

Men Equal – Men Different

Joint final report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION.....	4
GOALS.....	5
METHODS AND APPROACH	5
THE SAMPLE OF THE EMPLOYEES SURVEY	7
PRESENTATION OF RESPONDENTS.....	8
NATIONAL RESULTS	9
BULGARIAN CONCLUSIONS	9
<i>Policy for gender equality and reconciling work and family life in Bulgaria.....</i>	9
<i>National legislation in the light of the international agreements.....</i>	9
<i>Analysis of the Survey of Employees and Employers in Bulgaria.....</i>	11
DANISH CONCLUSIONS.....	16
<i>Legislation.....</i>	16
<i>Results of the surveys of employers and employees</i>	16
<i>Good practices</i>	18
FRENCH CONCLUSIONS	19
<i>LEGISLATION</i>	19
<i>Results of the surveys of employers and employees</i>	22
<i>CONCLUSION.....</i>	25
LATVIAN CONCLUSIONS	26
<i>Country Specific Notes on Methodology</i>	26
<i>Legislation and existing stereotypes regarding role of father.....</i>	26
<i>Perception and practice of fatherhood in Latvia</i>	28
<i>Family-friendly policies at workplace.....</i>	29
<i>Child-care and paternity leave.....</i>	29
<i>Conclusions</i>	30
<i>Country specific Good Practice Recommendations</i>	30
OVERALL RESULTS: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES	32
PARENTAL LEAVE.....	32
SPENDING TIME WITH CHILDREN	33
FLEXIBILITY AT WORK	34
FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES.....	35
WORKING OVER TIME	36
‘A GOOD FATHER’	37
PARTICIPATION IN HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES	38
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	39

CONCLUSIONS.....39
RECOMMENDATIONS40
 Recommendations towards EU:40
 Recommendations for the participating states (government level):41
 Recommendations for employers:41
 Recommendations for employees (fathers):41

**APPENDIX A: JOINT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE
EMPLOYEE SURVEY43**

INTRODUCTION

This report is the joint report of the project: Men Equal – Men Different, which was carried through in 2005-2006 by Latvian, Bulgarian, French and Danish partners. The project was financed by the EU 5th Framework Programme on Gender Equality. The aims of the project were to investigate and make recommendations to the changing role of men as fathers in Europe.

There is in Europe generally a growing awareness that in order to fulfil targets of gender equality at the labour market, in career and education, shared parenthood must be encouraged. Moreover men and men's organisations are fighting that men should be granted more responsibility and rights as parents. The questions are, whether it is actually possible for fathers to increase their share in family activities, whether they have formal opportunities to take father's leave, days off with the family work flexible hours, or whether fathers are actually willing to make family activities a higher priority in their life.

But it is also necessary to take off the burden of household work and family responsibilities of women's shoulders, as women are today heading at an equal share of work in the labour market, and as European women are educating themselves in a scale that outnumber men.

Due to the concern of the ageing population in Europe and the interconnected fall of the number of persons in the labour force, the European Union Summit in Lisbon (2000) decided on an ambitious plan to develop Europe into the leading knowledge region in the world and to mobilise the labour force in high numbers. The European Employment Strategy (EES) and the Social Inclusion Process were put into action in order to achieve the ten-year strategic goals set in Lisbon to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and social cohesion. One of the overall goals formulated was to increase female participation rate in the labour market from 51% in average to 60% in all member states by 2010.

The Barcelona Summit 2002 stated that the member states should be encouraged to remove the disincentives for the female labour force by improving child care provision to 90 % for children from age 3 to mandatory school age and 33% for children in the age below 3 before 2010.

As the EU is using the Open Methods of Coordination in order to encourage the member states to make measures, the EU is relying on member states to make the concrete measures, benchmarks and peer reviewing amongst nations. In relation to the targets on labour market participation it could be argued that a number of member states have already almost reached the targets for female participation in 2002, while other member states have no means of achieving the goals by 2010. But at least the progress could be followed through the procedures of the EES, the national action plans for employment and the examination of these plans by the commission.

It seems that the specific measures to take on the joint effort to remove the burden of child-minding and household work from the shoulders of women and parents by providing quality childcare, paid parental leave and good working conditions to enable parents to be good parents and to work in the still more complex worlds of work in the knowledge society are still way behind the eager to mobilise both the male and the female workforce for the labour market.

But at least two EU directives give binding direction for the care and leave arrangement for mothers and fathers:

Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave grants, subject to clause 2.2, men and women workers an individual right to parental leave on the grounds of the birth or adoption of a child to enable them to take care of that child, for at least three months, until a given age up to the age of 8 years to be defined by Member States and/or management and labour

Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding. Article 8 on maternity leave. Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that workers within the meaning of Article 2 are entitled to a continuous period of maternity leave of a least 14 weeks allocated before and/or after confinement in accordance with national legislation and/or practice. The maternity leave stipulated in paragraph 1 must include compulsory maternity leave of at least two weeks allocated before and/or after confinement in accordance with national legislation and/or practice.

This means that fathers have at least a right to three months of parental leave, whereas the mothers have a right to 16 week continuous maternity leave in connection to giving birth. In practice that means that the fathers will seldom be able to take part in the care of the baby for the first month, except for the 1-2 weeks of fathers leave that is granted in the three EU countries in the study. Still EU directives do not imply any specified financial compensation for either mothers or fathers, and this means that the rights are often meaningless, if no financial compensation for the loss of wages is given.

GOALS

The aims of the "Men Equal – Men Different" project are to examine, how fathers are able to create better balance between work and family life, by sharing family obligations and thereby contribute to gender equality. Within this framework the project has gathered new knowledge through the following activities.

1. Indicating of the main obstacles impeding active fatherhood and promote male involvement in the family life, child care
2. Development of good practice in the companies for reconciliation of the work and family life
3. Changing of the gender stereotypes in society and educating about possibilities of men involvement in the family life

METHODS AND APPROACH

In the four countries involved in the study the collection of data consisted of three different elements:

1. A report on the public environment for developing active fatherhood both connected to the legislation, the priorities of private companies, social partners and organisation and the public debate.

2. An electronic survey was made among employees from three companies in each country asking them about their possibilities and priorities in balancing work and family life.
3. Lastly a survey was conducted among employers in the same companies on company policies and practices for encouraging men to be more involved in parenthood.

In order to gather information on the main obstacles, questionnaires were sent out to men working in three different companies in each of the partner countries. The particular companies were chosen as case studies, which also mean that the results presented in this report are neither representative for the countries as a whole nor for the respective companies. Furthermore it should be stressed that the companies were chosen as examples of good practices on how men reconcile work and private life.

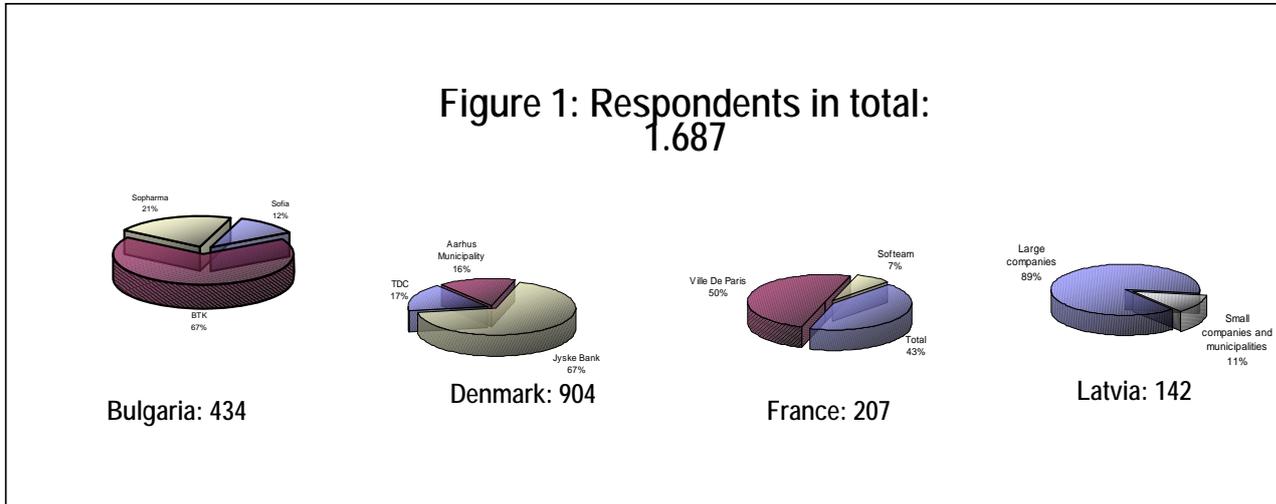
The questionnaire, which was sent to the male employees, had 39 questions. The questions were divided in five categories: 1) Background, 2) Paternity Leave, 3) Flexible working hours and family-friendly policies, 4) Activities with children and 5) Activities with family.¹ The questionnaires were predominantly distributed via the Internet, which was convenient for the research process, because it was possible to make transnational comparative analysis. Still it showed that it was not possible in all countries, as not all employees were expected to have regular access to the Internet. This means that a number of the questionnaires were distributed on paper and coded in by the researchers of the project.

The survey among employers was conducted as a telephone interview with three executives and managers in the chosen companies: One top executive, one mid level manager and one manager of personnel. The aims of this survey were to collect information on the company staff policies regarding father's access to leave, to stay home with sick kids, to work flexible hours and to take work home.

¹ The questionnaire is placed in Appendix A.

THE SAMPLE OF THE EMPLOYEES SURVEY

In total the analyses of the male employees are based on a total of 1.687 respondents, which are distributed in the four partner countries:



As it can be seen above the number of interviewed male employees vary a lot in the four countries. The initial goal was to have at least 100 answers from each company in each country. But the problem of electronic questionnaires is that it is difficult to control the actual number of answers, and at the same time the limited time schedule of the project did not leave the researchers with much time to compensate for a low number of respondents. In Latvia realising that the joint model would not give them a satisfactory number of respondents, the research group decided to change the model of selecting companies into one group of small companies and another group of large companies.

But it is important to stress that results quoted in this report are results from the case study companies in each of the 4 countries, and that they cannot be seen as results representative for the employed men in the country as such. The companies were chosen by the project team, representing the three different sectors, and to some extent also for being companies known for their progressive staff policy on gender equality and work/life balance.

PRESENTATION OF RESPONDENTS

As it can be seen in the table 1 below there are some differences in the age of the respondents in the four countries. The Latvian respondents are the youngest with almost 90% below the age of 40, whereas the French and Bulgarian group are somewhat older, with almost 60% over 40. The Danish respondents are in the middle according to age. In all the four countries there is an overweight of respondents with a university level education, especially in France and Latvia. The Danish respondents are in lesser extent university educated, probably because the group of respondents from Jyske Bank, which is the best represented group in the study, does not traditionally have a university degree. This is however probably to some extent a matter of definition, as a number of this group probably have a business school degree that equals a university degree in the other countries.

In the three out of the four countries the majority of the men are married, but in both France and Denmark just below 20% are co-habiting without being married. But the highest group of co-habiting men is found in Latvia. Here 44.9% are married and 31.6% co-habiting. These numbers shows the tendency in most of Europe that young couples get their first child without marrying. The fact that the Latvian men are younger than the three other groups of respondents probably is one reason why we found so many co-habiting men there. The Latvian children are also younger than the children of the respondents in the other three countries, as almost half of them are 3 years old or younger.

