



WP2 - RESEARCH REPORT

SOCIAL INNOVATION AND BEST PRACTICES ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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The document summarises the main results of the study carried out by AICCON, with the scientific support of Riccardo Prandini and Elena Macchioni - experts of the University of Bologna on work-life balance and welfare policies. The study is part of "WP2 - Research and Best Practice" of the **MASP project** - *Master parenting in work and life*.

The study focused on two best practices implementing innovative approaches to fostering work-life balance in Italy: the digital platform **MAAM - Maternity As A Master** and the certification **Family Audit**. These experiences are two pillars of the MASP project, in which they will be integrated in a complex policy implemented by a public-private partnership. The aim is to analyse the main features and results of the two best practices, in order to give evidence and recommendations to implement further project activities.

In order to identify relevant elements for the discussion, the analysis considered the interpretative framework on **social innovation**, which allowed to select 4 dimensions to evaluate the selected cases:

1. **culture;**
2. **governance;**
3. **sustainability and**
4. **scalability.**

The objective of the document is to contribute - assuming a scientific point of view - to the reflection on the possible paths aimed at the promotion of policies and tools of work-life balance within public institutions - with particular reference to the target "unemployed women" in pregnant or with children aged 0-3 - and private ones (both *for profit* and *non-profit*) - as for the target "parents".

The assessment of *MAAM and Family Audit* through the 4 dimensions identified was conducted on second level data. The path provides different suggestions on the challenges and on the elements on which each of the two projects is facing in order to increase its effectiveness. Furthermore, the study identifies the elements able to activate *peer-reviewing* processes and consequent mutual contamination within the MASP project.

FAMILY AUDIT - Strengths and challenges

The Family Audit standard is an instrument allowing public and private sector organisations to carry out internal surveys into their own workplace organisation. It is a managerial instrument adopted on a voluntary basis by organisations intending to certify their constant commitment to creating a balance between working and personal/family life.



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The process of applying the Family Audit takes place over a period of three and a half years: 6 months for auditing/planning/evaluation, leading to the preparation of the Activity Plan; 3 years to implement the action contained in the company plan. It is then possible to repeat the experience for a further three-year period. Two accredited professionals from outside the organisation monitor the whole process: a consultant who supports the organisation in the analytical work and an evaluator, who checks that the process complies with the Family Audit standard. Organisations obtaining the Family Audit brand are included in a special register. The Family Audit brand is registered and the property of the Autonomous province of Trento.

Family Audit nowadays has reached a high level of project maturity, capable of guiding companies of all sizes and types in striking a balance between work and life. Specifically, it is possible to highlight three elements that can ensure that the project has greater scalability with a view to good practice.

- 1) Firstly, it should be underlined that, due to the cultural vision on which it is based, *Family Audit* refers to **family** and its needs of balancing with professional life. This point usually tends to be easily lost within the broader theme of “corporate welfare”. The centrality of “family” marks out the process and its positive results. The data show that the greatest perception of improvement occurs where the programme tries to address the needs of family relationships (couples, parents or elderly relatives).

If the standard loses the focus on “family”, it would be confused with a corporate policy, useful to individuals, but off-centre from the real problem of workers to devote time to their own family organising.

- 2) The **Audit** process itself represents the second focus. It is one of the specificities to be maintained in the future and to be developed further. Unlike many corporate welfare programs, *Family Audit* is a real *listening and management process* that enters the heart of company life. Listening to the needs of employees and the company is central, through professionals who help build plans of measures suited to the context, to organise their delivery, their evaluation, certification and, where appropriate, the re-design.
- 3) Finally, *Family Audit* greatly facilitates the “**personalisation**” of measures. The engagement of all the internal stakeholders of the company allows design services on the specific needs of the worker and his family. Personalisation can avoid the growing process of “individualisation” of corporate welfare programmes that tend to present themselves as a menu of standard goods and services that do not really intercept workers' needs and projects. Personalisation also means “diversification and pluralisation” of the offer, moving beyond the culture of the *fringe benefits* which always remain the easiest way to address requests for employee well-being.

