too burdensome from an administrative and financial point of view. In addition, public authorities should have the capacities to realise follow-up monitoring.

Encouraging networking and co-operation between different enterprises - e.g. to stimulate the creation of joint childcare services, employer groupings etc. - is fundamental for different reasons: It may lead to greater impact and snow-ball effects, stimulate a pooling of resources and allow also smaller enterprises and organisations to have access to a large variety of tools to foster equal opportunities/work-life balance. Cities and regions can play an important role by acting as brokers between different type of stakeholders, by arranging and coordinating (networking) meetings and events, providing incentives for cooperation through specific programmes, public procurement, etc.

9. Improve the childcare offer!

In many cities and regions, a main reason for women not to re-enter the labour market after birth is the lack of appropriate childcare services.

Frequently, demand is higher than the number of places available. Moreover, high costs of childcare may prevent families from using these services. Another problem hindering parents, and in particular women, from accepting a job are opening hours of childcare services which do not correspond to the work schedule of parents or do not show enough flexibility (e.g. in the case of parents working part-time or following training courses on certain weekdays only).

Public authorities in charge of organising childcare services should evaluate and possibly reshape the existing offer in cooperation with a broad range of stakeholders, involving trade unions and employers, social economy, civil society, parents and others.

They might provide support to private actors wishing to create childcare services. This could be done, for example, through financial support and/or the facilitated access to specific funds and programmes, but also by encouraging cooperation between different organisations and enterprises.

Public authorities might also, where this is possible, want to join themselves multi-stakeholder partnerships aiming to set up childcare services (see also point 10).

10. Use potential and expertise of the social economy!

Social economy enterprises, where economic activities are based on principles of democracy, participation, solidarity and empowerment, might be an important partner among others for

cities and regions when it comes to creating a more parent-friendly environment and empowering women.

Not only might many of them serve as a model for the involvement of staff and responsiveness to the needs of their employees, but also as an inspiration for how to cooperate with different type of players and mutualise resources in order to reach objectives which an organisation could never attain on its own.

Exemplary in this context are next to the already mentioned family districts in the Province of Trento and initiatives of cooperative consortia also projects such as the day nursery Méli-Mélo in Lille (FR). The latter provides places for different categories of children - including children with disabilities and children with parents finding themselves in work integration processes. It was set up as a SCIC⁴ involving not only employees and parents, but also the city of Lille, associations, a regional platform of coopératives and alternative finance players.

11. Convince by making existing good practices visible!

Cities and regions should use the persuasive power of already existing good practices regarding the promotion of equal opportunities/work-life balance.

(Online) articles, social media posts and other type of (online) publications of examples of parent-friendly enterprises and organisations (including those encouraging men are to take their responsibilities as fathers) might have an important impact on others.

Local and regional governments might also decide to launch or support campaigns such as the #enfantsadmis campaign in Belgium, initiatives such as « Mamo pracuj »⁵ in Poland or specific labels (see point 6). Support might take the form of (co-)financing, communication activities, but also legal advice,...

12. Lead by example !

Cities and regions are (sometimes big) employers themselves. A strong commitment to equal opportunities, work-life balance and women empowerment will increase their credibility and stimulate others to follow their example.

Specific legislation (example: Wiener Gleichstellungsgesetz – equal opportunities legislation of the city of Vienna) and/or provisions in the internal rules of procedure stimulating the

⁴ Société Coopérative d'Intérêt Collectif (SCIC) – a new type of cooperative created in 2001 in France, which opens new ways of collaboration between public and private actors.

⁵ <https://mamopracuj.pl/>

application of related principles throughout different municipal departments are a strong fundament.

Some cities/regions might be able to nominate ombudswomen or -men or 'family officers'

Regular training of managers/civil servants in higher administrative positions helping them to apply principles and rules related to equal opportunities and work-life balance in their daily work will not only help employees to more easily combine work and the challenges of care responsibilities, but also encourage staff in general to change their own way of thinking and acting.

Publications such as hands-on guidelines aiming to support civil servants in promoting equal opportunities and work life balance in their daily work might also be of use. Ideally, they should be elaborated in cooperation with different municipal departments and units, cover a broad range of policy fields and include aspects such as the use of a gender-neutral language.

Policy-makers and management of enterprises should encourage and support solidarity initiatives among employees such as Gideonsbende in Amsterdam. This can be done, for example, through communication activities (mailings, intranet, etc.), the organisation of workshops and meetings between employees and administration and/or policy-makers, a more flexible handling of sometimes rather tight administrative procedures, the provision of meeting places and/or financing of certain activities, ... However, solidarity among employees should never be considered a replacement for action on the part of governments or employers.

All these initiatives should not target women/mothers only, but also and in particular seek to target men, encouraging them to take their responsibilities.

13. Let yourself inspire (and advise) by others!

Exchange with other cities/regions at regional, national or international level around existing policies and practices could certainly provide an additional stimulus and support for policy-makers and public administration.

A number of initiatives and networks through which this is possible exist.

Important in terms of 'sustainability' and impact, however, is also here the involvement of male politicians and/or civil servants beside their female colleagues. Too often it is above all women who are being delegated to meetings on topics linked to equal opportunities, work-life balance question etc.