Table 1: The sample distributed in age, education, family status, children and profession

	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Latvia
<i>Age distribution</i>				
Below 25 years	5,6 pct.	4 pct.	6,8 pct.	40,9 pct.
25-40 years	37,0 pct.	49,2 pct.	35,7 pct.	46,7 pct.
More than 40 years	57,7 pct.	46,9 pct.	57,4 pct.	12,4 pct.
<i>Level of education</i>				
University	43,9 pct.	26,2 pct.	75,8 pct.	77,9 pct.
Post-secondary	7,1 pct.	35,2 pct.	11,1 pct.	8,8 pct.
Secondary school	48,3 pct.	34,8 pct.	9,1 pct.	13,2 pct.
Primary school	0,7 pct.	3,8 pct.	4,0 pct.	
<i>Marital status</i>				
Married	69,6 pct.	63,0 pct.	57,1 pct.	44,9 pct.
Co-habiting	7,8 pct.	19,9 pct.	19,7 pct.	31,6 pct.
Divorced	5,4 pct.	3,6 pct.	4,1 pct.	1,5 pct.
Single	16,5 pct.	13,0 pct.	18,2 pct.	22,1 pct.
Widowed	0,7 pct.	0,5 pct.		
<i>Children^a (Yes)</i>				
0-3 years	75,2 pct.	70,7 pct.	50,2 pct.	
0-12 years	10,3 pct.	23,9 pct.		46,5 pct.
0-12 years	25,9 pct.	49,6 pct.	34,5 pct.	40,3 pct.
Above 12 years	49,3 pct.	33,9 pct.	31,5 pct.	6,7 pct.
<i>Professional category</i>				
Executive	16,2 pct.	23,8 pct.	33,8 pct.	73,5 pct.
Non-executive	83,8 pct.	76,2 pct.	66,2 pct.	26,5 pct.

^a some respondents have children in more than one age group

NATIONAL RESULTS

In this chapter the overall conclusions that are results of the three different analyses carried through in the four partner countries are presented. The conclusions are summarising the results of the reports: 1. National public environment, examining the overall policies on parental leave, father's role and family friendly policies in each partner country. 2. The results of the survey with employees. 3. The results of the survey among employers.

BULGARIAN CONCLUSIONS

POLICY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND RECONCILING WORK AND FAMILY LIFE IN BULGARIA

A major challenge Bulgaria is facing is the achievement of equality between women and men, which will be realized by drafting gender equality policies and establishing mechanisms for their implementation. The development of such policies and mechanisms for gender equality is a requirement for the accession of Bulgaria to the EU.

The main reasons for the introduction of reconciliation policies, which can be defined as policies directly supporting the reconciliation of professional, family and private life, are the increasing labour market participation of women, the change in family forms, and the demographic pressure of the ageing population.

Traditionally, women in Bulgaria make up half of the workforce. The share of women in the total amount of employed people in the middle of 2006 was about 47%. They are concentrated in economic sectors stereotypically considered to be "feminine", which do not offer many opportunities in terms of pay, career development and possibilities to participate in the decision-making process. In addition, Bulgarian women have lower employment rate compared to men², respectively 42,5% - 52,2% and activity rate, respectively 46,8% - 57,2%. The weaker economic activity of women is due to the following reasons: childbirth, childcare, and larger share of women in the overall number of students in universities. The number of unemployed women is slightly lower than that of men: in the second quarter of 2006 they were 149,6 thousand against 159,3 thousand for men.

NATIONAL LEGISLATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

In the year 2000, the State started the EU accession negotiations, whereby, Bulgarian legislation is being harmonised with the *acquis communautaire*. Through the EU accession procedure, equal treatment for women and men as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions³ has also been passed.

² NSI labour market indicators for second quarter of 2006

³ Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working condition.

Current Bulgarian legislation still puts a stress on particular protection of women during pregnancy and maternity and underestimates the gender approach to special measures.

As to the protection of pregnant women from the inherent risk of certain activities and related employment rights⁴, Bulgarian legislation envisages the special protection of women, especially pregnant women and mothers, and already meets the requirements of Directive 92/85/EEC to a significant extent. The Labour Code provides for a number of privileges for women in relation to preserving their health and that of their children, some of which (such as paid maternity leave) also aim at stimulating the birth rate.

Regarding maternity leave, Bulgarian legislation fully complies with international standards related to maternity leave, and Bulgaria has ratified the ILO Convention No 3 and Convention No 183 on Maternity Protection (2000). The State reports under both Conventions.

Bulgarian labour legislation does not contain any particular systematic regulations with regard to the protection and support of workers and employees with families. In the Labour Code the different titles that determine this subject do not include the words “paternity” or “parental” leave, but “Leave because of pregnancy, child delivering and child adoption”, “Leave for raising a child up to 2 years”, “Unpaid leave for raising a child up to 2 years”, “Leave for breast-nursing a young child”, “Unpaid leave for raising a child up to 8 years”, which does not stimulate the overcoming of parental stereotypes. A step in this direction is article 164, pursuant to which a child’s father or a child’s grandparents have the right, with the agreement of the child’s mother, to go on leave for raising the child until he/she is two years old. If a child’s mother passes away, the father or the child’s grandparents have the right to take the rest of the maternity leave period and the child rearing leave period (art. 167). Additionally, a child’s father has the right to be protected on the grounds of the prohibition on sending pregnant women and mothers of children younger than three years of age on business trips, in cases when the child’s mother does not have the opportunity to use this privilege. Pursuant to article 53⁵ of the Act for the Encouragement of Employment, the employers of single parents and / or of mothers with young children use privileges in receiving allocations for salaries, supplementary minimal remunerations under the Labour Code, obligatory instalments in the common social insurance funds etc

Other opportunities for combining family obligation with work responsibilities are outlined by the following regulations:

- The parental leave regulated in art. 167a of the Labour Code – this is a sample for an individual non-transferable entitlement to parental leave: each parent, if they work under a regular labour contract, has the right to go on an **unpaid** six-month leave for child raising until the child reaches eight years of age. This period is recognized as a part of the person’s total length of labour service. A grandmother, by a grandfather, or by a child’s guardian, can take it. Until 31st December 2006, one parent has the right to go on a 12-month leave, if the other parent agrees for the former to take the leave for them both.
- Possibility for the employer and employee to make an agreement for part of the legally provided working hours: part-time occupation (art. 138 of the Labour Code);
- Possibility for a woman-worker or for a woman-employee, who is a mother of a young child, to do her work at home, by making an agreement with the same or with another employer and following it until her child reach 6 years of age (art. 312 of the Labour Code);

⁴ Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding

⁵ Amendments, promulgated in State Gazette No. 26 / 21.03.2003

- Full-pay leave for two or more than two living children (art. 168 of the Labour Code).

If it is provided by a collective agreement (CA): a woman-worker or a woman-employee with two or with more living minor or under-aged children (e.g. younger than 18 years of age), has the right to take two working days of full-pay leave and a woman-worker or a woman-employee with three or more living children under 18 years of age has the right to go on a full-pay leave for 4 working days for each calendar year. These leaves are allowed whenever the worker / employee decides to take them, and they cannot be compensated with extra pay except in cases when labour agreements are suspended.

For the stimulation of the economic activeness of women and for support of the professional realization of parents, the network of child care services (in 2004 there were 22155 children 0-3 years old in full-time crèches and 202095 3-6 years old children in kindergartens) and of providing accessible and quality care is being broadened, health services are improved and a range of programmes and projects are developed aiming to enhance social changes and labour market policy shifts to the introduction of a 'life cycle' approach to labour and in compliance with the so-called global approach to 'professional life cycle'.

In the process of implementation of the National Action Plan for Encouraging Equality of Women and Men and of the National Action Plan for Employment, some of the following projects have been realized: 'Family Centres for Children', 'Stimulation of Independent Trade Activity in Provision of Children Upbringing services' etc.

ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY OF EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS IN BULGARIA

The survey was held in the following three companies in Bulgaria: the **Bulgarian Telecommunication company (BTK)** - the main telecommunication services operator in Bulgaria, that was recently privatised and currently employs over 12,000 professionals: 4,743 women employees (among them – 183 managers) and 7,350 men (among them – 215 managers); **the Municipality of Sofia** (the last regular elections for Sofia city counsellors and mayor were held in 2003, and in 2005 there were extraordinary mayor elections. At present, the number of women in the municipal administration is dramatically high – 80%. There is no statistics about the gender distribution of manager positions); and a well developing private company from the pharmaceutical industry – **Sopharma AD**, privatised in September 2000, which employs around 2,000 people.

Results from the Survey of Employees

An electronic questionnaire was developed by the Danish partner and was used by all project partners in order to secure similar surveys in all the four countries. It was translated into Bulgarian and was distributed only among male employees. Unfortunately, the Bulgarian team was not able to send it out electronically to employees in the three companies, but distributed it by regular mail to the respondents and when the answers were received, the team sent them in their electronic version to the Danish partner. If Bulgarian respondents had had the possibility to answer the questions themselves - directly electronically, some different results might have been received, as some mistakes would have been avoided, but the authors presume these differences insignificant.

The respondents are 434 employees in total from the three companies, respectively 291 people from BTK (67,1% of the respondents): 50 from the Sofia Municipality (11,5% from all) and 93 from Sopharma (21,4% of the respondents).

Only in the case of BTK, due to the fact that the company is very large and has branches all over the country, an option was created for diversification of the answers according to three types of the living place: Sofia, middle-size towns and small-size towns.

Although this is not a nationally representative survey, its results can be summarized in the following conclusions:

1. The majority of the respondents are not well informed about the new tendencies in the EU Reconciliation policy and in particular they are not familiar with the Bulgarian amendments in the legislation that provide opportunities for fathers to be actively involved in child care.

Here are some of the possible reasons for this: the larger part of respondents are between 40 and 60 years old (54%); 95,6% of them work full time for the respective company and only 8,5% have a second job; 78,8% of them have long labour relations with their current employer - over 4 years; most of them – 83,8% are at non-executive position and nearly half of them (48,3%) have secondary school education. The next factor is that although the majority are married and with children (respectively 69,6% married and additional 7,8% live in co-habitant), those with children 0-3 years of age, who are expected to be more informed, are only 10,3% of all the respondents. In terms of the survey objectives, the next interesting group represents 25,9% of the male respondents – those who have 0-12 years old children.

The authors also see confirmation of the a.m. theses in the way respondents answer the group of questions concerning the possibilities for taking parental leave. Let us point out once again that the questionnaires were filled in hard copies and it was observed that a large number of respondents considered the “parental” leave as the traditional yearly holiday they used, and which did the employer pay. Out of 319 persons with children, only 7 have used less than 14 days as “parental” leave; 250 men answered that they did not have possibility for that; 20 did not use that possibility and only 30 acknowledged they did not know about such possibility. All of those with children age 0-3 years (34 men) declare to have taken a parental leave of 1-6 days.