For the above reasons, the **challenges** facing *Family Audit* are 2:

- 1) The first one is linked to a **greater diffusion of the tool**, in order to include it in the cultural circuits of the management and to become the practice for the realisation of *people care* programs. It is also necessary to intensify information and communication activities, so that company



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management does not consider it only a "brand to be exhibited" but a *policy* capable of innovating corporate welfare.

2) The second challenge concerns the **territorialisation of tools and processes**; that means the company's ability to create plans of measures capable of involving the various players in the area to offer more personalised solutions and, at the same time, to activate plural networks of stakeholders assuming the territory as a common good.

MAAM - Strengths and challenges

MAAM – Maternity as a Master – is a learning method developed by LBV Ltd. **MAAM** is a business *blended* training program aimed to combine the theoretical aspects referring to specific *soft skills*, with what happens in professional and family life when relational skills need to be put in place and act. The program, developed on a digital platform, is aimed at the parents of children aged between 0 and 3 years and accompanies them in the months preceding birth, during leave and return to work, helping them to enhance the family experience and, at the same time, to enrich their professionalism and working relationships.

The *Life Based Learning* platform MAAM is more recent than the *Family Audit*. The research data give us a fragmented image of the potential effects in terms of work-life balance of this tool. Despite this, it is possible to outline some elements that mark it out as an innovative practice for balancing family and work responsibilities.

1) As highlighted for *Family Audit*, the focus is placed on **parenting** as a specific phase of the family life course. It is scientifically demonstrated that parenting is not a phase characterised by privatism, but an opportunity for personal and professional growth for those who live it.

This method activates and facilitates the cultural change linked to the relationship between the family and the working spheres, allowing us to grasp the possible synergies between roles and spheres of life and therefore enhance the resources coming from the different welfare actors committed to promoting sustainable lifestyles for citizens with care roles.

2) The **digital dimension** of the MAAM programme facilitates its diffusion and its accessibility by parents.

This second strength leads us to outline the **challenges** that this tool faces with respect to the possibility of consolidating itself as a good practice. Although using a simple and clear language, the **digital dimension** of MAAM and its complex structure (insights, exercises, etc.) could cause problems of accessibility and usability, especially for those job profiles not accustomed to using digital tools and following structured training courses.

The biggest challenge with respect to the MAAM tool concerns the possibility to include it in **wider welfare policies**, completing it with other welfare measures and devices. In this way, MAAM will not only remain an empowerment tool for individuals, but also an opportunity for users and enterprises. On the



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one hand, users could achieve the desired integration between professional and family life; on the other hand, companies could activate an articulated family friendly policy plan of *people care*.

To do this, according to the data, it would be important to enrich the training path by meetings and opportunities for discussion between users and *supervisors*, as well as to co-design moments between the various internal *constituencies* of the organization. So that the company could better understand the potential of the training tool and, therefore, support parents in managing multiple roles through a co-produced, articulated welfare package characterised by flexibility and customisation.

INNOVATIVE DIMENSIONS AND THE CHALLENGE OF PEER CONTAMINATION

The study tries to underline the innovative dimensions of the two best practices and the challenge of the peer contamination in MASP (and future) projects.

With respect to the **innovative dimension of the process**, both tools work in the direction of activating a virtuous circuit between needs (of workers and the company)/policy/outcome (worker well-being and company productivity).

As regards more closely the **innovative dimension of the product**, both paths aim to empower family relationships by providing solutions that allow people to design long-term plans through a growing integration between roles and work and family responsibilities.

Contamination of the two tools could lead to processes:

- *more structured* (project phases clear and linked to each other);
- *more articulated* (multiple tools addressing the same need);
- *more co-produced* (multi-stakeholder approach to address the need + engagement of the beneficiaries during the project phases);
- *more personalised* (needs analysis + design of solutions);
- *more usable* (flexibility + usability);
- *more capable* (monitoring + impact assessment).

Contamination can occur through *peer-reviewing processes* aimed at facilitating the exchange, discussion and activation of reflective practices between MAAM and *Family Audit's* stakeholders.

The MASP project can be seen as an opportunity to start this process.



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MASP

MASTER PARENTING IN WORK AND LIFE

Developed by



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