From the answers we might indirectly presume that the informed men do not take “parental” leave because of financial reasons. They are not motivated as this leave is not paid, or even though they have the right to take it, in most of the cases the family can not afford it because the husband’s salary is predominantly higher than the wife’s.

2. The traditions connected with child rearing are still very strong in Bulgarian society and the stereotype on the roles of the two genders in the family – the mother taking care of children and the father being the “breadwinner”, is predominantly in place.

When fathers are asked about the kind of family-friendly policy their company has offered, they point out mainly forms like “day off because of sick children” – 28% and “holiday houses for families” – 36%, which could be considered as traditional ones. Forms like “Kindergarten or nursery associated to the place of work”, “Home office”, “Possibility of working from home”, which are modern forms, are not explicitly mentioned. 20% of the respondents checked the answer “other forms”, but they did not specify afterwards what exactly they meant.

According to this survey, Bulgarian fathers are not ready to start working with flexible hours in order to care for children. Only 3,9 % of the respondents have used this opportunity. At the same time the majority of fathers (87%) declare that they do participate in activities with the kids at home, especially those with kids 0-3 years – 94%. Not surprisingly 92,3% of fathers with children at the age 0-12 years from BTK, 66,7% of those from Sofia Municipality and 81% from Sopharma confirmed engagements with their kids. Those who deny engagements with kids mentioned as a reason for that the lack of time because of their work, and only 7,7% consider

this engagement as their wives' obligation. At the same time, only 31 men, which is 9,7% of the respondents, have used holidays in connection with childbirth.

This contradiction in the answers – on one hand, supporting the notion that fathers must participate in the child raising and demonstrating readiness for engagement with kids at home, and on the other hand, not being much involved in real life, is also spotted in the answers to the questions on participation in the family activities and especially to the question defining the good father.

The biggest score – 76% is for the answer “spending holidays together” as a joint family activity for the 110 fathers with children 0-12 years. This form is also a traditional one. From these 110 fathers 95 are married and 9 live co-habitant, 5 are divorced and 1 is single. Only one father says that he is not engaged in any of the 6 mentioned family activities. The second place is taken by the answer “playing games together” with 64% answers and close to that one is, unfortunately, the “passive activity” “watching TV” with 53%.

As it was expected, again the majority of 361 people declared that they participate in the household activities. For the remaining 61 men the reason for not doing so is lack of time because of their work. But again the hard copy method of work played a trick on the respondents, showing that they are not sincere in practice: 133 of them answer the further question “If you do not take part in household activities why is it so?”

Good evidences for the prevailing stereotypes are the answers to the question “What do you think should be done in order to be good father? 52% of the respondents with children (base: 317 people out of 329) answer that a good father is the one who works hard to ensure good living for the family. The contrast here is that at the same time a large number of fathers have not started to work more hours after they got kids – 84% of the respondents with children. All respondents from BTK – Sofia, surprisingly support this answer while in the middle size town the prevailing answer is “to spend time with family”. The good news is that the latter is shared by 32% of all the respondents, which is a sign for breaking down the traditional model and for future changes towards active fatherhood. Less progressive are the respondents from Sofia Municipality – 29% of them consider spending time with the family as a sign of good fatherhood, the rest 71% are in favour of the patriarchal model.

What is interesting is that we can not find a correlation between the answers to this question and the respondents' generation: 51% of those under 40 years of age are in favour of the “hard working father as a good father”, the same view share 52% of fathers over 40; the opinion of “spending time with family” is supported by 38% of those who are under 40 and by 30% of fathers over 40. 10,7% of all respondents choose the answer saying that a good father is the one who helps at home and there are some 5% in favour of the category “other”, most of which put here an explanation that “all answers above are right”. Twice more are the fathers who support the model of the hard-working father compared to those who support the model of the father who spends time with family, among those who did not have possibility for taking a parental leave; the same correlation is observed with the couples where the partner works full time. In those couples where the partners work part time or she is in maternity leave, the share of fathers supporting the two models is equal.

On the whole, the new tendency concerning the role of fathers in relation to reconciling work and family life is slightly represented in these three companies. This is mainly linked to the existing stereotypes about the roles of women and men in society and more particularly with the triple burden of women that was widely spread in the socialist period and with the traditional opinion that “mothers are better than fathers in raising children”; it also relates to the lack of motivation for fathers to take a more active role in child care; to the lack of information about models of non-discriminating practice in the other countries and about the existing progressive amendments in Bulgarian legislation.

Results from the Survey of Employers

The survey team succeeded to take interviews with 5 managers: the three Heads of the Human Resource sections and with two lower level Bosses. The information given by persons from the same company was summarized by the authors, as there are no big differences in the answers.

The surveyed three companies can be divided in two groups: two companies – BTK and Sopharma, which have very well developed socially responsible policy, and the Sofia Municipality, whose status has an essential impact on its social policy.

Various measures for development and consolidation of the employees' connection with the firm are in place in the first two companies and all benefits provided for in the Labour Code are available to the employees. For example, different forms of recovery of the working ability and motivation for improving the quality of work are available, such as organized recreation for the employees and their families at company holiday houses; the employees can take days off for vacation regularly depending on the intensity of the work season, and their families pay a minimum fee for the company holiday facilities; regular health checks and the companies cover the treatment costs in case of illness of the employee or a member of their family when it is necessary (in case of expensive operations or treatment that is not covered by the state health care funds, the company cover 100% of the treatment costs for employees and 50% for their family members in Sopharma). In case of death of an employee or employee's family member, the companies pay for the funeral; meals are supplied during the work day, and the employees pay a minimum fee for them and can buy food for their families at the same low price (for BTK branches in the country where daily canteen services are not available, the company provides financial support); BTK also gives monthly grants to its employees' children at school or university; in Sopharma money bonuses are given for New Year's Day and other holidays, and pay rises are given regularly according to the employees' contribution, a range of free services is also available, such as organized transport to the workplace and back, company cars, additional leave is given when necessary to employees who are doing distance-education courses; there are opportunities for additional professional qualification and career growth, the employees doing evening and night shifts have free meals. There are opportunities for the employees' children to attend cultural events; there are also company team-building and motivating events, etc. Some specific bonuses are offered by BTK to their employees, such as the change in the group insurance policy - it is now extended to all family members of the employees; the additional pension insurance for workers who only contribute to the extent they feel encouraged, the workers also enjoy the privilege to have Internet connection at home and buy mobile phones at preferential prices. Their families can have SIM cards giving them the right to free conversations between them.

The managers in Sopharma think that the level of salaries in the company is way above the average for the country, which provides a good motivation for the employees to contribute effectively to its prosperity and enables them to successfully reconcile their work and family responsibilities, allowing them for example, to even send their kids to private kindergartens. What is most valuable for the company management are the company's employees. It is a company policy to hire on staff both partners in a family /the husband and wife/, which provides an opportunity for reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities – combination of flexible hours and the family is able to afford high-quality paid childcare services.

BTK's recent privatisation accounts for the management processes that have crossed the organization for the last 2,5 years. While the main objective is to preserve the inherited social policy, developing an overall strategy in this perspective is planned to begin in 2006. This is conditioned by the numerous tasks that stood open in front of the management during the transition

to a private company. A shift to new political priorities and their focusing on people is planned for the autumn of 2006.

The employees' pay in Sofia Municipality is directly dependent on the Bill on State budget, which considerably limits the management's ability for social policy within the small funds they have. Perhaps this is the reason why these functions are transferred to the trade union organization. Part of this fund can cover some of the employees' personal expenditures, such as medication in the event of illness, but this happens rarely. Usually, at the end of the year, the excess amount of this fund is distributed as additional pay for all employees.

In all working places the social benefits are accessible to men and women equally, and they use them without any discrimination. Speaking about a reconciliation policy, the management clearly recognizes that no such has been conducted. The companies do not offer any affirmative actions or special incentives. However, they demonstrate awareness and sensitivity to the problem through forward thinking and planning to have such a policy, as part of the corporate strategy. The sector where BTK operates is primarily engineering oriented and around 2/3ds of the employees are men. Thus, the management has seemingly no interest in stimulating fathers' parental leaves. Home distant work is in practice only for employees with operational activities-managers and some technicians. This policy is not connected with reconciling professional and family life. In Sopharma the company's activities do not involve using the home as a working place. There is no company childcare centre as the technological cycle and the ways of production and hygienic requirements for safe and healthy working conditions do not allow the employees to bring their children to the company.

In all 3 companies there are some cases when fathers take parental leave but this decision is strongly conditioned by the two parents' incomes i.e. bringing up the financial aspect. In those cases, fathers are protected from losing their job: depending on the length of the leave a temporary new replacement is organized or colleagues take over the responsibilities. There were no negative reactions by the colleagues in these cases. The parents in Sopharma choose how to use the parental leave, but the most frequently used one is the leave for sick child. There is no legislative or any other obstacle for fathers to use these opportunities but they rarely do so because of the traditional attitudes to child rising.

Caring for relatives and part-time work are discussed and reviewed everywhere on individual basis within the limits provided by the Labour Code. These cases, however, are to be classified more as an exception than as a general policy. In Sopharma the flexible working hours are used for taking the children to crèches and kindergartens and bringing them back home, for health checks, and for providing continuous care for the children when both parents work in flexible hours. When using this form, the company searches to find the mutual benefit for the company and the employees. For example, in situations of urgency /such as an urgent order/ the company and the employees negotiate the terms of extra hours/work which are afterwards compensated for with additional free time to be spent with the family.

Finally the following **CONCLUSIONS** could be summarized for the surveyed work places:

The managements of the surveyed work places demonstrate awareness and knowledge of the Labour Code and other legislative provisions on maternity/paternity leave. They applied them in the company's policy without discrimination on the ground of gender, but at the same time they do not have a policy specially focused on the reconciliation of professional and family responsibilities and are not fully aware that this policy will promote equal opportunities and treatment for women and men. No special measures were observed for increasing the role of fathers in a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities that could enable women to play more effective role in the labour market. None of the companies is providing childcare services for the employees' children. There are no special policies that include flexible hour schemes for the parents taking parental leave.

DANISH CONCLUSIONS

LEGISLATION

The legislation on parental leave in Denmark was last changed in 2002. This new legislation grants the mother 4 weeks of parental leave before and 14 weeks after the birth giving. After the birth giving the father is granted 2 weeks of parental leave. Both parents have the right to 32 weeks of parental leave, but only the reserved periods (4+14 weeks for the mother and 2 weeks for the father) and 1×32 weeks are paid. This makes a total of 52 weeks paid parental leave.

The legislation grants people, who are entitled to sickness pay (including all wage earners), a parental leave pay that equals daily allowances during leave (13.000 DKK or approximately €1.913 per month). However pay during leave is not only regulated by the legislation. Most employed people in Denmark work under the regulation of a collective agreement between a union and employers' organisation. Almost all agreements grant full pay during the periods that are reserved for one of the parents (4+14 weeks for the mother and 2 weeks for the father), and a growing number – e.g. the public sector – also grants full pay for another 10 weeks. A small number of private companies even grants 100% pay during the whole period (up to 52 weeks).

In Denmark today most infants are cared for at home until they reach the 1st birthday, which equals the end of the maternity/paternity leave. After this age the majority of infants are cared for in the daytime in public day-care institutions for children. In Denmark day care institutions are generally open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., but most of the children spend less time than these 10 hours daily in day care.

80 pct. of all children in the age 3-6 are cared for in public kindergartens. In the age 0-3 years 50 pct. are cared for in public institutions or by publicly engaged day-care mothers.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS OF EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

The Danish surveys were carried out in the telecommunication company TDC, the municipality Aarhus and the bank Jyske Bank.

Most of the employee respondents in the survey (between 75% and 87%) are either married or cohabiting with their partners, and the majority of the remaining group refer to themselves as "single" rather than "divorced" or "widower". The majority of the married or cohabiting men have partners, who work full-time. The largest group is found in TDC (70%) and the smallest in Aarhus Municipality (55%). The largest group with partners working part-time is found in Aarhus Municipality (22 to 23%) while only 9% of the married/cohabiting men in TDC live with partners who work part-time. In Aarhus Municipality and Jyske Bank, approximately 73% of the respondents have children, while in TDC the corresponding figure is 60%. For the respondents of all three companies who are parents, it applies that approximately half of them have children at the age of 0 to 12.

Almost all of the parents have had the possibility of taking some kind of paternity leave (most in TDC, i.e. 86%, least in Aarhus Municipality, i.e. 71%) and the majority of those have also taken this leave (as above, most at TDC, i.e. 83%, least in Aarhus Municipality, i.e. 75%). This means that 17% in TDC, 25% in Aarhus Municipality, and 19% in Jyske Bank of those who actually *did* have the option for paternity leave, have *not* exercised it. Totally, 53% of the fathers in Aarhus

Municipality, 62% in Jyske Bank, and 75% in TDC have taken paternity leave to some extent or other while some 14%-18% *have not* exercised this option (most in Aarhus Municipality). The group of parents who *have not been able to* take leave constitutes 19%-20% in Aarhus Municipality and Jyske Bank, but only 9% in TDC

The three companies in the study are not representative for the companies in Denmark as such concerning work life policies. We have chosen them, because they all have a reputation of a special focus on family friendly policies. Still there are very different, both in the way family friendly policies are integrated into the staff policies and in the practices of the employees.

All three companies are large, from a Danish perspective. In each their sectors they are the largest or second largest in Denmark. This also means that they worked out policies on staff management in many different aspects, including also policies for father's leave and work life policies.

The size of the companies also means that the single employee could more easily be replaced with substitutes from within the company, than in small-scale enterprises with only a few employees. And the majority of Danish companies are middle size or small-scale companies. So if we had chosen a sample of smaller companies the results would probably have been quite different.

Although all three companies in the study are very concerned with work life arrangements, it is obvious that they are so from very different perspectives and that these policies are included in the philosophy of the company in very different ways. TDC is marketing a very high profile on the matter mainly in relation to the Dad's Hug campaign and the concern to engage fathers actively in the early life of the children. In this sense TDC also take a stand in the overall debate in society on the development of parenthood in a world of double working parents.

Jyske Bank on the contrary is very concerned with HR policies in total and not particularly taking a stand regarding father's engagement in paternity leave. Jyske Bank focuses on the whole life situation in all ages and not particularly the younger employees. This means that they focus on the individual and individual needs. In that sense it also appears that the company is not sending the responsibility over to staff members of middle aged or senior age groups to compensate for the needs of the young parents. Especially in a time in which the young parents get older and older, the age of the parents at the birth of their first child is now 30 in Denmark, whereas it was approximate 25 in the middle aged generation. This means that the young parents will normally be in the age groups 30 to 45 and leaving it to the age group 45-65 to compensate for the flexibility of the young parents.

The surveys also show that there are very different possibilities for work life balance arrangements for different groups of employees and that there is a gap that is almost the same in the companies between people, who needs to be at the work place at fixed hours (call centre workers, buss drivers, home care helpers etc.), whereas the professionals are able to attend to their work at home or anywhere.

Although the staff policy profile is different in the three companies, this difference is not that obvious in the responses given in the employee's survey. In all three companies the fathers answered that the most important thing in being a good father is to spend time with the family. It is also a general result that staff members that hold a university degree show greater flexibility than other staff groups and that fathers in this group are also more inclined to take paternity leave, than fathers in other staff groups.

There are some differences in the selected samples in the three companies. The share of university-trained professionals is higher in the samples taken from TDC and Aarhus Municipality than in Jyske Bank. This implicates that the fathers at Jyske Bank appear to be less interested in

paternity leave than in to two other companies. This might not be true, if we have chosen a different sample.

As a whole it shows that the gender division of labour in the family and the gender division of paternity leave, days off to care for sick children etc. is more equal in families, in which the father holds a university degree.

Still an enormous change has taken place over the last years. This shows very vividly in the difference in the frequency of father's leave taken with now older children than with the young ones. This of course also reflects the fact that fathers have only been allowed a share in paternity leave for a limited number of years.

But a number of fathers didn't take paternity leave, even if they had the chance to. One often referred reason for that is that the husband earns more money than his wife and that the couple accordingly couldn't afford that he went on leave. Another frequent answer is that the mother of the child did not want him to, as she regarded it a loss for her to hand over some of the leave to him.

As a whole the three case companies in the surveys shows three slightly different strategies concerning family friendly policies. However they all represent a new tendency in the role of fathers in relation to reconciling work and family life. This is probably linked very closely to the development of women's careers in Denmark. It is remarkable that the majority of the wives of the interviewed men have a full time job of their own to attend to. But it also reflects a change in the attitude of men towards fatherhood in the way that becoming or being a father is an important thing that the fathers wish to give a high priority in their life.

GOOD PRACTICES

In the three companies in Denmark we can outline three different strategies that could also be named good practices.

Dad's Hug

The Dad's Hug campaign in TCD is an example of good practice, because it shows a special engagement from the company to change the gender differences in the early childcare in the way that fathers are encouraged to take on ten weeks. This campaign is furthered by the special promise to give the fathers full salary during the ten weeks and by the promotion of the arrangement from the employers' side by giving them a present of baby tools and a letter encouraging them to take the offer.

The example set by the executive

In the Aarhus Municipality a female manager tells us that she is specially concerned with the problems of parents having to leave early to pick up children at the kindergarten, as she is often forced to leave early herself for the same reason. Thereby she shows that it is legitimate to make this family priority, when you have small kids.

This also points to the general example that a good gender equality policy requires support from the top of the organisation and some fiery souls that are able to set the example and send the message downwards in the organisation.

The care for the work-life situation of the single individual in all age groups

In Jyske Bank the work life balance policies are not particularly aimed at furthering the possibility for fathers to go on paternity leave. This concern is not regarded a matter for the company to interfere with.

Nevertheless there is a general concern for all life ages allowing also people of senior age the possibility to take some time off, eventually to take care of their grandchildren.

FRENCH CONCLUSIONS

LEGISLATION

Family allowance

- To better reconcile family life and professional life, a new benefit was created at first January 2004 (*Prestation d'Accueil Jeune Enfant*). This involves benefits that are composed of basics allocations that can be used to enable the parents to choose "crèche" (day care centre) for their children or leave or reduce their employment until the child is three years old.
- The Family Allowance for the Employment of a Registered Childminder (*aide à la famille pour l'emploi d'une assistante maternelle agréée*) which can be claimed by parents whose children aged less than six are looked after at the childminder's home. Parents can deduct this expense from their taxes.
- The Children's Home Care Allowance (*allocation de garde d'enfant à domicile*), which covers part of the employer's social security contributions, which have to be paid by parents who employ a childminder in their own home. Parents can also deduct this expense from their taxes.
- The Parental Education and Upbringing Allowance (*allocation parentale d'éducation*), is paid without means testing when a parent who has been working for at least two years decides to give up work to bring up his or her children, provided that one of the children is aged under three.
- The Young Child Allowance (*allocation pour jeune enfant*), amounting to EUR 151.08 per month. There are other specific types of assistance, such as the means-tested New School-Year Allowance (*allocation de rentrée scolaire*), paid once a year to compensate for the expenses incurred at the start of a new school year, and the Family Supplement (*complément familial*) which goes to large families whose children are aged three or over.
- The Parental Presence Leave (*congé de présence parentale*), together with an allowance, in cases where children are gravely ill and need a parent to care for and stay with them. The leave and allowance will be for an initial period of three months, which can be renewed. Thereafter, such parents will become entitled to the already existing Special Education Allowance (*allocation d'éducation spécialisée*).

Childcare

Child minding for very young children often continues to be a problem, however, as the number of facilities available is still inadequate. There are nursery places for only 10% of the 2.4 million children aged under three and close on a quarter, i.e. 500,000, are looked after by, for instance, neighbours or the family (in the broad sense). Less than 20% of children, both (or one) of whose parents work, have nursery places.

To counter this situation, the government runs plans:

- To promote the creation of 12.000 places/year from 2007 to 2012 for very young children in nurseries has been launched. Investment aid will mean that places can be provided for a further 600.000 children in crèches, nurseries and other innovative child minding facilities.
- To create additional places in "crèches", development of child care more adapted to the situation of parents who have to know atypical working hours or need temporary care for their children.
- To reform the Family Allowance for the Employment of a Registered Child minder (AFEAMA - *aide à la famille pour l'emploi d'une assistante maternelle agréée*), which will help families on low incomes, whose breadwinners are most likely to hold vulnerable and part-time jobs, to make use of individual child minding methods, which are by their nature more flexible. The reform takes the form of a modulated increase in this allowance for families on low or average incomes
- To implement the sharing of parental responsibilities and rights, independent of the status of the parents. The law also lay down that in case of the parents' separation it is possible to arrange for shared residence for the child at each of its parents.

Leave provisions

- **The Maternity Leave:** every pregnant employee can benefit of it without any consideration of the time spent in the company. The minimal leave is 16 weeks, generally 6 weeks before and 10 weeks after the birth. The employee can take less time off but to be able to benefit of the daily allowance the person should stop at least 8 weeks. The daily allowance from the social security office is based on the daily wage received by the employee the last 3 months before the maternity leave. The employer is not forced legally to add the difference of the full wage. However most of the collective conventions maintain the full salary. It is usually done for the entire leave.
- **The Parental Education and Upbringing Leave** (Allocation Parentale d'Education - APE) can be taken in 3 different forms: the employee can stop his professional activity for a maximum period of 3 years; he can benefit of a part-time (between 16 and 32 hours/week) for 3 years; or he can take a professional training not paid but he still benefits of the insurance coverage risk. During the parental education and upbringing leave the employee can under certain conditions get the parental education and upbringing allowance financed by the family allowance office. At the end of the leave the employee find his last job or a similar one with an equivalent wage together with his insurance rights.
- **The Sick Child Leave:** all employees can take 3 days/year for his sick child aged under 16. However 5 days are accepted if the child is under 1 year old or if the employee takes care of 3 children or more aged under 16 alone. Some collective conventions give more days for sick child. The days should not be taken if the other parent of the family already took the leave for sick child. In principle the employee is not paid during this leave (neither by the employer neither by the social security office). Some collective conventions can pay the employee under certain conditions (for example if the employee informed enough in advance the employer, if the employee spent at least 6 months in the company, etc.)

- **The Paternity Leave** was introduced in 2002. This eleven-day leave is added to the three-day leave, which was previously permitted by the French labour legislation. This leave applies to whole the wage-earning employees, independents, agricultural workers, public servants, and unemployed receiving compensation. This leave should start in the first four months of the child. During this leave the employer does not pay the employee but the employee gets an indemnity. In the general system this indemnity is equivalent of the daily father's wage within the limit of the social security system (around 2589 € in 2006). If the wage is over the limit the employer can complete the indemnity but he is not obliged to do so. For the public servants the total amount of the wage is maintained.

Working time flexibility related to better work-life balance

- The State recommends the development of a direct intervention of the companies with regard to enable families to reconcile work and family. Tax credit is one of the instruments set up by the French government this involves that companies can have taxes reduction for the amounts spent on for example: the creation of "crèches" internally or the offer of part-time work
- The National Charter for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Equality of treatment between Women and Men given to the Prime Minister 8 March 2004 federates about a hundred of the main organized forces in society, public and private, to gender mainstream their actions and policies. This means integrating the gender equality objective into all Community policies. One year after the assessment is positive: 15% of the objectives were reached for the year 2004 and 37% are in process. The involvement of all the organizations should continue.
- The Political Label for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men were launched end 2004 by the government. The first label was awarded 10 March 2005 to the company PSA Peugeot Citroën. Since then 19 companies were awarded for their actions.
- Family-friendly arrangements in firms are defined as practices facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, which firms introduce to complement statutory requirements: leave from work for family reasons; changes to work arrangements for family reasons; and practical help with child-care and eldercare. Leave from work for family reasons includes provisions for extra-statutory maternity, paternity and parental leave, career breaks, leave to care for elderly relatives, and emergency leave to deal with a sick child or problems with child-care. Changes in work arrangements for family reasons include reductions in working hours (for example, from full-time to part-time working), term-time only working contracts, working at home for family reasons, and appropriate flexi-time arrangements. All these types of arrangements can be of considerable assistance in easing the work/family reconciliation. Flexibility in working hours is of vital importance to deal with the emergencies of everyday family life.

The reduction in working hours (35h/week)

- New working time organisations appeared with the 35h/week. Some employees could negotiate 4 days/week, more flexibility in their working hours per day, 1 day off every 15 days, an account of days off for their over-working hours, etc. These new arrangements have facilitated the life of many parents. However all the companies did not change to the 35h/ week or apply it yearly with more holidays for their employees but no change of the weekly working hours.
- One of the main findings is that when fathers have experiences a reduction in their working hours, they look after their children more, especially when their partners work full-time and

have had no reduction in their own working hours. 47 % of employees asked in a study in 2002 (1618 employees asked) have the feeling they spend more time with their children since the reduction in working hours.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS OF EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

The national information centre for women and families' rights (CNIDFF) partner of the project in France chose to conduct this survey within the industrial firm **Total**, the **Municipality of Paris** and **Objecteering Software**, subsidiary of the company Softeam, located in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

For the municipality of Paris a sample of 450 men were investigated. The municipality counts 45.000 employees. The sample was carefully chosen to ask the employees targeted for this survey: young men possibly fathers. There are as much executives as non-executives (49% executives for 44.2% non-executives) and as much young as older employees (43.3% 25-40 years old and 46.2% 40-60 years old) that filled the questionnaire.

The employees of Total answer very often internal surveys, so the human resources department authorized the CNIDFF to conduct this survey through the union network CFE-CGC. This union represent the middle executives in France. The sample from Total does not represent the employees of the group but the employees depending to this particular union. 5 unions defend the employees in France, so this union represents only some of the employees belonging to a union. Since the CFE-CGC represent the middle executives and the managers the sample asked is for 76.1% executives against 21.6% non-executives. Moreover 76.1% of the men interviewed are 40 to 60 years old.

Objecteering Software counts around 50 employees, so it has been possible to conduct the survey through all the male employees. 86.7% of the employees that answered the questionnaire were 25 to 40 years old. 86.7% were executives against 13.3% non-executives. This software company employ mostly young engineers. Men are more represented than women in engineering in France. It is also common in this new technology companies that men occupied the high positions and the women the administrative positions.

In the two private companies mainly executives answered the questionnaire. The Internet access and the membership to an executive union can explain this. It should also be noticed that it is not the same kind of executives: younger executives for the software company and older ones for Total. Executives from all the ages are represented in the whole survey. The sample of the Municipality of Paris is more balanced with young, older, executives and non-executives.

PATERNITY LEAVE

The fathers taking the paternity leave usually take it for duration of 7-14 days (82.1%). 14 days is the legal duration of this leave in France.

19.2 % did not know about the possibility of taking the paternity leave. This could be due to a lack of information in the company or from the State because this leave exists only since 2002. 27.2 % do not or did not have the possibility to take it. For fathers before 2002, the paternity leave did not exist as it is today.

There is a discrepancy between fatherhood regimes and the fathering practices actually observed. 53.6 % of the investigated fathers declared having the possibility to take the paternity

leave. More than half of the fathers knew they had the possibility of taking the paternity leave but did not take it (58.2%). The reasons for not taking the paternity leave are: financial constraints for the family, the charge of work to accomplish, the fear of the employer reaction, or thinking that it is not for them. Fathers sometimes quote employers' attitudes as an important reason for their low take-up rates; employers may regard fathers taking parental leave as relatively uncommitted to their jobs. Employers are usually more flexible with women concerning their work-life balance (flexible hours, days off, leaves for sick child or new birth).

24.3% of the fathers asked from TOTAL took the paternity leave, 69.2% for the Municipality of Paris and 49% for Objecteering Software. In the sample investigated in Ville de Paris (public sector) the use of the paternity leave is more important. In the private sector selected (Total and Objecteering Software) more than half of the fathers asked did not take the paternity leave. Most of the investigated fathers in these two private companies were executives. Since the paternity leave indemnity financed by the social security is limited to 2589 € maximum and there are no obligations for the employers to make up the wage the executives are disadvantaged and prefer sometimes to take paid holidays than the paternity leave to be with their child.

Family-friendly arrangements tend to be more common in firms with higher proportions of professional and technical workers, where there is a written Equal Employment Opportunities statement, when there is a structured hierarchical management system, or where there are a relatively high proportion of female managers. Small businesses have more difficulties to facilitate these arrangements. Flexible working hours, followed by various types of short-duration family leave schemes (such as sick-child leave) tend to be mentioned most often by employees – work-place *crèches* and career breaks much more rarely. Family-friendly arrangements in firms are defined as practices facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, which firms introduce to complement statutory requirements. Extra-statutory family leave is often vital when children are ill and not able to benefit from the usual child-care arrangements, or when child-care arrangements break down.

TOTAL is aware of the problematic of work-life balance. The company try to offer different services and arrangements to its employees (flexi-time, part-time, job sharing, crèche, platform of services, etc.) to facilitate a better reconciliation of work and private life. If men are not taking the paternity leave or other family leaves/arrangements it is not the consequence of a lack of opportunities offered by the company.

SOFTEAM does not have a specific policy facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life. The firm respects the law but do not offer extra family-arrangements.

THE MUNICIPALITY OF PARIS offers good working conditions in enabling employees to freely organise their daily working hours. All the employees cannot have this flexibility because they have to respond to the public service regulations but the municipality try to find a way to offer to these particular employees other facilities and arrangements. The equal opportunity plan encourages all the departments to facilitate the work-life balance.

OTHER LEAVES

55.4% didn't use other kind of leaves for taking care of their children. Few men use leaves to be with their children. The parental childcare leave allowance is relatively low and cannot replace male wages, so it is mainly women that take it. In France 98% of the persons taking the parental childcare leave allowance are women and 2% are men (CAF, Recherches et Prévisions 76, June 2004)

FLEXIBILITY OF WORK

Job satisfaction is increased, and stress reduced, when employees with family responsibilities are able to work no more hours than they desire to work and have some control over their starting and stopping times. Flexibility in working hours is of vital importance to deal with the emergencies of everyday family life. Employees appreciate flexible hours' arrangements.

Flexibility includes reductions in working hours (for example, from full-time to part-time working), term-time only working contracts, working at home for family reasons, and appropriate flexi-time arrangements. 6.8% of the investigated fathers stood at home to take care of the children after the end of the maternity leave. 25.9% took more days off to take care of the children. 1 father on 4 maintains using days out of work to be with their children. 5.34% take care of their children several times per month. The majority of the investigated fathers do not make daily arrangement to take care of their children. On average, with the current gender pay gap, the financial penalties to a family are greater if a father rather than mother reduced working hours.

Women mainly support the reconciliation between work and family. The number and the age of the children do almost not influence the men career but it does for women. The family tasks mainly done by women include the time for taking care of the children. A study from the INSEE institute in 2004 confirmed that women invest themselves 2 times more than men for the children homework's. The men spend more time to work, study, and train. Women work more part-time to take care of the children and the domestically tasks (79% of the part-time workers in France are women, CNRS figures, 2006).

FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT (children aged under 12)

76.5% fathers of children aged under 12 assure doing activities with them. 11.8% confess not doing or very rarely activities with their children and 11.8% did not respond. 23.5% of the investigated fathers are not very involved with their children.

ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN

Men interviewed are mainly doing leisure activities with their children. (Indoor games/computer 60.3%; external activities 55.9%). Less are involved in the day-to-day activities related to children. 1/3 of the fathers declared taking care of the household activities and the homework. (Cooking/ household activities 29.4%; homework 36.8%)

Fathers' involvement in housework remains low, contributing to women's feelings of overload and unfairness, particularly for full-time working mothers. A study from the MATISSE laboratory of the CNRS in 2001 shows that in the family where both parents work full time the women assume 2/3 of the time dedicated to domestically tasks and children education.

In the survey 88.1% of fathers with children <12 years old declare participating to the household activities (92.4% for men with no children)...

TIME DEVOTED TO CHILDREN

More than 1 father on 2 declared taking care of the children (63.2%). 24.4h/week is the average of time dedicated to children announced in the survey. There are differences between the estimated times indicated by the investigated fathers. For some they spend 1h per week and for some others 55h/week. It seems difficult to estimate the time spent with children. 13.3% of fathers admitted not doing activities with their children or very rarely. For 62.5% it is because of a lack of time.

"GOOD FATHER"

A "good father" for 66,7% is someone spending time with the family; for 12,3% someone working hard to ensure good living situation to the family; for 11,4% someone helping with the household activities; 5,3% answered "Other". The majority think a father should spend time with the family and his children. Depending on the professional category it can be noticed that the non-executives indicated more than the executives that "working hard to ensure good living condition to the family" was important with 14,6% non-executives for 11% executives.

CONCLUSION

This survey gives an idea and a perception of the investment of some French men in the family area. The sample is not representative of fathers in France. The results of this survey should not be taken as a picture of the French fathers and the French public and private companies. No sweeping generalization can be done. However the results still confirm the fact that fathers are spending more time at work than in the family sphere. Even if they are more interested to help at home and to take care of the children they still continue to be more invested in the professional area.

Firms play an important role in the work/family reconciliation and the change of the society. Whatever government policies are put in place, the detailed aspects of reconciliation are worked out in workplaces and homes. National policies will be much less effective if firms implement them unwillingly. Relatively low-skilled or easily replaced employees may be the most vulnerable. On the other hand, many firms not only comply fully with national legislation, but also complement it through so-called "family-friendly" arrangements.

Family-friendly arrangements are most common in the public sector. The public sector both employs a relatively high proportion of women and is less subject to market pressures. Family-friendly arrangements are also more likely to be reported by large firms. However, when attention is focused on changes in working arrangements, the differences between small and medium sized enterprises and large firms may be quite small, especially since smaller firms may be more willing to allow informal arrangements.

Regarding the type of family-friendly arrangements on offer and the benefits they bring, employers either mention changes in working hours for personal arrangement, such as part-time working and flexi-time, either extra family leave benefits or help with child-care. It is very rare for employers to provide benefits from each of the four categories mentioned above. The most commonly cited reasons for introducing these arrangements are better retention rates of valued staff with family responsibilities, and improvements in staff morale.

Family-friendly working practices can result in a net reduction in absences from work and increase employee commitment, with positive effects on productivity, turnover, quit rates, and work performance measures (interviews of employers in the “Documentary on good corporate practice” produced for the project “men equal, men different” in France).

Getting the work/family balance right will be regarded as of vital importance in the years to come. The size and composition of the working-age population has already begun to change, requiring policies to promote increased paid employment among women. The challenge is to achieve more flexibility in career patterns in ways, which both build human capital and encourage longer and deeper involvement by women in paid employment and fathers in caring. Positive developments happened recently but the changing society remains slow.

LATVIAN CONCLUSIONS

COUNTRY SPECIFIC NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

As in the rest of the countries, research consisted of three parts in Latvia. The **Public environment analysis** was based on existing research data and general observations as well as analysis of the legal system regarding involvement of men in family life. The **Employee survey** was conducted based on the common methodology (questionnaire) in all participant countries, but is important to emphasize that in Latvia the questionnaire was sent out electronically and the biggest sample was received back from one large enterprise, and therefore the sample only reflects attitudes of younger men who work for a large and stable organization (i.e., it is not representative for the country as such). The **Employer survey** that included 1 large private company, 1 large partly state owned company, 1 municipality, 1 medium size company and 4 small companies did not reflect the general employment situation entirely accurately, as the largest number of people (68.9%) in Latvia work in small and medium size businesses. The respondent sample of the Employer survey, however, matches the general situation in Latvia closer than the Employee survey.

LEGISLATION AND EXISTING STEREOTYPES REGARDING ROLE OF FATHER

The Public environment analysis shows that with the exceptions of the difference between the length of the maternity and paternity leaves⁶, the lack of legal provisions for men whose partners are expecting⁷ and lack of more detailed custody provisions⁸ barriers to more active

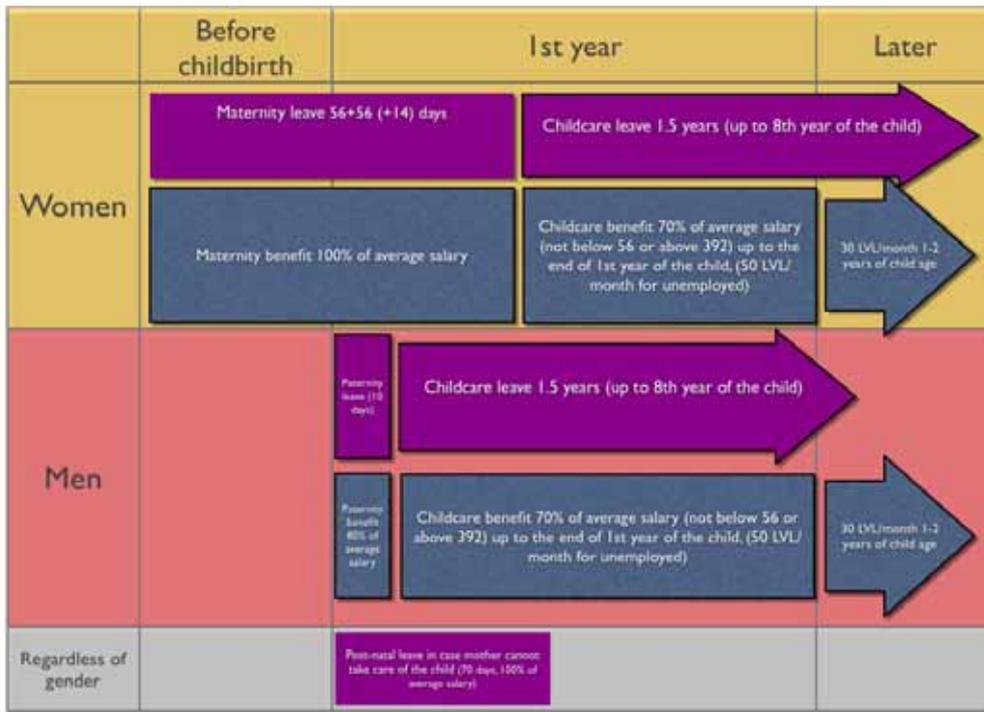
⁶ Maternity leave stipulated by the law is 10 times longer than the paternity leave (i.e. 114 vs 10 days)

⁷ Men are not considered fathers by law until the child is born, while an expecting mother is allocated different rights by the law

⁸ Children are customarily left with the mother of the child, but there are no clear legal guidelines regarding this

fatherhood of Latvian men are more operational than legal, as the legal system generally complies with international standards (see Picture 1). These obstacles to increased participation are rooted in general stereotypes about what family duties are specifically male or female that can be well observed at the level of school and kindergarten education that offers for example segregated household and gym classes and in general conditions girls and boys for gender-specific life trajectories. Employees and employers alike still perceive child-care and family as mostly female business, thus men are expected to fulfil their duty to their partners and children by being breadwinners, even if they do not state that openly. This conclusion is supported by the results from both **employee** and **employer** surveys which demonstrate that fathers are reluctant to use the family-friendly provisions granted by the law and in case they do use them, a portion still does not spend time with the family but rather use the time to find an additional employment (especially regarding child-care leaves). Younger men tend to hold more emancipated *views* on the role of fathers in families, but in practice often follow the patriarchal model of breadwinner and holiday-dad. The **employer** survey also demonstrated that larger and/or companies that develop fast tend to be much more family-friendly than small and stagnating ones.

The illustration below summarizes the legal provisions for mothers and fathers regarding child-birth. Child-care leave can be taken by both parents at the same time but the child-care benefit can be received only by one parent at a time. In compliance with a recent decision of the Constitutional Court (Satversmes Tiesa) of Latvia a parent who receives child-care benefit does not need to go on child-care leave and can continue working (effective from March 2007).



Picture 1. Summary of leaves and benefits available for fathers and mothers in Latvia. (One LVL is approximately 1.43 EUR.)

PERCEPTION AND PRACTICE OF FATHERHOOD IN LATVIA

Even though the majority of all respondents **in the Employee survey** said that in order to be a good father one had to spend time with family (79%) and only 6% supported the model of father as a bread-winner, the patriarchal models still govern *behaviour* of respondents. 22 % of men with children **in the Employee Survey** indicated that they had started working up to 10 hours more per week since the child was born, whereas 6 % of the fathers indicated that they work more than 10 hours per week more, which indirectly confirms the generally held notion that in order to be a good father one must earn more money by working more. The forms of activities that fathers engage in when together with children also show the breadwinner, holiday-dad kind of behaviour, as almost all the respondents (96%) said that they spend holidays together, the next most popular activity being watching TV (70%) and having picnics (69%) followed by playing games together at home (57%). All other activities fall significantly shorter.⁹

⁹ However, it must be noted that spending holidays together is a category that is different from all other since it is more temporal category than an activity. Thus, watching TV becomes the most popular of activities while 'having picnics' might need a further investigation of what the respondents meant by that since the tradition of picnicking is a rare one in Latvia.

The data on the perception of a good father shows that younger generation has more emancipated views on what it means to be a good father. Younger fathers and fathers with younger children were more likely to have taken both the state stipulated paternity leave and other kinds of leave in connection with child birth or child sickness.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AT WORKPLACE

The informants of the **Employer survey** generally insisted that professional and private life ought to be kept separate and that a family-friendly policy meant a good salary and some entertainment organised or paid for by the company for the employee to take part in with other family members. Flexible working hours, distance work, and other principles of organising are not regarded as family-friendly policies and are used only rarely. The most often mentioned family or child-related policy was providing *ad-hoc* sick leave in case of child-sickness¹⁰.

CHILD-CARE AND PATERNITY LEAVE

In general family-friendly policies at large and medium-size companies are either better developed or better implemented than in small and micro companies. The recently instituted paternity leave of 10 days after the birth of the child, for example, was actively used by the men working in all interviewed large and medium size companies. In small companies, however, taking paternity leave was reportedly more problematic, with fathers taking the paternity leave only *on paper*. Maternity leave, which is about 10 times longer, would be most often taken for granted.

Child-care leave (up to a year and half within the first seven years of the child's life) can also be used by fathers. In practice that happens very rarely and those, who use the leave, are working for large and medium size companies or public sector. In addition, there is evidence that even those who take the leave do not always utilize it for childcare as they seek another employment by working abroad or illegally in Latvia. It appears that men who take the leave and use it for taking care of children are not only disadvantaged career-wise but also sometimes experience negative peer-pressure, as opposed to those who use the leave to engage in another employment.

In large companies preservation of the position of a parent on a childcare leave was not questioned. The substitute worker would usually be put to another task by creating a new position if necessary. In small companies the return often proved more problematic, especially for men. Two owners of small companies admitted that a man would not be able to return after a long absence (such as the childcare leave). Return of women after maternity leave was never questioned but could be difficult in some cases. In addition, large companies showed remarkable effort in communicating all available social benefits to their employees and included those benefits in their human resources strategies. Small and medium size companies did not perceive this as the task of the management team or as a benefit to the company. The **Employer Survey** indicated that both mothers and fathers in larger companies and public sector were at a much more advantageous situation regarding their social rights than in smaller companies. In addition, the best conditions for women and men as parents were provided by the enterprises that were growing.

An employee who was actively taking care of his or her child (still more likely to be a mother) was always perceived as posing a certain risk factor to the work process. The smaller companies that left organisation of the family related issues solely in the hands of the employee were often dissatisfied with the way they were managed. If the process was planned and supervised well as

¹⁰ Anecdotal evidence shows that sick leaves are still in majority cases taken by mothers.

it was done in the larger companies where some women were on a childcare/maternity leave at any given time, it did not pose a threat to the productivity, as both of the interviewed large companies were known as being the leaders in their fields.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to gender stereotypes that associate strongly women with childcare and men with wage-work, men choose not to use all possibilities to combine work and family life offered by the state. A new, more active role of fatherhood can be observed as becoming somewhat more widespread during the last 10 years, which is also supported by the **Employee** and **Employer Survey data**. The general image of a man as a robust, little open to love and more aggressive creature is still permeating general understanding of manhood and thus also shaping the possibilities for men to reconcile family life and work in the way women do. The social results of such gender segregation are devastating for Latvian men. Data shows that life expectancy for men in Latvia are 10 years less than for women. Men who have been (by their own choice, social pressure or most likely – both) locked out of family and deprived of fatherhood are more likely to die early and/or live in poverty.¹¹

COUNTRY SPECIFIC GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Basic assumption

1. The human resources policy of a company is designed incorporating assumption that employed men are not only employees but also member of a family and father.

Financial support

2. All taxes for the employees are promptly paid
3. Men receive bonus in case of marriage or childbirth
4. Fathers who have children of less age up to 12 receive a bonus at the beginning of each school year

Positive flow of information

5. Men are being informed about their rights in connection with childcare and childbirth and motivated to use these benefits

¹¹ 15.4% of single women can be considered to experience poverty while for single men this indicator rises to 23.6% (UNDP 1999 'Dzimums un tautas attīstība Latvijā' [Gender and national development in Latvia], p. 12)

Holiday policy

6. Men receive all holiday time they are entitled and the free time they are entitled to in connection with childbirth and child-care.
7. The employer provides extra days off (in addition to the ones stipulated by the law) to new fathers in the case of childbirth.
8. Fathers, not only mothers, receive days off in case of sickness of the child.
9. First day of school is a holiday for parents whose children are in grades 1 - 4, and parents of older children can negotiate a holiday.
10. Employer grants an additional day off per month to parents with children younger than 7.

Other specific actions

11. Children of employees receive Christmas presents up to the age of 15.
12. Activities for employees are organised outside working time, intended for the whole family.
13. Crèche or kindergarten available from the employer.
14. The health of employees and their family members is insured.

General actions

15. Flexible working time is available.
16. Employees are motivated to spend more time with their families (time management course).
17. The fact that employees are also fathers is taken into account when the small bonuses are planned (taking children to work for a visit, children's birthdays, active holiday bonuses).

OVERALL RESULTS: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we sketch some overall transnational results of the employee survey. This is only a tiny selection of the data gathered. But the research group assume that the below mentioned subjects are of interest in a joint discussion in Europe on measures to be taken to better the conditions of active fatherhood in a society with double earner's families.

PARENTAL LEAVE

Table 2: Percentage of fathers taking leave, who didn't have the possibility, did not use the possibility or did not know about it

	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Latvia	
1-14 days	2,2 pct.	26,8 pct.	11,6 pct.	20,6 pct.	} Yes
15 days or more	3,8 pct. <i>6,0</i>	34,6 pct. <i>61,4</i>	11,8 pct. <i>22,4</i>	0 pct. <i>20,6</i>	
Did not <i>have</i> the possibility	78,4 pct.	18,1 pct.	27,2 pct.	42,9 pct.	} No
Did not <i>use</i> the possibility	6,3 pct.	14,8 pct.	31,2 pct.	23,8 pct.	
Did not <i>know</i> about possibility	9,4 pct.	5,7 pct.	19,2 pct.	12,7 pct.	

There are big national differences in the replies to the questions of maternity and parental leave. The most fundamental difference is found in the question of, whether it is at all possible for fathers to take parental leave. Three out of four Bulgarian men answer that this is not possible. In contrast only one out of five Danish men describe this possibility as non-existent. Among French fathers one out of five answered that it is possible and among Latvian fathers two out of five answered that it is possible. An obvious reason why so many father respond that they did not have the possibility is that paternal leave was instituted by law only in the last years (in France 2002) and many of the fathers had kids before that. Still the differences among the countries are very big concerning this question, as 61.4% in Denmark had the possibility and used it, whereas this goes for only 6.0% in Bulgaria.

If we look at the length of fathers on leave, it is in practice only Danish men, who take more than 15 days of leave. However even if Bulgarian men do not often take leave, the majority of those who go on leave take a long leave.

It is important to note that more than 50% of the French respondents and 35% of the Latvian respondents have not been on leave. The reason is either that they didn't want to or they didn't know the possibilities of taking leave. So while the reluctance of Bulgarian men can be explained by lack of possibilities, it seems that French and Latvian men are either not willing to or uninformed of their legal- or collective agreement based rights. While the lack of willingness to take leave can be explained as social, cultural or economic barriers, which can be difficult to change, lack of knowledge can be compensated through goal specific campaigns.

SPENDING TIME WITH CHILDREN

It is remarkable that playing indoor games as computer with the kids is popular in all four countries, although in Latvia doing housework with the kids appear to be popular among fathers. Football seems to be a specific Danish interest for fathers to play with the kids, whereas hiking is popular in the other three countries. In France and Denmark going to the playground or swimming pool with the kids are popular activities for fathers.

Table 3: Percentage of fathers spending time with children in different activities

	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Latvia
Playing football	30	41,5	21	24
Playing indoor games ("computer or other games")	50	48,8	60	33
Hiking	24	1,5	34	35
Other kind of sports	24	34,3	28	26
Housework (e.g. cooking)	21	44,8	29	65
Helping with school work	38	45,7	37	28
Helping repairing bicycle, building models etc.	38	45,5	21	35
Going to play grounds, swimming pools etc.	26	69,7	56	44
Other activities		9,5	4	24

FLEXIBILITY AT WORK

We asked the fathers whether they had the possibility of working at least some flexible hours, meaning that they could decide for themselves to leave work early, to start early or to take work home.

Table 4: Possibilities for fathers to work flexible hours

Do you have possibilities for working flexible hours?	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Latvia
Yes	5,3 pct.	56 pct.	45,5 pct.	23,8 pct.
No	94,7 pct.	44 pct.	41,5 pct.	76,2 pct.

It is significant that while amongst the men in Denmark and France around 50% (56% in Denmark and 45.5% in France) have possibilities for working flexible hours, this is only the situation for 5.3% in Bulgaria and 23.8% in Latvia.

This is probably due to a known dilemma of, whether work should be in the centre of life and thereby have the rights to exceed the paid or fixed working hours, or whether work at the labour market should be delimited by fixed hours. It shows that this is also a dilemma between former socialist regimes and the more liberal regimes. But it also shows that in countries like Denmark and France the fight for fixed hours is no longer regarded as an important one, that taking work home, and thereby working less hours at the workplace is regarded as a concern for the freedom of the individual.

But it is also a dilemma that the tendency, shown in other Danish studies¹², is that men have more flexibility in their work than women, and that executives and professionals have more flexibilities than workers. This means that there tend to be a gap in the working cultures in the society and that professionals and executives on the one hand have the possibility of taking time off with the kids and on the other hand are never free from work, while workers tend to have more fixed working time and family time.

¹² Hvad kvinder og mænd bruger tiden til - Tidsforbrug og ligestilling i danske familier (Timeuse and gender equality in Danish Families) Lausten & Sjørup. SFI. Copenhagen 2003.

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

The question of family friendly policies can be difficult as it can both be argued that in order to be a good parent it is important to have fixed and stable working hours and not be forced to take work home – and that it is important to be able to work from home and combine some days working at home with taking care of family and kids.

There are very different answers to these questions. It springs in the eye that almost all Danish men have the opportunity to stay at home with a sick child, whereas this goes for only one forth in the three other countries. This of course does not give any indication of how much this possibility is used by fathers in the four countries, but it is a well known fact that even when mothers and fathers have the same opportunity to take days off with sick children in Denmark, this opportunity is predominantly used by mothers.

Table 5: The percentage of respondents having the possibilities of using family friendly policies

	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Latvia
Days off to care for sick children?	28,3 pct.	88,8 pct.	23,7 pct.	26,1 pct.
Days off to care for other relatives?	7,6 pct.	50,1 pct.	7,2 pct.	3,5 pct.
Possibility to use the day-care centre of the company?	1,4 pct.	1,5 pct.	7,2 pct.	-
Family holiday homes?	35,9 pct.	57,9 pct.	32,9 pct.	-
A workplace at home with computer and Internet?	0,5 pct.	45,9 pct.	2,9 pct.	2,1 pct.
Are you allowed to work some of your fixed hours at home?	0,3 pct.	66,7 pct.	1,9 pct.	0,7 pct.
Other	20,3 pct.	3,8 pct.	14,0 pct.	16,9 pct.

**Multiple answers allowed*

**Only fathers with children 0-12 years*

WORKING OVER TIME

In order to know, whether the men had felt that their role as fathers had forced them to work more, whether they had felt that they should prioritise the role as the main breadwinner of the family, we asked them, whether they stated working more hours after having got children. Only a minority answered that they did start to work more, and the biggest group of those in Latvia. In France the number is particularly low, whereas Denmark and Bulgaria are low too on this question. It is however remarkable that between 16 and 30% of the fathers in the four countries starts to work lower hours after having had kids. In the study we have not had the opportunity to ask the mothers of the kids whether they choose to work more or less hours after childbirth.

Judging from other Danish surveys¹³, mothers on the contrary tend to work 2 or more less hours after childbirth. Whether this a free choice or rather based on cultural norms and convention is difficult to state.

Table 6: The percentage of respondent fathers who started working more hours after childbirth in the family

Have you started working more hours after you got kids?	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Latvia
No	84,0 pct.	82,1 pct.	88,2 pct.	71,4 pct.
Yes, up to 10 hours/week	8,5 pct.	14 pct.	8,4 pct.	22,2 pct.
Yes, more than 10 hours/week	7,5 pct.	4 pct.	3,4 pct.	6,3 pct.

¹³ Ibid

‘A GOOD FATHER’

The men were asked, what they think what it means to be a good father. In Denmark, France and Latvia more than two thirds of the men replied that spending time with the family is the most important activity to do in order to be a good father.

In Bulgaria, however, half of the men think that working hard to ensure good living conditions is the most important activity, and only one third think that spending time with the family is important.

These answers can probably be seen as an indicator for the wealth of the society, that in the three other countries living conditions at least among the respondents are so good that they do not need to worry about spending enough money for the family to survive.

Helping in the household has low priority in the response to this question in all four countries.

Table 7: The percentage of answers to the question of what it means to be a good father

Commentaire : I think it can also be seen as an indicator of changing attitudes in former Eastern block countries, as Bulgarian sample had over 50 % people over 40. The Latvian sample might have showed the same, but the people are simply younger. KARINA

A good father equals...	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Latvia
Working hard to ensure good living conditions	51,7 pct.	7,9 pct.	12,3 pct.	6,3 pct.
Spending time together with family	32,5 pct.	84,1 pct.	66,7 pct.	79,4 pct.
Helping in household	10,7 pct.	4,2 pct.	11,4 pct.	-
Other	5,0 pct.	3,9 pct.	9,6 pct.	14,3 pct.

PARTICIPATION IN HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES

The men in the employee sample were asked, whether they at all participated in household activities, and following which activities they participated in. The good news is that the overall majority of men in all four countries did participate in household activities. In Latvia – which is at the top of the scale – 92% of the men participate, whereas in Bulgaria only 85,5% participates.

But when asked about specific activities the answers differ quite a lot. In Denmark a lot of men (78.8%) participate in cooking, whereas in Bulgaria this is only the case for 29.5%. Men in Latvia are just behind the Danish men regarding cooking, whereas French men are in the middle. Dishwashing follows the same pattern as cooking; also here the majority of Danish and Latvian men participate, while the share is lower in France and Bulgaria.

In all the countries laundry is not high on the household activities done by men, the highest score goes to Danish men with 53.7% and the lowest to Bulgarian men with 15.2%.

The number of men taking care of children is showing a somewhat different picture, as 51.8 of the Bulgarian fathers take care of kids, while in Latvia only 36.6% of the fathers take part in this. Denmark and France are on the top in this question with 66.3% and 63.2% of fathers taking care of kids. A somewhat related question of collecting/bringing kids to kindergarten or schools follows the same pattern with Latvian men in the bottom with 14.1%, Bulgarian men much higher with 47.3% and Danish and French men inn the top.

Table 8: The percentage of respondent fathers taking part in different household activities

	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Latvia
<i>Yes</i>	85,5 pct.	90,7 pct.	87,6 pct.	92,5 pct.
Cooking	29,5 pct.	78,8 pct.	48,8 pct.	66,9 pct.
Dishwashing	30,4 pct.	74,9 pct.	46,9 pct.	69,0 pct.
Laundry	15,2 pct.	53,7 pct.	30,0 pct.	25,4 pct.
Taking care for children *	51,8 pct.	66,3 pct.	63,2 pct.	36,6 pct.
Shopping	60,6 pct.	77,1 pct.	54,6 pct.	81,7 pct.
Collecting/bringing the children*	47,3 pct.	61,7 pct.	36,8 pct.	14,1 pct.
Maintaining house/garden	44,0 pct.	66,3 pct.	49,8 pct.	44,4 pct.
Other	1,4 pct.	12,5 pct.	5,8 pct.	2,1 pct.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

In 2003 Eurobarometer made a survey showing that the majority of men in the EU are aware that they have a right to parental leave but are not taking it up, seventy five per cent knew of this entitlement. However, eighty- four per cent said they had not taken parental leave or were not intending to do so. Eighteen per cent of respondents said they had not or would not take parental leave because they could not afford to. Forty-two per cent said insufficient financial compensation was the main factor that discouraged them from taking parental leave. Thirty-one per cent said they felt their careers would be affected and just over one in five said they did not want to interrupt their careers. Although the EU directive on parental leave was passed in 1996, thirty-four per cent said they did not have enough information about parental leave. Nineteen per cent still saw parental leave as being more for women. Ten per cent feared that "they would be stuck at home and have less social life".

We still find this to be the pattern – although with some diversity – in this present study. However it is remarkable and positive that the question of changing father's role in relation to the overall change in gender roles both in the family and at the labour market is on the agenda in all the involved countries in this study. It is obvious that the Scandinavian countries are ahead of the other countries in this connection and that this is connected to the specific Scandinavian development of the welfare state accommodating parents with day care facilities, allowing mothers to go back to the workplace after the maternity leave, whereas such facilities are still insufficient in countries as France.

In Bulgaria the protection of mothers still plays an overall part in the national policies of parental/maternity leave. It also seems that the whole debate on reconciling work and family life is less outspoken in Bulgaria in spite of the very high percentage of women working in the labour market.

The question of protecting women is also inherent in the directives of parental leave and protection of mothers around childbirth and breastfeeding. It is a question which has universally going on for more than a century: Whether protective legislation serves the rights and interests of mothers and the struggle for gender equality or whether it rather serves the immediate interests of male workers in regulating the participation of women in the labour force¹⁴.

The public interest in the role of fathers in the more gender equal family has escalated in all the countries in the last years, and as the study shows, more and more young fathers in all four countries are involved also in early childcare. And in three of the four countries the fathers acknowledge that being a good father means to spend time with the family. This means that the economic necessity of fathers to work hard to provide for his family is of less importance – only in Bulgaria this still seems to be a main motive for men working many hours outside the family

¹⁴ Protecting Women – Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States and Australia 1880-1920. ed. Ulla Wikander; Alice Kessler-Harris and Jane Lewis. Illinois 1995. p. 3.

and leaving most housework to women – even if they also do work many daily hours away from home.

Somewhat contradictory Latvian almost 30% of Latvian men responded that they started working more hours after having become fathers, although the vast majority answered that a good father spend time with the family.

In Denmark the inequality of women and men concerning parental leave has increased since the maternity leave was prolonged into one year in 2002. As women still take the overall majority of this year, the difference between the days away from work increased, although men actually increased the number of days on parental leave.

Particularly in families and in companies in which women and men both hold professional position it seems that the sharing of family obligations between women and men are changing in the way that fathers take more part in parental leave. Still it seems that these groups also often have the opportunity to take work home with them and thereby expand the real working hours invisibly.

Most of the fathers also have access to paternity leave, but in all countries it seems that there are at least three main barriers:

1. The cultural barrier that many men do not think it is their task to take on childcare obligation. They rather think of themselves as breadwinners even in the case, where their wives work full time too.
2. The economical barrier that parental leave is in most countries poorly compensated, and as it is expensive to feed and raise children.
3. That maternity leave is traditionally regarded a matter of protecting mothers from the heavy burden of work, and thereby that women in many countries think that maternity leave is their right, even if there are legal opportunities to share parts of it with the father. Still it is a political question whether or to which extent this protective legislation serves the interests of women.

Commentaire : I think that this cannot be said with such a certainty about the whole country, as we are basing our conclusions on case studies and the results in Latvia could be more similar to Bulgarian if older men were surveyed and who knows what they would be if other companies were surveyed in France and Denmark. KARINA

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS EU:

- a) Have a unified strategy for the EU countries and accessing countries – providing that men and women have equal access and rights to child-care and engagement in private life
- b) The implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (96) 5 on reconciling work and family life to be assessed bearing in mind the need to promote equal opportunities for both genders
- c) Distance work should be experimented with (pilot-projects) and research done on the effect on private/work life reconciliation

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PARTICIPATING STATES (GOVERNMENT LEVEL):

- a) To take measures for overcoming the pay gap and for guarantee equal wages for women and men
- b) Assign funds for NGOs for awareness-rising campaigns and research institutes for additional research
- c) State/municipality should provide facilities for child-minding (kindergartens, crèches) for each child, which should be not only available, but also affordable for parents
- d) Legal and operational framework for child-care should be developed (e.g. certification of nannies, rules for crèches etc).
- e) The family policy of the state should be written for men AND women, it should include statements on facilitating work and private life reconciliation
- f) Financing for parental leaves – to introduce paid, socially covered parental leave and encourage men to take it
- g) To initiate a dialogue with the social partners, local and regional authorities and NGOs for outlining the needed measures for reconciliation of work and family life

Commentaire : This was my suggestion, but it somehow does not really fit into talking about fatherhood, so I would propose that it is taken out.
KARINA

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

1. Have positive flow of information ensuring that all employees are informed about the state provided benefits and/or company specific benefits
2. Result-oriented work – if possible
3. Flexible working hours should be available for all employees if possible
4. The human resources policy of the company is re-evaluated emphasising the idea that a man is not only an employee, but also a family member and father. All other good practice recommendations are based on this general assumption
5. Create a good role-models for men as fathers (e.g. Manager takes time for child-care)
6. Give additional family-friendly provisions on top of state-provided ones (while also fulfilling all state-provided ones)
7. Parenthood is treated as a part of life-long learning which is beneficial to the company
8. Develop inner statistic system on the absenteeism of parents of young children (0-3 years) or those who to care for sick dependents

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES (FATHERS):

- a) Before you become a father, make agreement on how you would share the child-minding

Commentaire : I agree with Klāvs, that either there are more recommendations for fathers or we take this out

9/ What is your level of education?

- Primary school Secondary school
 Post-secondary school University

10/ Are you:

- Married Co-habiting Divorced
 Single Widowed

11/ If you are living with someone, specify her/his professional situation:

- Full time Part time On maternity leave Other

12/ Do you have person in charge that need an investment of time?

- Child/children
 Elderly person(s)
 Disabled person(s)
 Other, to be specified:

13/ How many children do you have? And how old are they?

Number:

- 0 - 3 years old:
3 - 6 years old:
6 - 9 years old:
9 - 12 years old:
+12 years old:

14/ Do all the kids live at home with you?

- No Yes

15/ Are some of the kids born in earlier marriages?

- No Yes

16/ Have you had any possibilities of taking parental leave?

- No Yes I do not know

17/ Have you used these possibilities?

- No Yes:
 1-6 days
 7-14 days
 5 - 25 days
 More than 25 days

18/ Who paid for your leave?

- Yourself
 Your employer
 Public benefit
 Mixture
 I do not know

19/ Have you used holidays in connection with childbirth?

- No Yes

20/ If you have had possibilities for parental leave, but did not use them, why not?

- The family cannot afford it, as I make more money than my wife
 I didn't want to myself
 My wife didn't want me to
 There is no tradition to do so at my work place
 My employer didn't allow me to
 I couldn't leave the work I was dealing with at the moment
 My colleagues did not approve of it
 I do not know
 Other, to be specified:

21/ Have you had any possibilities to work flexible hours to care for the children?

- No Yes

22/ Have you used these possibilities?

How:

- I stayed home some days when my wife started working again after maternity leave
 I take some extra days off now and then to be with the family
 I cared for the kids several weeks/month
 Other, to be specified:

23/ Does your company offer other kinds of family friendly policies?

- Days off to care for sick children?
 Days off to care for other relatives?
 Possibility to use the day-care centre of the company?
 Family holiday homes?
 A workplace at home with computer and Internet?
 Are you allowed to work some of your fixed hours at home?
 Other, to be specified:

24/ Have you started working more hours after you got kids?

- No Yes:

- 10 hours a week
 10+ hours a week

25/ Which kinds of activities do you take part at home:

- Cooking How many hours per week:
- Dishwashing How many hours per week:
- Laundry How many hours per week:
- Care for children How many hours per week:
- Shopping How many hours per week:
- Collecting/bringing the kids to school
/kindergarten How many hours per week:
- Outdoor/indoor maintenance of house
and garden How many hours per week:
- Other, to be specified: How many hours per week:

26/ If you do not take part in housework activities, why not?

- I consider it a women's job
- My wife consider it her job
- I don't know how to do it
- I think it is boring
- I do not have time for it because of:
 - Work
 - Other obligations in the family
 - Community work
 - Other, to be specified:
- Other, to be specified:

27/ Which activities do you engage in with the kids?

- Playing football
- Playing indoor games or computer
- Hiking
- Other kind of sports
- Cooking, or other kinds of housework
- Helping them with their school work
- Helping the kids with repairing bicycle, building train models or similar
- Going with the kids to play grounds, swimming pools or similar
- Other, to be specified:

28/ If you do not engage in activities with your kids, why not?

- My wife does not like me to
- I think that is my wife's job
- The kids prefer to be with their playmates
- I do not have time for it because of:
 - Work
 - Other obligations in the family
 - Community work
 - Other, to be specified:
- I do not know
- Other, to be specified:

29/ Which kinds of joint activities do you engage in as a family?

- Holidays
- Sports
- Picnics
- Playing games together at home
- Watching television
- Helping the kids with schoolwork
- Other, to be specified:

30/ What do you think should be done in order to be good father?

(Mark the most appropriate answer)

- To work hard to ensure good living conditions
- To spend time together with family
- To help in household
- Other, to be specified: