



FOCUS

Fostering Caring Masculinities

## FOCUS - The European Dimension

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The Equality and  
Anti-Discrimination Ombud



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### The European Dimension

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## **Preface**

Fostering Caring Masculinities (FOCUS) is a European project. The overall object of the project has been to examine and improve men's opportunities for balancing work and private/family life in order to encourage the preparedness of men to take over caring tasks.

Five partner countries participate in the FOCUS project: Germany (Dissens e.V.), Iceland (Centre for Gender Equality), Norway (The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud), Slovenia (Peace Institute) and Spain (University of Girona). A steering committee with members from all the partner countries has been the governing body of the project. The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud has been responsible for managing and administering the project.

The project has been funded by EU's Community Action programme to promote Gender equality between men and women. The project was initiated by the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Family Affairs which also co-funds the project.

To achieve the aims of integrating men in gender equality policies and particularly to encourage men to participate on equal terms with women in caring and family life, more knowledge and exchange of experiences is needed. The main focus of the project has been to carry through work place studies in two companies in each of the five partner countries. The idea was to examine companies' framework conditions for reconciliation of work and family/private life, and employees' experiences with the juggling act of reconciling work and family life. Additionally, the project has examined how national frameworks differ according to the conditions for reconciling work and private/family life.

The Institute for Social Research in Oslo was assigned to carry through and finalise the transnational report based on the national studies. Research director Mari Teigen and research assistant Trude Langvasbråten at the Institute for Social Research have been responsible for the completion of the transnational report.



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# 1. Introduction

The FOCUS project directs attention to how working life adjusts to employees' needs for reconciliation of work and family/private life, particularly emphasising men's opportunities for participating in caring and family life in general.

The focus on caring masculinities can be seen in relation to a number of developing trends and factors. The increase in women's participation in European labour markets, especially full-time, has made dual career families a widespread phenomenon. The decline in traditional long-term, full-time jobs, towards more differentiated and non-standard working contracts with increased requirements for flexibility, is another trend cutting across Europe. This development is mainly producing change in the male workforce, as the standard, long-term working contract has been more widespread among men as compared to women (Puchert et al. 2005: 11). Demographically, Europe is facing major challenges as the populations are steadily growing older coincidental to fertility rates in decline. While a fertility rate level of 2.1 is needed for zero growth, the EU average has been below 1.5 since 1995 (Eurostat 2005c). Also, family forms have become increasingly diverse and multifaceted over the last decades.

Thus, the organising of care has become a pressing issue. For the ambition of gender equality to progress, the focus of attention is now on men and their opportunities and determination to change. Besides, it can no longer be taken for granted that the organising of care remains the main responsibility of women, within the frame of traditional nuclear families with a male breadwinner. On this background, new measures to promote a better reconciliation of people's professional lives on the one hand and their private/family lives on the other, has become an issue of high priority on the European social agenda (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 25).

A more intimate relationship between masculinity, i.e. the position of men in society and the image they have of themselves (Gärtner & Höyng 2005: 17), and care, has also been generated by attitudinal changes among men. The term *hegemonic masculinity* was initially introduced two decades ago (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985), and has generally been understood as a pattern of practices that allow for men's dominance over women, but also as a hierarchical structure where other types of masculinities are subordinate to the hegemonic form (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The concept of hegemonic masculinity describes a culturally dominant masculinity upheld by certain groups of men with a socially dominant position. Despite being changeable and relative to time and place, hegemonic masculinity has often been closely related to labour, prescribing a norm of men as financial providers or breadwinners (Brandt & Kvande 2003), and associated to over-performance and long hours at work. Although the field of masculinity is a field of persistence, it is also characterised by change and tension (Gärtner 2005: 175), and the male breadwinner model has been increasingly challenged by alternative discourses on masculinity giving more centrality to values such as care and active fathering. And in fact, the ways in which hegemonic masculinities are conceptualised, should acknowledge that democratisations of gender relations is a possibility. Thus, hegemonic masculinity have the potential of becoming an all together positive figure – where masculinity is open to equality with women (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

The European study *Work Changes Gender*, indicates a lacking legitimacy for the breadwinner model among men (Halrynjo & Holter 2005: 105). Attitudinal changes are, however, probably more prominent in the private sphere compared to the professional world (Gärtner 2005: 177). Powerful economic, social, cultural and psychological structures, e.g. *the sprinkle system*, are still facilitating the male breadwinner model,

rather than the caring role (Holter 2003: 25). Apart from favouring the male provider role economically, this system is also built on ideological premises linking masculinity together with values such as instrumentality and non-care, connected to social sanctions of what is perceived as “unmanliness”. In working life, the existence of such norms and sanctions make it harder for individual men to choose differently, as alternative masculinities (men giving priority to care for instance) are often met with marginalisation. Individuals who make divergent priorities meet glass ceilings preventing them from promotion (Gärtner 2005: 177). Therefore, structural changes that actually enable and foster caretaking by men are detrimental for change to take place (Gärtner 2005: 179).

### **1.1. Focusing on the organisational level**

In this respect companies can play a decisive role in promoting and supporting men (as well as women) in achieving a better balance between work and private/family life. The organisational framework of companies, management, internal arrangements, measures and procedures, as well as the informal organisational culture may facilitate positive change (Gärtner 2005: 178-179). For instance, male employees taking (long) paternity leaves or working reduced hours to take care of their children, may function as internal innovators creating increased acceptance for caring masculinities. Likewise, low acceptance and negative sanctions impede change.

Plantenga & Remery also emphasise that working life organisations themselves are detrimental actors in shaping the de facto opportunity structures of their employees, within the frames of national legislation and regulations; *“it is at the organizational level where the details of the reconciliation of work and family life are worked out. As such, the organizational level is an important element of the overall care regime, with a distinct effect on patterns of participation and fertility”* (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 25).

Emphasising reconciliation policies and practices on the organisational level is the focal point of the FOCUS project. The workplace study involve two companies, one public and one private, in 5 European countries; Germany, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain.<sup>1</sup> These countries have their specific local historical, political, economic, social and cultural contexts. It is therefore important to have in mind that this report does not provide the basis for a systematic, national comparative study. The focus is rather on comparing various company policies and organisational settings, that indeed is founded nationally, but where the idea is to collect knowledge and experiences on a wide range of reconciliation policies and how they are practiced. In the national studies, the selected companies are portrayed, especially with respect to the adoption of measures and initiatives to enable the reconciliation of work and private/family life of employees.

Employees in different positions and levels have been interviewed in all companies. Results and findings from the national studies provide the basis for action work aimed at promoting organisational change and cooperation with change actors, innovators, experts and managers in the selected companies.

### **1.2. Structure of the report**

The remaining part of this report, which is the result of a comparison of the five national reports, is structured in 5 chapters. Chapter 2 gives a brief and general overview of some key labour market figures, reproductive trends and reconciliation policies in each partner

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<sup>1</sup> The national reports also provide information on conditions for balancing work and private/family life, such as legislation, statistics and so on.

country. In chapter 3, the selected companies in the workplace study are presented. Chapter 4 presents the main findings from the workplace study. The different measures provided by the companies to promote reconciliation and caring masculinities is the first topic, followed by a section on organisational cultures, organisation of working time, job satisfaction and wages. Family and private life is the next topic, discussing in particular fathering and fathering ideals, the sharing of household responsibilities and experiences with paternity and parental leave. In chapter 5, we summarise and conclude. The last chapter gives an account of the various recommendations given in the national reports addressed to the companies, in order to promote reconciliation of work and private/family life and to foster caring masculinities.

## 2. Statistics and institutional framework

This chapter gives a brief and general overview of some key labour market figures, recent trends in reproduction and time use, as well as a look into existing reconciliation policies in the five case countries. For more details, we recommend a visit on the FOCUS homepage ([www.caringmasculinities.org](http://www.caringmasculinities.org)), where all the national reports can be downloaded.

### 2.1. Labour market key figures

Increased and increasing labour market participation of women is a long-term trend all across Europe (Höyng et al. 2005: 22), but an employment gender gap remains, along with other differences in the working lives of women and men. For instance, more women than men work part-time, and men more often work overtime. The labour market is still segregated along gender lines horizontally as well as vertically, and men's wages outdo women's. However, on all these dimensions, inter-country variations are apparent.

**Table 2.1 gives an overview of some key labour market figures in Germany, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain. Per cent.**

	Employment rates <sup>2</sup>	Unemployment rates <sup>3</sup>	Part-time employment <sup>4</sup>	Average actual hours worked <sup>5</sup>	Gender pay gap <sup>6</sup>
<b>Germany</b>					
men	71.1	11.7	7.7	41.8	23
women	59.3	11.0	44.3	30.9	
<b>Iceland</b>					
men	88.4	2.9	7.3	48.5	26 <sup>7</sup>
women	81.6	3.2	33.6	36.5	
<b>Norway</b>					
men	77.8	4.8	13.9	38.2	15 <sup>8</sup>
women	71.4	4.6	44.9	30.6	
<b>Slovenia</b>					
men	70.2	5.6	7.1	42.1	9
women	61.7	6.2	11.0	38.9	
<b>Spain</b>					
men	75.0	7.3	4.7	42.4	15
women	51.2	12.3	24.9	35.4	

Concerning employment, Iceland has the highest overall employment rates, as well as the lowest unemployment rates, for both men and women. The Icelandic gender gap in employment is only slightly higher than the Norwegian equivalent, which is the lowest among the five countries. In the other end, we find Spain, showing the highest differential (23.8) between male and female employment rates, and the highest unemployment rate for

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat 2nd quarter 2005 data. 15-64 years (Eurostat 2005a).

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat 2nd quarter 2005 data. 15-64 years (Eurostat 2005a).

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat 2nd quarter 2005 data. 15+ years (Eurostat 2005a).

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat 2nd quarter 2005 data. 15+ years (Eurostat 2005a).

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat (2006). The gender pay gap in EU statistics is defined as the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees in the whole economy. The population consists of all paid employees aged 16-64 who work 15+ hours a week. Eurostat-figures available only for Spain, Slovenia and Germany.

<sup>7</sup> This figure refers to gross hourly earnings and is referred in Mósesdóttir et al. (2006: 33). Numbers from 2000, suggested a 24 % gender pay gap in the public sector and 27 % in the private sector in Iceland (Einarsdóttir et al. 2002: 16).

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Norway, average 2004 and 2005. Note that the Norwegian figure is not based on gross hourly earnings, but on monthly wages. However, for the wages of full-time and part-time employees to be comparable, part-time employees' wages have been calculated into the corresponding full-time wages in their jobs (<http://www.ssb.no/emner/06/05/lonnansatt/>).

women. Unemployment has been a major problem in the Spanish labour market, but it has been on the decrease since the 1990s onwards (Spanish national report). Still though, it affects Spanish women to a larger extent than Spanish men.

According to Höyng et al. (2005: 40), working part-time is “clearly a women’s domain”, something that is confirmed in these figures. Slovenia has nonetheless a significantly lower gender gap than all the other countries, with a differential of 3.9 between men and women.<sup>9</sup> The biggest difference in part-time employment between men and women is found in Germany (36.6), followed by Norway (31.0), Iceland (26.3) and Spain (20.2). Women use part-time work as a strategy for reconciling family and working life to a larger extent than men, and parenthood generally have a different impact on the labour market behaviour of women and men (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 28). In general, women reduce their working time when having children, while men without children actually have a lower employment rate than those who have children (ibid: 29). Eurostat-figures from 2005 (Eurostat 2005b) show that the employment rates for women aged 20-49 are lower for those who have children under 12 years in all EU member states, except for Slovenia and Denmark.

Plantenga & Remery (2005: 30) also point to Slovenia (and Portugal) as an exception from the general pattern in EU; in these two countries, after having children, both men and women are more employed.

The “actual hours worked” category include all working hours, including overtime, and men generally have longer working hours than women. In Iceland and Germany we find the largest differentials between men and women, while Slovenia has the lowest one. The distribution of work between men and women is more even when unpaid work is taken into account, but this will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2.

Referring to Eurostat-figures, Höyng et al. (2005: 23) state that the gender pay gap has remained the same between 1994 and 2003. In contrast to the decrease in the employment gap, women’s hourly gross wages have stagnated 16 % below the hourly gross wages of men. Looking at the three countries where Eurostat-figures are available, Germany shows the largest pay gap between men and women (23) and Slovenia the lowest (9). Spain comes closer to the average of 16 %, with a gender pay gap of 13 %. The large pay gap in Germany is also given attention in the German national report, but the authors stress differences between East and West Germany. In the East, women have higher earnings than their counterparts in the West – full-time employed women in East Germany receive on average 92 % of men’s income, while West German women only earn 76 %. The authors relate this to the transformation process taking place in East Germany following the unification, where unemployment especially hit employees with lower qualifications. Due to this, the employed women in the East have higher qualifications than their equivalents in the West, and thus earn higher incomes. In Norway, women earn on average 85 % of men’s wages, but this figure is not directly comparable to the Eurostat-figures (see note 6). Iceland shows the highest gender pay gap (about 26 %), which is also the highest among the Nordic countries. According to Mósesdóttir et al. (2006: 14), this may among other things be related to Iceland having the highest female labour market participation in Europe (over 80 %), and a large proportion of these women are employed in low paid jobs in the care

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<sup>9</sup> Slovenia is a post-socialist country and a recent member state of the European Union, with a very low per cent of part-time employment. According to the Slovene authors, a partial explanation for this may be found in Slovenia’s political, social and historical context. The formal equality granted by the former Yugoslavia (Slovenia was part of it from 1945 to 1991), including women’s reproductive rights and social rights as well as many social provisions, such as day care centres for children and health insurance coverage, enabled women to participate in the labour sphere in terms of full-time paid employment.

sector (like the other Nordic countries), requiring low or no skills. The relatively large share of unskilled women in the Icelandic labour market, is therefore an important factor contributing to the size of the gender pay gap.

Several explanatory factors are relevant when assessing the pay gap between men and women, but Barth et al. (2005: 76) claim that the gender pay gap is first and foremost linked to a) the segregation of men and women across occupations, firms and positions, and to b) wage differences favouring male dominated jobs. Gender segregation in the European labour market persists, but according to Höyng et al. (2005: 54) there has been a decrease in the segregation related to women's upward mobility. Despite a general increase in the educational level of women, career choices often remain traditional, and thus contribute to the reproduction of a gender segregated labour market.

All national reports confirm the existence of segregation in the labour market, both horizontally and vertically. Women are overrepresented in the service sectors, in occupations like teaching and health care, while men more often occupy technical professions. There are more female than male students in tertiary education, except for Germany, where the number is almost equal (49.5 % in 2003, German national report), but there are marked gender differences in the choice of subjects. In Norway, Spain and Germany, the national reports show that female students dominate in the social sciences, humanities and health studies whereas male students prefer technical sciences and engineering.

In all five countries, the national reports confirm women's under-representation in managerial positions. In Norway, women count for 23 % of the Chief Executive Officers in the private sector. The situation is somewhat better in the public sector, where 35 % of the executives in the state administration are women. In the largest companies publicly listed, only 18 % of the boardroom members are women (Norwegian national report). In Spain, 29 % of the company managers, and 31 % of those holding high positions in the State Administration are women. Only 3.9 % of the company boardroom seats are held by women (Spanish national report). 34 % of the managers in Slovenia are female. In the largest Slovene companies, women counted for 4 % of the boardroom seats in 2003 while the figure for company boards in general was 22 % (Slovene national report). In Iceland, women accounted for 18 % of the managing directors and 22 % of the chairmen of the company boards in 2004. A recent report on the 100 largest Icelandic companies indicates that women in 2005 held 12 % of the boardroom seats, and made up 10.5 % of the executives. The German national report also confirms vertical segregation in the labour market. While men and women are almost equally represented in middle (and lower) level positions, 12 % of employed women and 22 % of employed men, held positions at the top level in 2004. In the Microcensus survey of 2004, 21 % of the employees who described themselves as *top leaders* with widespread managerial tasks, were women. In what is termed "*the 30 major enterprises in the German traditional "old" economy*" , women only count for 1 % of the seats in the executive boards, and 8 % in the governing bodies. In the IT-sector, the female share in the 30 biggest companies' executive boards and governing bodies, is 4 % each (German national report).

## **2.2. Reproductive trends and time use**

Great demographic changes are taking place worldwide (UNECE 2005a). While women have entered education institutions and labour markets in increasing numbers, fertility rates have decreased markedly. In the EU, the fertility rate dropped from 2.7 in 1965, to below 1.5 in 1995, where it has remained ever since (Eurostat 2005c). In addition, the

average age of first time mothers and fathers has increased. Coincidental to people having fewer children later on in life, the populations are growing older. According to UN forecasts, every third person in Europe, CIS and North America, will be over 60 years old by 2050, while the proportion of people below the age of 20 will shrink to 20 % (UNECE 2005a). This huge demographic challenge is an important reason for reconciliation between work and family life having become an important topic on the European social agenda (Plantenga & Remery 2005).

If we look at the five case countries, relatively low fertility rates are manifest, but there is also important variance.

**Table 2.2 Total fertility rate<sup>10</sup>, percent.<sup>11</sup>**

Germany	Iceland	Norway	Slovenia	Spain
1.3 (2005)	2.1 (2005)	1.8 (2005)	1.2 (2004)	1.3 (2005)

For the population to replace itself, a fertility rate at the level of 2.1 is required (Eurostat 2005c). The only country at this level is Iceland, having the highest fertility rate in Europe besides Turkey. The Icelandic fertility rate reached its lowest level in 1985/86 and 2002, when it dropped to 1.9 (Icelandic national report). Norway's fertility rate of 1.8 has remained stable over the last years. In combination with high labour market participation of women, the Nordic region has experienced a converging trend of fertility rates slightly below the reproduction level (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 30). In countries with low labour market participation of women, such as Poland and Greece, on the other hand, fertility rates have approached the unity level (ibid.). This has been something of a puzzle for researchers, but an important explanation is probably the existence of large public sectors employing a big proportion of women and generous maternity benefits corresponding to employment in the Nordic countries (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 31). The Icelandic national report argues that the recent changes in the Act on maternity, paternity and parental leave (see section 2.3), has contributed positively to Icelandic fertility. Slovene, Spanish and German fertility rates are all below the 1.5 level.

All five national reports confirm a rise in the age of first time mothers and fathers. The youngest first-time mothers are Icelandic (just above 26), while the oldest first-time mothers are Spanish (31).

All over the ECE region, families have grown smaller during the last 30 years, and a greater diversification in lifestyles is evident (UNECE 2005b). Divorce rates have gone up and marriage rates down, more couples are cohabitating without getting married, and there has been an increase in the number of one-person households and lone parents. In all five countries, it is possible to register same-sex partnerships, but there are differences in national legislation in this area. Since Norway adopted the law on partnership between same-sex couples in 1993, 2 823 individuals were registered partners in 2005 (Norwegian national report). Spain's law extending marriage rights to gays and lesbians came into effect in July 2005. One year later, there had been 4 500 marriages. In a Population Census carried out in 2001, it was estimated a number of 10 474 same-sex couples in Spain (Spanish national report). Slovenia has recently adopted a law on same-sex partnership

<sup>10</sup> Eurostat defines the total fertility rate as, "the mean number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if she was to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the fertility rates by age of a given year" (Eurostat 2005c).

<sup>11</sup> All figures from the national reports, except for Slovenia (Eurostat-table: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=1996,39140985&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=en&product=Yearlies\\_new\\_population&root=Yearlies\\_new\\_population/C/C1/C12/cab12048](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,39140985&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=detailref&language=en&product=Yearlies_new_population&root=Yearlies_new_population/C/C1/C12/cab12048)).

(July 2006), but it is highly controversial in gay and lesbian organisations who consider it discriminatory and unconstitutional (Slovene national report). Since 1996 it has been possible in Iceland for same-sex couples to register their cohabitation, and 119 couples have done so (Icelandic national report).<sup>12</sup>

As it was noted earlier, men spend on average more hours on paid work than women, but when unpaid work is taken into account, women work more hours a day than men (Eurostat 2006). According to UNECE (2005b), men have been slow in adapting to changing family needs, as more women have entered the labour market. Even when women work full-time, men take a smaller part of the household chores than their partners.

In Norway, women spend on average 3:56 hours a day on housework, while men spend 2:41 hours, in 2005. Despite this considerable difference, there has been a significant equalisation in the gendered distribution of housework during the last three decades. In 1970, men spent 15 % of what women did on domestic tasks while in 2000, this figure had gone up to 41 %. This development is mainly due to women having reduced their time spent on housework. The gendered difference in time spent on housework, is more significant when couples have small children (women use close to 6 hours and men 3:5 hours a day), thus reflecting a larger part of mothers working part-time in this period (Norwegian national report).

While Norway is among the European countries where the difference between men and women concerning time spent on domestic work is the smallest, Spain is one of the countries where the difference is largest (Eurostat 2006). According to the Spanish national report, women use 4:55 hours a day on domestic work, whereas men use 1:37 hours. When considering both paid and unpaid work, men have in practice one hour more free time than women. In Germany, the differential is also relatively high: women spend 4:11 hours a day on housework, while men spend 2:21 hours. Similar to the case of Norway, employed couples with children do more housework than those without, and large parts of it are carried out by the mothers, who in 2001/02 did almost twice as much domestic work as the fathers (German national report). In Slovenia, women use on average 2 hours more a day on domestic work than men, as women use 4:24 hours, and men use 2:24 hours a day. In the age group 20-74, women have 1:05 hours less free time compared to men, and these numbers are almost similar when comparing employed men and women (Slovene national report).

Based on a survey from 2000, the Icelandic national report, states that men spent 10:01 hours a week on domestic work, while women spent 18:69 hours. When both paid and unpaid work is considered, men work about four hours more a week than women. In a survey from 2003, on attitudes towards gender equality, it is evident that women to a larger extent than men are responsible for all domestic work, if repairing the house and car is excluded. Also, men tend to think that the distribution of household chores is more even than women do (Icelandic national report).

### **2.3. Reconciliation policies**

Plantenga & Remery (2005: 5) define reconciliation policies as “*policies that directly support the combination of professional, family and private life*”, such as childcare services, leave facilities, flexible working arrangements, and other policies, for instance

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<sup>12</sup> The German national report has no information on this.



allowances for working parents.<sup>13</sup> In the following section, we will give a brief overview of flexible working time arrangements, childcare services and maternity, paternity and parental leave facilities in the five case countries.

### **2.3.1. Flexible working time arrangements**

Flexible working time arrangements in which part-time is the most widespread example, can be an important measure to improve reconciliation between work and private life.<sup>14</sup> In most European countries flexible working time arrangements are organised at the company level, but there are some countries with national legislation on part-time. Plantenga & Remery (2005: 59) distinguish between two different forms in this respect: firstly, legislation on part-time employment can be directed at all employees, or secondly, it can be applied specifically to working parents. Only Germany out of the five case countries is found in the first category, while Norway and Slovenia belong to the second group.

In 2001, Germany adopted new regulations on part-time. Here, part-time work is stated as a general right, and part-time employees should not be penalized in company internal decisions and actions (German national report). However, the part-time provisions only apply to employers who employ more than 15 persons, and requests for part-time can be refused for “company reasons”. These are defined as “*a significant disturbance of organisation, of the work cycle or safety within the company*”, or it can refer to the “*development of disproportional high costs for the employer*” (German national report). According to the German national report, working time accounts are relatively new in German organisations, and has been developed mainly as a means to adapt working time to company requirements. It can also be used for family reasons, and according to a survey from 2003, flexitime arrangements (when applicable) are often used to adapt working life requirements to the needs of family life.

In Norway and Slovenia, part-time legislation is directed at working parents. The Norwegian Labour Environment Act gives parents who want to spend more time with their children under the age of 10, the right to work reduced hours, as caring for young children constitutes “weighty welfare reasons”. The employer can refuse requests for part-time, if they should constitute “particular inconveniencies” for the company, but the rejection must be well-founded (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 60; Norwegian national report). In Slovenia, one of the parents who looks after a child under the age of 3, or a child with a medical condition calling for intensive care, has the right to work part-time (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 59, 62; Slovene national report). The Slovene national report states that “*new forms of work are becoming more common*”, and among the employed part of the population, 5.4 % report doing telework or working from home.

Both in Germany and Norway, and also in Spain, it is common that the employer offers opportunities for part-time work (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 63).<sup>15</sup> The Spanish national report emphasises that the organising of working time has been a major obstacle to

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that it is not always clear whether the different policies under this heading have been instituted (only) with reconciliation in mind. This may be especially true for flexible working arrangements, which is often motivated by a wish for increased flexibility for the employers, as well as other factors.

<sup>14</sup> In all five countries, working hours are regulated. A full-time, regular working day typically counts about 8 hours. Apart from part-time, flexible working time arrangements, may include flexitime systems, contractually agreed annual working time, self-determined working time and individual contractual working time agreements, but Plantenga & Remery (2005: 63) conclude that such measures do not seem to play any major role in European countries, apart from flexitime systems.

<sup>15</sup> In Spain, about 60 % of the companies allow part-time work, especially large and medium sized firms, but only 9 % allows it for all employees. Flexitime is used by 59 % of all companies in 2002, but it is only available to all employees in 17 % of them. The opportunity to work from home is declared by 21 % of the medium and large size companies, but only 4 % has made this option available to all employees (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 64).

reconciliation between work and family life in Spain. The Siesta tradition forces numerous employees to take extended lunch breaks, and work until 8 p.m. or later. This is not in line with the rest of Europe, and in January 2006, novel government regulations were announced for federal agencies, stating a maximum of a 45-minute lunch break. Thus, the working day should not exceed 6 p.m. According to a survey from 2005, the majority of salary earners (48 %) had a split timetable (morning and afternoon), while 25.4 % had a continuous morning timetable. Only 19.2 % prefer the split timetable, whereas the majority (67.4 %), prefer the continuous one (Spanish national report). Although the new regulations only apply to about 18 % of the salary earners (civil servants) (Spanish national report), it is the government's hope that the private sector catches up and follows suit.<sup>16</sup> Also according to this law, an employee (civil servant) can ask for reduced working hours to take care of a child up to the age of 12, where it used to be 6 (Spanish national report).<sup>17</sup> The Spanish national report also states that 52.5 % of the employed population aged 16-64 are allowed the possibility to change starting and finishing times at work for family reasons, and another 16.7 % have this option under special circumstances. 46 % are allowed to organise their working life and take days off for family reasons. 18 % can do this under special circumstances, whereas 28 % do not have this option.

Following the Icelandic national report, the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men (96/2000) states that it is a responsibility of the employer to make sure necessary measures are carried out in order for men and women to reconcile working life obligations and family needs. Increased flexibility in the organising of work and working hours should be promoted through such measures. A survey from 2003, suggests that 63 % of the employees aged 25-64 living in and around the Icelandic capital Reykjavik, had worked flexible hours, while 50 % reported having worked from home during the last 12 months. These working arrangements are most widespread among managers, employers and professionals (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 66).

### **2.3.2. Childcare services**

Availability of childcare services is of great importance to full employment (especially female), and to the reconciliation of work and family life. Assessing the coverage rates of childcare services is difficult, because no comparable data exist and national data are not easy to convert as childcare facilities often constitute unique features in each country (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 33). However, Plantenga & Remery (2005: 33) have tried to make comparable calculations based on national data, but these figures should nonetheless be read with some caution.<sup>18</sup>

The EU Barcelona summit in 2002 set targets for childcare coverage that should be reached by each country by 2010. In the age group 0-3 years, the target was set at 33 %, and for the group of children between three years and mandatory school age, there should at least be 90 % coverage. In the first age group, Spain and Germany are way below the Barcelona target of 33 %, both countries showing rates below 10 % coverage. Norway and Slovenia are close to the 33 % target, with rates nearly at 30 %, while Iceland has a coverage rate exceeding 50 % (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 33-34).

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<sup>16</sup> Washington Post, April 23/2006: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/22/AR2006042201123.html>

<sup>17</sup> Note also that some of the Autonomous Communities (Regions) in Spain have drawn up their own laws on reconciliation. In Catalonia for example, Law 6/2002 allows employees in the Public Administration to reduce their working day by 1/3 with full salary until the child is 1 year old (Spanish national report).

<sup>18</sup> In particular, the numbers for Slovenia may be a bit inaccurate, possibly indicating a coverage rate below what may be the correct level.

In the second age group, the 3-year olds to mandatory school age, all countries meet the Barcelona target of 90 % or close, except for Slovenia, which scores fairly low with a rate close to 60 % (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 34).

It should be noted that the availability of childcare services does not provide a satisfactory answer to whether demands are being fully met – actual demands for childcare services is dependent on a number of factors, such as the participation rates of parents - especially mothers, levels of unemployment, the length of parental leave facilities, the opening hours of schools and the availability of informal arrangements, such as grandparents (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 34).

Also important in this respect are differences between regions and rural versus urban areas. This is especially true for Germany. In the age group 0-3 years, only 2.7 % of the West German children are offered places in day care institutions, while 37 % of the children in this age group in the Eastern federal states are provided with the same option (German national report).

For more information on costs and affordability, norms pertaining to childcare services, flexibility in opening hours, employers' involvement and other details on childcare facilities, see Plantenga & Remery (2005: 38-46), and national reports.

### **2.3.3. Maternity, paternity and parental leave facilities<sup>19</sup>**

Leave facilities also constitute a central element of reconciliation policy (Plantenga & Remery 2005: 47). Here, we focus on maternity, paternity and parental leave.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Germany**

In Germany, mothers are entitled to 14 weeks of 100 % paid maternity leave, provided by the statutory health insurance, beginning six weeks before birth. The eight weeks following birth are compulsory, while the expectant mother has the right to work during the six weeks prior to birth if she wishes to do so. Employed parents are entitled to three years of parental leave, and the rules regulating this were changed significantly (the last time) in 2001. These changes were meant to provide fathers with improved possibilities to participate more in the family.

With the current provisions, parents are allowed to decide for themselves who will take leave and when, and it is possible for both parents to take parental leave at the same time. Previously, only one of the parents could take the parental leave, even if both parents were employed. Also new, is the possibility to postpone the last year of the parental leave, up till the child is 8 years old, where it previously had to be taken before the age of three. This however, requires approval from the employer. Moreover, persons on parental leave employed in companies with more than 15 employees, have the right to work part-time for up to 30 hours a week. This claim can only be refused by the employer insofar as it creates considerable problems for the company.

The CDU/CSU and SPD coalition government<sup>21</sup> decided on new rules concerning childcare payments, the parental allowance, which enters into force on January 1 2007. The parental allowance should fulfil two important functions; firstly, it replaces the subsidy for parents

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<sup>19</sup> Except for some references to Plantenga & Remery (2005), all information in this section is based on the national reports.

<sup>20</sup> For information on other leave possibilities, such as leaves to take care of sick children and breastfeeding leaves, see national reports.

<sup>21</sup> CDU is short for the Christian Democratic Union, and CSU is short for the Christian Social Union. SPD refers to the Social Democratic Party.

(monthly payments of 300 € during the first two years of the child's life, depending on the parents' household income), and provides parents with minor or no income with a fixed basic amount of 300 € a month during a period of up to 14 months. Secondly, parental allowance should temporarily compensate the income of those parents who decide to take a leave or work part-time following childbirth. More specifically, it replaces 67 % of the former lump sum net earned income (maximum 1800 € a month), during a 12 month period, of those who take leave or work less hours due to childcare. Two additional months are reserved for the partner if he or she wants to take leave or cut back work, extending the parental allowance to 14 months. These two months are comparable to parental leave time reserved for fathers in other countries. Some flexible use is also allowed; the overall parental allowance budget can be stretched over a period of two years.

#### Take-up rates

In 2003, 85.5 % of the households having a child after January 1 2006, were entitled to parental leave, and out of this group, 85.3 % made use of their claim. The share of mothers taking leave in these households amounts to 95.1 %, while fathers account for the remaining 4.9 %. Even though this number is low, it has increased. Under the former legislation (before 2001), only 1.5 % of the fathers entitled to parental leave, made use of it.

#### **Iceland**

The Icelandic law regulating parental leave facilities, was significantly modified in 2000. The Icelandic author has summarized the most important changes in 13 points (Icelandic national report):

1. The total leave period was progressively extended from six to nine months
2. The mother has three months
3. The father has three months and those months came in steps, one month in 2001, two months in 2002 and three months in 2003
4. The parents can divide three months as they like
5. The months assigned to the father and the mother are non-transferable except if either parent dies before having made full use of his/her non-transferable three months
6. The parents can take the leave separately or together
7. The parents can, in cooperation with their employer, divide the leave into separate periods or use it with part-time work
8. The parental leave has to be used before the child reaches the age of 18 months
9. Employees are protected against dismissal after informing the employer that they intend to take parental leave
10. Parents who have been working full-time receive compensation during the leave, which amounts to 80 % of their salary. In the original law there was no "roof" on the payment but now a roof has been introduced so that those who earn over 600.000 ISK, receive only 80 % of 600.000. This is a very high roof, affecting only about 1-2 % of parents. On the other hand there has always been a "floor" meaning that if 80 % of the salary is lower than a certain minimum the sum is raised
11. Minimum labour market participation for receiving salary related payment is 25 %
12. Students and people outside the labour force are entitled to a flat rate benefit if they have been living in Iceland for the past 12 months
13. The payments come from a Parental Leave Fund which is financed by a part of the insurance levy which all employers pay as part of the wages

#### Take-up rates

The 2000 reform has been a success, and Icelandic fathers have adapted to the new circumstances very willingly and easily. About 88 % of the fathers use their right in its

entirety or in part. Fathers on average use 97 days, while mothers use 183 days. Approximately 16 % of the fathers use some part of the dividable three months, whereas 80 % of the mothers do the same. About 14 % of the fathers do not make use of the time allotted to them, while this is true for only 1 % of the mothers. A growing share of parents divide the leave between them in one way or another, but no information is available yet on how couples divide it.

## **Norway**

In Norway, the term *parental leave* is used to describe all leaves related to the birth of a child. If the mother-to-be has held paid employment with pension yielding annual earnings corresponding to at least half the National Insurance basic amount (1/2 G), during at least six of the last ten months prior to birth, the mother and father are entitled to a total of 54 weeks paid absence with 80 % pay, or 44 weeks with 100 % compensation.

This birth allowance is paid by the state, insofar as the annual earnings do not exceed six times the basic National Insurance amount. The mother must take the first three weeks prior to birth and six weeks afterwards, the father must take six weeks and the remaining part can be shared. If the mother-to-be does not fulfil the requirements for birth allowance, she has the right to a fixed lump sum after giving birth.

In 1993, Norway introduced the *daddy quota* as the first country in the world: four weeks of the parental leave period assigned to fathers that could not be transferred to the mother. The daddy quota has been extended to six weeks. The father also has the right to a two-week leave following birth, so called compassionate leave. This is not paid by the state, but many employed fathers receive half or full compensation from the employer. Fathers employed in the public sector for instance, receive full wage compensation from the employer during these two weeks. Note also, that the fathers' right to birth allowance depends on him having held paid work during at least six out of the last ten months preceding his absence (at least 1/2 G), but also that the mother holds paid work, is in full-time education or is sick. If the mother works part-time (less than 75 %), the father's birth allowance will be reduced accordingly. Self-employed persons have limited rights to birth allowance.

The *time account* allows for flexible use of the parental leave period, giving both parents, either simultaneously or consecutively, the right to work part-time, thus extending the leave period.

### Take-up rates

In Norway, around 80 % of all parents who have the right to birth allowance choose 54 weeks' parental leave with 80 % pay. Three quarters of all Norwegian mothers have the right to birth allowance. 71 % of the fathers on paternity leave in 2004 used the four-week daddy quota, but only 17 % of the men took more than the daddy quota. The length of men's leaves has not increased notably in later years. The corresponding numbers for 2000 were 11 %. The numbers from the National Insurance Administration show that it has become the norm that fathers take their allocated quota of the parental leave while the mothers take the rest. According to a survey conducted by the Norwegian Gallup, the reason why fathers do not take a larger portion of the leave period is that mothers are unwilling to give up what they see as "their" part of the leave period. Other surveys reveal that men are expected at the workplace not to take more than the obligatory father quota.

The time account option is in little use, as less than 5 % of parents entitled to birth allowance make use of it. Possible explanations are probably complicated rules, lack of

information, certain practical problems concerning the combination of work and leave, and also that it presupposes negotiating a solution with the employer.

## **Slovenia**

Parental leave in Slovenia is regulated by a law adopted in 2001 (the Parental Protection and Family Benefit Act), and it consists of maternity, paternity and parental leave, as well as adoption leave.

Maternity leave covers 105 days, and may only be transferred to fathers under very special circumstances. It is 100 % wage compensated, insofar as the mother has been covered by parental leave insurance in the prior year (the minimal parental compensation is 55 % of the minimum salary in Slovenia, and the maximum amounts to 2.5 average monthly pay). Paternity leave did not exist before the 2001 act, and non-transferable paternity leave has been introduced gradually since 2003; 15 days from January 1 2003, extended to 45 days the next year, and finally on January 1 2005, the paternity leave was extended to 90 days. The first 15 days are 100 % wage compensated and have to be used during the mother's maternity leave. The additional 75 days, are not wage compensated, but the state guarantees the payment of social security contributions based on the minimum wage. The parental leave (or childcare leave) extends until up to 260 days to take care of a child, following the maternity leave, and may be obtained by either or both of the parents. This is also 100 % wage compensated (depending on insurance as above mentioned). Persons that have been unemployed in the year prior to leave, are still entitled to it, but the paid allowance only equals the amount of social support contributions.

The 2001 act, also entitles parents to work part-time up to the child is 3 years old, after the parental leave period is over.

### Take-up rates

In Slovenia, it is mostly the mothers who take the parental leave in its entirety. In 2003, only 2.3 % of the fathers entitled to parental leave, claimed the right to use it. In 2002, the proportion was less than 1 %. Only 3-4 % of parents work part-time following the parental leave period (and up to the child is 3 years), and 90 % of these are women. According to Plantenga & Remery (2005: 50), the take-up of maternity leave in Slovenia is extremely high. Moreover, in 2003, 90 % of the fathers used their right to paid paternity leave, on average 8 days.

## **Spain**

Since 1999, working Spanish women giving birth, have had the opportunity to transfer parts of their 16 weeks of maternity leave to their spouses. The first six weeks after birth must be taken by the mother, but the remaining 10 can be divided or passed on to the father. The mother-to-be must have completed 180 days of social security contributions, during the last five years to be entitled to maternity leave, which is financially compensated 100 %. For the mother to pass on leave to the father, he must also have completed the 180 days of social security contributions. Unpaid leave of up to three years to take care of a child is also existent.

Since 1980, fathers have held the right (of their own) to 2 days of paid paternity leave. However, changes are to be instituted, and there are other relevant laws, specific to Autonomous Regions and to civil servants in the general state administration.

On January 1 2007, the new Gender Equality Law enters into force, and it gives fathers an additional 8 days of paternity leave, thus extending the non-transferable paternity leave to 10 days.

Since the signing of the Concilia Law in April 2006, civil servants in the general state administration (approximately 18 % of all salary earners), have been entitled to 10 days of non-transferable paternity leave. The breastfeeding leave for children up to the age of 12 months may also be added to the maternity leave as an additional four weeks. The Concilia Law also allows for more flexibility in the organising of working time, and it stipulates that the working day must not go on after 6 p.m. The right to work reduced hours for parents with children under six years has been extended to the child reaches 12 years of age.

Some of the Autonomous Regions, for instance Catalonia, have also drawn up their own laws on reconciliation, which improve state-wide legislation.

#### Take-up rates

The percentage of fathers taking parts of the transferable part of the maternity leave, is very low; 1 % in 2000, and 1.8 % in 2005. According to the authors of the Spanish national report, the take-up of the paternity leave (2 days), is almost universal. Of the unpaid leaves to take care of a child in 2003, 96.3 % of these applications were issued by the mother, and only 3.7 % by the father. According to Plantenga & Remery (2005: 49), the total number of maternity leaves each year, usually make up only one third of the total number of children born the same year in Spain.

## **3. Selected companies**

### **3.1. Selection criteria**

Each partner country of the FOCUS project has carried out national work place studies, based on a common design developed by the steering committee. The interview guide for the national work place studies was developed by the Norwegian Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud, in collaboration with the Steering Committee. Each country selected one private and one public company.

The size of the organisations, and their areas of working life, differ and were decided upon by each of the project partners.

The selection of informants in the organisations intended to represent both representatives of the organisation as well as employees in general. Preferably, 2-3 organisation representatives and 3-4 male employees were to be selected. From the group of organisation representatives, the project partners were asked to choose two or three employers or employees (male or female) from top management, middle management, human resources representatives, experts on gender equality issues (employed by the organisation) or representatives of trade unions.

The selection of informants among the employees in the organisations were also to be made in accordance with criteria set in advance. The male employee informants should be chosen among fathers living with children under the age of 13 (at least two out of the key informants), preferably have a wife/partner that work full-time, and it should be possible to include one or two informants who are not fathers, but who care for their partners, parents or elderly/disabled people within their families.

### **3.2. Presentation of the companies**

#### **3.2.1. Germany**

##### **EnerCom**

The private company EnerCom (pseudonym), is an internationally operating energy company, active in 26 countries with headquarters in Western Europe. Numerous mergers made it one of the sector's world leaders according to financial turnover.

In Germany, the company runs its business under the label Deutsche EnerCom AG. It is leading in the domestic fuel stations and lubricant market. Worldwide, the company employs about 100,000 people, in Germany about 10,000. EnerCom holds one of the largest refinery systems in Germany and also deals with natural gas, electricity and regenerative energy.

EnerCom is located in a traditionally male dominated segment of the labour market. There are no women in top management positions, 10 % women in middle management and 16 % women in the management level below.

##### **UBA**

The public organisation UBA (Umweltbundesamt) – The Federal Environment Agency – is the scientific environmental authority under the jurisdiction of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).



UBA's field of work is the investigation, description, and assessment of the environment *"in order to determine adverse impacts for humanity and the environment."* Beyond research, public information or advice and consulting (of German governmental, but also of regional and private bodies) are core tasks of the organisation.

The agency was founded in 1974. Located in Berlin (with some smaller dependencies all over Germany), the central organisation of UBA moved to the Saxony-Anhalt town of Dessau in 2005. This move is a major topic in the working life of all of the informants, and seems to have concrete impacts on the whole organisation. UBA has 758 female and 602 male employees.

### **3.2.2. Iceland**

#### **The Business**

The private company the Business (pseudonym) is one of the oldest operating industrial companies in Iceland, but has undergone significant changes in the last decades. The changes are not the least related to a shift in ownership structure, from being owned by a family to be handed over to the private market. Additionally, the Business has changed from being primarily a manufacturing firm, to an importer and distributor.

The Business employs about 130 individuals, which makes it a quite large company on an Icelandic scale. Its production is both for domestic consumption and export. Around 75 % of the employees are men, 6 of the 8 managers are men and as are 10 of 13 in middle management.

#### **The Institution**

The public company the Institution (pseudonym) is one of Iceland's oldest service institutions, and while some changes have occurred in the last years and decades, particularly regarding increased competition, the Institution's general nature remains the same. The Institution employs 326 people, meaning that it is quite large in Iceland. 60% of the employees are male, as are 7 of 8 in top management, 18 of 24 in middle management and 3 of 7 in lower management.

### **3.2.3. Norway**

#### **Microsoft Norway**

The private company Microsoft Norway is involved in software marketing, sales and customer support. The company is part of the multinational corporation of the same name. Since Microsoft Norway is a relatively small company, informants were recruited from the entire organisation.

The total number of employees at Microsoft Norway is 174. All employees work full-time; 125 men and 49 women. There are 13 men and 5 women in top management; 4 men and 8 women in middle management; 2 men and 1 woman in the company board; the chairman is a man. Trade unions are not included in internal negotiations at Microsoft Norway. The number of organised employees is unknown.

The number of employees has doubled in size in the period 2003-2006. Out of a total of 174 employees, only 38 have worked there for more than five years (i.e. from six to 15 years). 66 employees have worked for Microsoft Norway for less than two years, and 70 employees have worked there between two and five years.

## **NRK**

The public company NRK is the national public broadcasting company in Norway. It runs two TV channels and three radio channels in addition to publishing news on the Internet. NRK is a publicly owned company that is financed through the general broadcast receiver licence. The broadcast receiver licence is paid by all Norwegian residents who own a TV-set.

At NRK, employees and managers in the Regional and news division (NYDI), were interviewed. NYDI has more than 1000 employees spread over 50 locations in Norway and 12 abroad. NYDI produces news for radio, television and interactive media.

Total number of employees at NRK is 3440. The majority works full-time: 1843 men and 1294 women; 193 men and 343 women work part-time. In top management there are 7 men and 2 women, in middle management, 162 men and 115 women; in the company board, 6 men and 5 women. The chairman is a man. 3000 of the employees are members of a union. Five unions are represented in the company.

### **3.3.4. Slovenia**

#### **POP-TV**

The private company POP-TV constitutes a branch of the larger company Pro Plus Ltd., operating in television management, Slovene television programme production, and the selling of television advertising space. The main activity of the company is the production of the television programmes of two channels. Pro Plus is a company of a mixed ownership structure, being owned by Slovene and foreign owners (CME – Central European Media Enterprises Ltd.). The commercial television programme POP-TV was launched in 1995, and today the company runs two television channels, POP-TV and Kanal A. In addition to the two commercial television channels, Pro Plus runs the internet daily newspaper 24ur.com.

The management of POP-TV consists of 13 members, 10 of them are men and 3 are women; there are 148 permanent employees, and 284 members of outsourced staff. Of the 148 permanent full-time employees, there are 66 men and 82 women. There are 2 women working part-time, and 5 women working under temporary contracts. Of the 284 outsourced staff, there are 157 men and 127 women.

#### **Radio Slovenia**

The public company Radio Slovenia consists of three national radio channels that conceptually complement one another. News programming is one of the most important elements of the national radio, and it constitutes an advantage in competition with other radio stations. Radio Slovenia started broadcasting in 1928 under the name Radio Ljubljana. The employees of all three channels produce 72 hours of programmes every day.

The management of RTV Slovenia (joint management of the national radio and television) consists of 16 members, 12 of them are men and 4 are women. Similar ratios are to be found in the Supervisory Board and the Programme Council. In the Supervisory Board there are 10 men and one woman, in the Programme Council there are 20 men and 8 women.

338 workers are employed by Radio Slovenia, 91 of them work in radio production. There are 183 full-time male employees, and 146 full-time female employees. 6 men and 3 women work part-time, 7 men and just as many women work under fixed-term contracts.

In top management, including both radio and television, there are 25 men and 7 women, in middle management there are 33 men and 7 women, and in lower management there are 55 men and 30 women. The average length of time worked in RTV Slovenia, is 18 years.

### **3.3.5. Spain**

#### **MRW**

The private company MRW is a family firm that was set up in 1977, offering courier and goods transport services. It is a Spanish capital firm having grown rapidly during the last decade. Its scope of operations is on the Iberian Peninsula: Spain, Portugal, Gibraltar and Andorra. The company functions as a network interconnected by two central hubs (the airport zones of Barcelona and Madrid). It has 39 interchange points all over the Peninsula and a network of 754 franchise outlets. The company employs 449 employees in its own centres. Of these, 257 or 57 % were men.

In Spain, MRW is well known for its work and family/private life reconciliation measures and incentives.

#### **The Department of Education of Catalonia**

The public company, the Department of Education of Catalonia (hereafter only the Department of Education), is located in the city of Barcelona. The Department of Education oversees the entire educational community of Catalonia except for the university education sector. The Department of Education employs more workers than any other section of the Catalan Public Administration: 60,816 are employed in the department, comprised of teachers and administrative and services personnel. It employs about 44 % of the total number of Catalan public administration employees. The majority of the Department's employees are teaching staff, more specifically 55,117, whereas 3,833 are administrative and services personnel in the school centres and 1,866 are personnel in its central and regional services. Women make up 72 % of the Department of Education's workforce and men 28 %. This organisation and all the Catalan public administration are ruled by Law 6/2002 concerning reconciliation measures between personal, family and work life. The measures set down in this law make it one of the most advanced in Spain.

This study focuses on the Department of Education's headquarters in Vía Augusta in Barcelona, which is the location of the Department of Education. The headquarters are responsible for drawing up guidelines for the Catalan education system along with planning and management. 661 people work here. 69 % of them are women, and 31 % are men.

## **3.4. Interviews and informants**

### **3.4.1. Germany**

In EnerCom four informants were interviewed. Three of them have management positions, one woman and two men. One of the male managers is married and has two children; the other one is not married and has no children. Also one male employee was interviewed. He is married and a father of two children.

In UBA six informants were interviewed. Three of them have management positions, two women and one man. The male informant is married and a father of two children. The three employees interviewed are all men. Two of them are married and have two children each. The third one is not married and has no children.

### **3.4.2. Iceland**

In the Business five informants were interviewed, two managers and three employees. Both members of the management team were university educated women and the three men also have university education and work in the Businesses offices. Two of the employees are in their forties and one in his thirties.

Also in the Institution, five informants were interviewed, two managers and three employees. One of the management informants was female. All the other informants were men. Three of the informants have university educations. One of the managers lived only with a spouse as the children had formed families of their own. In the other instance, there were two children living in the home. With the employees, the number of children remaining in the household was three, four and one.

### **3.4.3. Norway**

In Microsoft Norway five informants were interviewed; two male managers and three male employees. Two of the informants at Microsoft Norway have executive functions. One of the informants is under 40 years old. The other four informants are between 41 and 50 years. Three of the informants have partners who work full-time, and two work part-time. Since Microsoft Norway does not have trade union representatives, this group was not represented among the informants.

In NRK six informants were interviewed, five men and one woman. The one female informant was an executive. Since this study focuses on men's experiences, her interview is only used as a source of information about the organisation. Three of the men are managers and two men are general employees. Only two of the men in management positions have personnel management responsibilities. One of the informants is a trade union representative. Four out of five male informants work full-time. One informant works 75 %. Three of the informants are under 40 years old, one is between 41 and 60 years, and one informant is over 60 years old. Three of the informants have partners who work full-time, one has a partner who works part-time, and one has a partner who is unemployed.

All the key informants have and live together with children. Some also have children who live with them either part of the time or only live with their mother. All the informants are married and live in heterosexual relationships. Both the informants and their partners have higher education.

The informants' income level is high compared to the average income in Norway. The informants from Microsoft Norway have a very high income. All the men earn more than their partners. However, many of the partners also have high incomes compared to the national average.

### **3.4.4. Slovenia**

In POP-TV six informants were interviewed. Three of the informants were full-time male employees who are also fathers. They live in classical nuclear families with partners, and children attending kindergartens or primary schools, most of whom are younger than 13 years. The other three interviews were done with three managers, two were full-time male employees and one was a full-time female employee; they also live in classical nuclear families with partners and underage children from their present and/or previous relationships. One of the men and the woman are in top management, the other man works in middle management.

All the informants are between 33 and 40 years old. Four of the informants are married, two cohabit with their partners; all the six respondents live together with partners and children from their present relationships, one of them lives together with a child from his present relationship and children from his partner's previous relationship. Four respondents have finished secondary education, one has finished higher education, and one has got a master's degree.

In Radio Slovenia six people were interviewed. Three of them are employed men who are also fathers, aged 31, 34, and 44 years. They all live in classical nuclear families together with a wife and two children. At least one of the children was younger than thirteen years at the time of the interview. The other three informants, aged 41, 44, and 49 years, are managers, one of them a woman. Both male respondents were working in top management, the female informant was working in middle management at the time of the interviews. One of the respondents does not live with a family, another live in a single-parent family, and the third lives in a classical nuclear family. Only in the last case are the children in the family below the age of thirteen years; the other two respondents have older children.

All six respondents have higher education or a university degree, on average they have been working at Radio Slovenia for 15 years.

### **3.4.5. Spain**

In MRW six informants were interviewed. Two of them were managers and four were employees in middle positions and/or administrative and services personnel. The average age of the interviewees was 38 and there was hardly any age difference between managers and workers. The average age in this company is quite young. The majority of workers joined the company at a very early age in the nineties coinciding with the expansion of the company.

In the Department of Education six informants were interviewed. Two of the informants were managers. Four were employees in middle positions and/or administrative and services personnel. The average age of interviewees in the Department of Education was 40. The average age of the managers interviewed was 50 and of the rest of the workers, it was 35. In the Department of Education headquarters, interviewees had been with the organisation for an average of almost 17 years whereas in MRW the average was only 9 years.

The majority of interviewees were white collar workers with a very high educational level. One held a doctorate, eight had university degrees and three had secondary school qualifications. The education level at the Department of Education headquarters is very high.

All interviewees were married. The education level of the spouses of the informants was also generally high. In general, they had university qualifications, especially the spouses of the Department of Education interviewees.

Eleven informants live in nuclear families made up of their spouse and children. One of the informants also lives with his parents in law. The informants had an average of 1.75 children. In MRW the average was slightly less, 1.6. Only two interviewees had a large family of three or more children.

**Table 3.1. Selection of informants (managers, employees and total) <sup>22</sup>**

	<b>Germany</b>		<b>Iceland</b>		<b>Norway</b>		<b>Slovenia</b>		<b>Spain</b>	
	EnerCom	UBA	The Business	The Institution	Microsoft Norway	NRK	POP-TV	Radio Slovenia	MRW	Department of Education
Employees	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	4
Managers	3	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	2
Total number of informants	4	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6

<sup>22</sup> Women are included among the informants from the representative level (managers). In EnerCom one woman, in UBA two women, in the Business both women, the Institution one woman, POP-TV one woman and in Radio Slovenia one woman.

## **4. The workplace study**

This chapter presents the work place study of the FOCUS project. These studies are mainly based on qualitative interviews in respectively two companies in each of the five participating countries. In this chapter we will give a brief overview of the measures adopted in the different companies. Then we focus on how central organisational conditions, such as organisational culture, working time, job satisfaction and wages, relates to opportunities for reconciliation of work and family/private life, and particularly the fostering of caring masculinities. In the following sections we focus on various aspects of family life and how they relate to work, such as the sharing of household responsibilities and caring, and generally the balancing work and family life. Finally the main findings are summed up in terms of patterns of variation, according to company, positional level, sector and country.

### ***4.1. Existing measures to promote reconciliation and caring masculinities***

The work place studies in the five countries indicate a relatively great dispersion of types of measures to promote reconciliation of work and family/private life. Generally, adopted measures are gender neutral or specifically directed at women. Very few initiatives exist to develop measures to prepare and encourage men to increase their participation in family life and caring activities.

#### **4.1.1. Germany**

Both companies in the German work place studies have made efforts to promote gender equality and to make it possible for employees to balance work and family/private life. The main measures concerns flexible working time, home office and opportunities of parental leave arrangements.

In the German national report it is concluded that the adjustments for reconciliation of work and family/private life are better developed in the public sector organisation UBA compared to the private sector organisation EnerCom. Even though the measures applied and the level of self-determination gives employees with care-responsibility less obstacles in UBA, men tend to stay invisible in both organisations in terms of gender, and they are hardly recognised under the aspects of equality, diversity, and care.

#### **EnerCom**

**Flexible work:** In EnerCom the main measure for reconciliation of work and family/private life is flexible work. EnerCom has different instruments for working time flexibility: Flexitime, working time accounts, overtime account, and home offices. In addition, a work time model called “full-time light“ is applied, which means that employees by reducing their monthly salary (93 %) can take more holiday.

**Home-office:** The opportunity to work from the home is mentioned as a condition providing flexibility.

**Leaves etc.:** Employees with children can make use of special company leaves. Male colleagues are supported when staying home with sick children.

According to the German report none of the men at EnerCom have taken parental leave, only a few have taken parental part-time.

## **UBA**

The main components of the UBA reconciliation policy consists of opportunities for flexible work and telework.

Flexible work: UBA offers different options of flexibility: The service time model implies that all UBA departments have to ensure public and in-house availability by minimum one person from 9-16.00h (Friday 9-15.30), which gives the opportunity to collectively decide on individual working time. Part-time is also an opportunity in UBA, however only for the staff below the management levels.

Home office, etc: Telework/home office is provided for and paid by UBA to a maximum of 120 employees. But working from home is allowed only for 50 % of the contract working hours, in order to restrict the non-present time.

In the German report UBA's commitment to reconciliation and providing flexibility is mainly explained as due to the company's move from Berlin to Dessau. Because of this move, 80 % of the UBA employees are commuting.

### **4.1.2. Iceland**

The Icelandic workplace study reveals that in the Gender Equality programs of both companies issues concerning reconciliation of work and family/private life are left rather open: *"Employees shall be given the possibility to tend to temporary family responsibilities such as may be caused by the illness of a child, spouse, or other close relatives."* There are however quite a few propositions present in the debates in the two companies about how to arrange for a better reconciliation between family and work. The adoption of measures is however not yet decided upon.

#### **The Business**

The Business has a set gender equality program. According to the Icelandic Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, gender equality programs should be adopted by all enterprises. However, a survey accomplished in 2004, reports that less than 1/3 of the businesses in Iceland fulfil the obligation. Neither are there any specific policies in place to enable men to reconcile family and occupational responsibilities at the Business.

#### **The Institution**

The Institution emphasises gender equality as regards wages and operates according to a set gender equality program. There are, however, few direct measures in place to balance work and family/private life and to foster caring masculinities. It varies between divisions whether the staff is offered the option of working from home, flexible hours or a part-time job for some time. There are no measures in place to make it easier for employees to tend to their children, nor to increase the number of men taking paternity leave. The men working in the Institution generally use their state instituted right to paternity leave.

Flexible work is officially mentioned as a measure adopted at the Institution to reconcile work and family/private life.

### **4.1.3. Norway**

The Norwegian work place study reports the most comprehensive adoption of measures to promote reconciliation of work and family/private life. There are also examples of initiatives to foster caring masculinities. Nevertheless, the two companies included in the Norwegian work place study differ significantly in how personnel policy aimed at reconciliation is established and implemented.



## **Microsoft Norway**

Microsoft Norway emerges in the FOCUS project as the only company having developed and adopted a personnel policy directly targeting men in connection with reconciliation of work and family/private life. The main components of the personnel policy at Microsoft Norway on this matter concerns a parental leave policy directed both at fathers and mothers. Another factor is a rather extended flexible working arrangement.

**Flexible work:** All employees at Microsoft Norway have flexible working hours and the possibility of a home office. Only a few jobs are exceptions from this (receptionists etc.). It is quite common that most of the working hours are spent at the customers' premises. Many of the employees spend only one working day a week at Microsoft Norway's offices. The rest of the working days are either spent with customers or in the home office. The flexible work contract means that employees do not report working hours. At Microsoft Norway the employees can work anytime and anywhere as long as they have a portable computer and are available on the telephone.

In Microsoft Norway the flexible working arrangements are seen as the most important measure to promote work and family balance. Nevertheless, the personnel policy of Microsoft Norway also expresses a concern for the more negative aspects of a flexible, engaging, but also often insatiable, working situation. To meet with such issues Microsoft Norway is cooperating with the non-governmental organisation MOT. The purpose of this cooperation is to raise employee awareness of the need to set limits at work.

**Parental leave:** Microsoft Norway's schemes for parental leave are meant to encourage fathers to take more parental leave through what is named *the daddy package*. In the long run the goal of the company is that both male and female employees should share the parental leave period equally with their partners. Microsoft Norway compensate for salary if it is not completely covered under the state financed birth allowance limit for both fathers and mothers. Fathers receive full pay for the two weeks that they are entitled to compassionate leave after the birth of a child.

In Microsoft Norway male managers are explicitly encouraged to take longer parental leaves to act as role models (i.e. more than the father quota and preferably six months, this apply also to mothers).

A vacation club was a former initiative in Microsoft Norway to balance work and family life. The idea was that employees should bring their children to the club at work during school holidays. The company planned to hire people to look after the children and provide them with a programme of activities. Initially, this idea was well received by the employees, but when the vacation club was organised there were few entrants. The scheme was therefore discontinued.

## **NRK**

Reconciliation of work and family/private life has been an emphasized aspect of the personnel policy of NRK as well. The main components of the work-family reconciliation policy of NRK are flexible work, parental leave and availability of kindergartens.

**Flexible work:** In NRK most of the employees work shifts. For parents of young children, accommodated shifts are offered to help reconciling the work and family balance. However, such arrangements are only made on the initiative of the individual employee, and are not part of the regular routine. Arrangements are made between the employee and the closest superior. Accommodated shifts are surely a measure that could promote caring

masculinity. In NRK, however, this has mainly been applied by mothers. Fathers have rarely asked for this type of arrangement.

**Parental leave:** Like most Norwegian companies within the public sector, NRK has good schemes for parental leave. Economic compensation for salary applies to the entire birth allowance period. Fathers receive full payment for the two weeks they are entitled to leave after the birth of a child (compassionate leave). Yet, there have not been taken any initiatives to encourage fathers to take longer parental leave. Neither to encourage male managers to take long leaves to act as role models. NRK clearly offers good job security when the employee returns to work after leave.

**Life phase policy:** NRK focuses on a life phase policy as an element in the development of the company's personnel policy. The life phase policy is organised by allocating a fixed sum to this type of projects every year. Departments in the various divisions then may apply for funding for concrete projects related to employees' life phases. For 2006 the company particularly focused on two target groups/life phases: employees over 60 years and pregnant women. However, the personnel managers ascertain that the life phase approach opens for thinking more broadly with regard to other life phases as well.

**Internal mobility:** In the work place study internal mobility emerges as a central issue for balancing work and family life at NRK. Mobility is here understood as the possibility to change jobs, department or division in order to get other and more family friendly working conditions. Several of the informants at NRK explain that they have chosen to take the position they have today because of working hours, less travelling etc., or that for a period they changed jobs for these kinds of reasons.

**Childcare:** NRK has two kindergartens.

#### **4.1.4. Slovenia**

The two organisations included in the Slovene work place study have not actively adopted any measures to promote reconciliation of work and family/private life. Still, the differences between the two companies are significant, presumably also in relation to matters of reconciliation. Especially the market discourse predominant in the private company, POP-TV, seems to be in clear opposition to the adoption of a more family friendly policy.

##### **POP-TV**

There are no measures introduced in the private company POP-TV to promote reconciliation of work and family/private life. Flexible working hours are not a part of the work scheme at POP-TV. Individual arrangements of flexitime are reserved for private errands, and not really institutionalised to ease the family and work balance. The possibility to work from home is also limited. The legally regulated paternity leave and paid leave, introduced by the Slovene government in 2003, was the only mentioned measures for reconciliation that was officially accepted by the company.

The work place study indicates quite clearly, that reconciliation of work and family is considered to be an individual problem at POP-TV. The informants express the opinion that initiatives to reconcile family and work should be a question completely of individual choice, and not a matter for personnel policy of the organisation. The justification for drawing this sharp line between professional and family/private matters is based on the emphasis of making profits as the main and only aim of the company. In a way, the question of reconciliation seems to be turned upside down at POP-TV, from a question of

encouraging work and family balance to a question of the company not putting any obstacles to reconciliation.

### **Radio Slovenia**

In the public company Radio Slovenia there are no measures adopted targeted at work and family reconciliation. The work place study presents however, three main mechanisms interpreted as instruments to promote work and family balance. These are: home office, flexible working hours, and contemporary means of communication.

**Flexible work:** The working hours are not strictly regulated at Radio Slovenia, which imply possibilities of flexible work. This flexibility is, however, not part of the personnel policy of the organisation. For those working shifts, these may be changed on the basis of individual agreements between colleagues. More flexible working hours may however be arranged through agreements with the immediate superior, by recruiting outsourced personnel for shorter or longer periods of time.

**Home office:** The opportunity to work from home offers certain flexibility. This is described as contributing to the reconciliation of work and family/private life.

**Communication technology:** Availability of contemporary communication technology is also mentioned as a condition affecting the opportunity to reconcile work and family. The editors at Radio Slovenia were in former days tied to the broadcasting schedule. Today, because of the availability of internet, their work is less tied to the broadcasting time, and they have the opportunity to more easily attend to family activities.

### **4.1.5. Spain**

The two organisations included in the Spanish work place study both apply a relatively broad set of measures to promote the reconciliation of family and work balance. The two Spanish companies differ significantly, however, concerning types of measures. The reconciliation policies of the Department of Education are rather developed. The arrangements are however not restricted to this organisation, but are part of a legal reform concerning all public service organisations in the province of Catalan. The private company, MRW, is recognised in Spain for the adoption of a family friendly policy promoting reconciliation of family and work.

#### **The Department of Education**

The personnel policy of the Department of Education to promote reconciliation, is not instituted on the work place level, but is ruled by Law 6/2002 concerning reconciliation measures between personal, family and work life applying for all Catalan public service organisations. The measures set down in this law, however, make it one of the most advanced in Spain.

**Flexible work:** The regular working time at the Department of Education is organised according to a continuous work table, that is working hours from 8 am to 15 pm, plus one afternoon a week (2 and a half hours). Working hours are flexible, in the sense that there is half an hour leeway in deciding when to start and when to end the working day.

**Reduced working hours:** Employees with children are entitled to a 1/3 reduction in the working day with 100 % paid salary until the child reaches the age of one (for mothers and fathers). After that there is a possibility of a 1/3 reduction in the working day until the child reaches the age of 6 with 80 % of paid salary.

Furthermore, the Administration passed a new reconciliation law on June 22nd 2006 in order to address the reconciliation problems of its employees. This law has introduced certain changes, i.e. it has extended the one third reductions in the working day to a whole year regardless of whether the child is one year old or older. It has also extended the age of the child to 12 years in the case of a reduction in the working day.

The employees are granted up to nine days to attend to personal matters.

**Paternity leave:** The new reconciliation law from 2006 also grants fathers 4 weeks of paid paternity leave, which cannot be transferred to the mother. This is undoubtedly the most innovative measure from the point of view of fostering caring masculinities.

### **MRW**

MRW is described as widely recognised in Spain for the introduction of a family friendly personnel policy and a social benefits program.

**Children attendance subsidies:** 100 € a month subsidy for the nursery fees of employees' children below the age of three; a 3,000 € bonus for employees who adopt a child; and 30 minutes extra reduction of daily working hours as breastfeeding leave. It should be noted that breastfeeding leave in Spain is for men as well as for women. The leave is not attached to "the breast", but to the act of feeding the baby (i.e. bottle). Many men do not know that they are entitled to this kind of leave, and it is usually women who make use of it.

**Flexible work:** Employees can opt for a continuous work timetable and have two options: 8:00 am – 16:00 pm or 9:00 am – 17:00 pm. 90 % of the workforce is on a continuous timetable.

The Social benefit program of MRW also includes facilities for hiring people with disabilities and 1 % of company profits go to social programmes. Besides this, the company takes part in initiatives for equality of opportunity between men and women.

**Figure 4.1: Measures to promote reconciliation and caring masculinities, across companies and countries.**

<b>Germany</b>		<b>Iceland</b>		<b>Norway</b>		<b>Slovenia</b>		<b>Spain</b>	
<i>UBA</i>	<i>EnerCom</i>	<i>The Institution</i>	<i>The Business</i>	<i>NRK</i>	<i>Microsoft Norway</i>	<i>Radio Slovenia</i>	<i>POP-TV</i>	<i>Department of Education</i>	<i>MRW</i>
Flexitime	Flexitime	Gender equality programs repeat national legislation and are not formulated as action plans		Flexitime	Flexitime	Flexitime	The nationally regulated paternity leave regulations are accepted, but reconciliation is not an issue.	Flexitime	Flexible work
Home office/telework	Home office			Accommodated shifts	Home office	Home office	Communication technology	Days off work for personal reasons	Children attendance subsidies
				Internal mobility	Parental leave (the daddy-package)			Reduced working hours, full wage comp. (child max 1 year)	Extra breast feeding time
				Home office	(Vacation club (discontinued))				
				Parental leave	Compassionate leave				
				Compassionate leave				Optional reduced working hours, 80 % salary (child max 6 years)	
				Kindergartens				Paternity leave (from 2006, 4 weeks reserved to the father)	

## **4.2. Working life: perceptions and experiences**

The organisational culture, the organisation of working time, job satisfaction and the wage systems of companies are very important features for understanding the conditions that either foster or restrain reconciliation of work and family/private life. However, such conditions vary to a large degree across companies, with different impacts on the opportunities to balance work and family life, and in particular to promote men's caring and participation in family life.

### **4.2.1. Organisational culture**

#### **Germany**

The interviews with managers in the two companies UBA and EnerCom revealed ambiguous organisational cultures. On the one hand, positive attitudes were expressed towards reconciling the work and family balance of the employees. On the other hand, the organisational culture was distinctively described as marked by strong norms of work dedication and *over-performance*.

Expectations of accessibility emerge as particularly problematic at EnerCom. Employment insecurity intertwines with expectations of high job performance and demands of *always accessibility*. In sum this produces pressure and stress, which again negatively affects how the employees perceive their opportunities to balance family life and work.

Especially at the management level, accessibility, over-performance and a high degree of work dedication is quite explicitly connected to career prospects. In this way, the promotion system functions as an obstacle to reconciliation of work and family, and in particular it discourages men's part-taking in family life and caring activities.

An organisational culture of always accessibility is pinpointed by managers sending e-mails on Sundays:

*I told him: 'Please send them only on Mondays. Mondays are normal work days, Sundays are not.' It's imposing high pressure on the colleagues. The example a chair person gives is definitely important. (EnerCom informant)*

Gender equality issues and formal regulations to facilitate the family and work balance appear to be more present at UBA. Nevertheless, also UBA are clearly featured by an over-performance culture. Also here e-mails are mentioned as a way managers underpin their expectations of employees' accessibility and work dedication.

*It is sometimes hard to see leaders here – for the others. Because this workaholic tendency does not make leadership look attractive in UBA. And some of them expect the others to work the same way, as other leaders as employees. For example, I know a leader sending work orders on Sunday nights, which have to be complied with on Monday mornings. He just does not notice that he applies his standard on others. And he is no exception. That appears even more often. (UBA informant)*

#### **Iceland**

The organisational cultures of the Business and the Institution are described as quite different. The Business, on the one hand, is marked with high expectations of job performance and a heavy workload. According to the informants, high expectations put on

the employees' job performance, were seen as due to down-sizing and shifts in the ownership structure. Especially, the informants that had been with the Business for the longest time, certainly felt that the pressure had been growing throughout the past few years. Simultaneously, feelings of job insecurity were growing among the employees. One effect of this was that the Business had experienced a rather high "turnover" among the staff. This was partly seen as a consequence of a tough work load and pressure. In addition openings for promotions were limited, top management in the Business was typically recruited from outside of the company.

However, matters of reconciliation of work and family/private life were not perceived as a company responsibility:

*I don't know what the Business should be doing. People just need to prioritise and safeguard this and if they do it them selves the businesses can't get any further with it. It's in everybody's nature to go as far as they can and it's in the nature of managers to try to squeeze everything out of their staff they possibly can. It's up to the employees, and perhaps the unions, to make sure those things don't go out of bounds. (Business informant)*

The organisational culture at the Institution appears as far more relaxed. Problems related to over-performance and long hours work is not central in the presentation of the organisational culture. Rather the informants stated their pleasure in working for the Institution, and took pride in its work and were ambitious on its behalf.

### **Norway**

The two Norwegian companies differ clearly according to organisational culture. One pattern of difference follows the individualism – collectivism dimension. This divide is largely parallel to the private – public divide. The private company Microsoft Norway can be described as mainly individualistic and the publicly owned company NRK as collectivistic.

NRK measures for reconciliation of work and family/private life are adopted through negotiations between the unions and the management.

*I don't think the management of NRK thinks about these things. NRK only thinks about broadcasts. But the unions care. The management only cares about it when they're asked to. (NRK informant)*

In Microsoft Norway the internal welfare and personnel policy appear more clearly to be initiated from above, and not really as the answer to discontent among the employees.

*I don't see it as a problem that we don't have trade union representatives. (...) It's because so few people are organised, you know. And that again is because the people who work here are very self-reliant. Most of us don't believe in joint action to achieve what we want. Instead, you should manage on your own. The company has an individual reward system. I think that's fine. I think the other employees think its fine too. Otherwise you wouldn't choose to work at Microsoft. (Microsoft Norway informant)*

Similarly, however, in both companies rather tough expectations of accessibility, characterise the organisational culture. In NRK expectations of accessibility were however clearly different depending on positional level. For managers accessibility applies all the

time. Executives should be available on the telephone at any time of the day. For regular employees who work shifts accessibility primarily applies in exceptional cases. In Microsoft Norway, expectations of accessibility apply to all employees and are connected with the company's flexible organisation of working time. The employees are expected to be available to executives and colleagues on mobile phones and e-mail no matter where and when they work. This applies not only to office hours, but also to evenings, weekends and vacations.

There is a clear difference in the informants' perception of what they can expect from their company. A strong faith in collective demands and collective solutions, are explicitly expressed at NRK. The informants at Microsoft Norway express a strong sense of individualism and feel that they cannot expect the company to adapt to their needs. They have few ideas about what the company could do to promote the balance between work and private life. Most of the informants feel that Microsoft Norway already is a family friendly place to work.

However, the Human Resources manager at Microsoft Norway expresses openness towards spending money on measures to promote reconciliation of family and work. The argument is that such measures will benefit the company in a number of ways. The idea is that a reputation for being a family friendly company is important for recruiting the best candidates, but also that taking care of the employees will have the effect of retaining them in the company – over a 15-year period.

The personnel manager at NRK, on the other hand, expresses a certain degree of scepticism towards developing new measures. This scepticism is due to experiences with strong union influence at NRK and a perception that if she gives them a little, they will demand more.

## **Slovenia**

The two organisations in the Slovene work place study differ even more sharply according to the public - private dimension. Especially, POP-TV appears to emphasise the premises of a profit optimizing, capitalist company.

*Either you work for a financially successful firm, where the capital is a very strong drive and you'll try to pursue a career there or you are employed in an economically less intensive industry, having more free time but less economic strength. (POP-TV informant)*

This market oriented rhetoric of POP-TV appears to work contrary to reconciliation of work and family/private life. The idea of making men participate more in family life and caring activities does not appear to be present in the company discourse. The mantra of "making profit" is presumably what features the entire mentality of the organisational culture and management politics. And as a part of this profit oriented discourse, public sector organisations are placed as the direct opposite. Public sector companies are seen as the remnants of the former regime, where payments are lower and where people work only to meet the minimum standards. The informants at POP-TV describe the choice between working in a private or a public company as a matter of personal decision and preference.

Neither the situation in Radio Slovenia emerges as particularly aware of how to adjust to employees needs to reconcile work and family. The informants at Radio Slovenia also describe a work situation of pressure and demands for dedication, but in this organisation it is the dedication for journalism that features the organisational culture. Working life, family-life and free time is described as absorbing into each other. Radio programmes are



aired 24 hours a day and news events happen at different times, thus the organisational culture is featured by a constant availability for making adoptions. Fixed planning of activities is seen as impossible.

*Journalism is a job different from other jobs that finish at two, three, four o'clock. This really is a way of life. I think that the family needs to establish such relationships that people you live with accept it. That it doesn't cause conflicts.*  
(Radio Slovenia informant)

## **Spain**

The two Spanish companies also vary according to the public – private sector divide.

A prominent issue at the Department of Education concerns procedures for recruitment to top positions. In the Department, top positions are politically appointed. Generally, this appears to affect the organisational culture negatively. Partly, the management becomes quite dependent upon the personality and the way of doing things of the present politically appointed manager in charge.

*I reached my limit 15 years ago and I can't move on from where I am now. Because I haven't got the educational qualifications I can't go up any further. I'm going to stay here for the rest of my life regardless of whether I do things well or badly. This is a way of demotivating you.* (Department of Education informant)

*I have zero promotion prospects. I'm always going to be on a renewable contract. The only way of being promoted is to study and take entrance examinations but I don't intend to do that. I could begin to study something but not for entrance examinations.* (Department of Education informant)

This negative comprehension of the promotion system, or lack of it, is however not the prevailing view among the management of the Department of Education. According to them management is democratic, however admittedly hierarchical.

Anyhow, a characteristic trait of the Department of Education is its' belonging to the Public Administration. On the positive side, civil servants have consolidated their rights and work stability more than other workers have. One example of this is the system of reconciliation measures that civil servants and Public Administration personnel are entitled to.

MRW, on the other hand, is a family firm where the owner and president of the company have a very high profile. The company is described as featured by a paternalist leadership, where the management team works like a family. The managers are company employees who have climbed up the ladder as the company grew and have reached their present positions. This internal promotion policy is one way of maintaining the paternalism and the family spirit of the organisation. Most of the informants at MRW considered the chances for promotion to be good. The company has been growing and opening up new divisions which meant greater prospects for employees. The company policy is to give priority to in-house promotions. The hiring and promotion policy of MRW is to fill vacant and new positions with workers from inside the company. So there are quite a few cases of employees who started out at the bottom and have gone up slowly as the company has grown.

*For the time being I think they are good. I have gone up little by little so it's true that there is in-house promotion and that you can slowly climb up the company*

*ladder based on your experience and other characteristics. I'm pleased, very satisfied in this respect. (MRW informant)*

*I started off as a telephone operator and was gradually promoted to my current position [The interviewee holds an important post in the company hierarchy]... and I can go further. (MRW informant)*

*I think they are good despite my age. I am 53. The company is growing so I think that I too have a chance to be promoted. (MRW informant)*

The organisational culture of MRW can be characterised by an intertwinement of the aims of profit and economic success and an emphasis on employees' job satisfaction and the underpinning of companies' social responsibility. These factors define the culture of the organisation and were manifest in the organisation discourse, both of managers and workers. The MRW's efforts for reconciliation of work and family/private life, together with the emphasis put on the general social responsibility of the company, appear as a part of the "branding" of the company.

#### **4.2.2. Organisation of working time**

Flexible working time is widely dispersed in the companies included in the work place study. Typically, flexible working hours are presented as an arrangement to reconcile family and work. Even though, such arrangements may also serve other considerations. Simultaneously there appears to exist an informal norm of "more-time", that is demands of employees' accessibility and working long hours that apply for most companies, especially on the management level.

The two German companies emerge as rather similar in connection to the formal organisation of working time. In EnerCom the standard weekly working hours are 35, 5, in UBA it is 39 hours for normal employees and 40 hours a week for civil servants. Yet, in both organisations norms of accessibility and working long hours were clearly expected, and more so in EnerCom compared to UBA. Especially on the management level, long hours were closely tied to career prospects. Managers have "functional" hours, which mean that they do not have fixed working hours, but work as much as is needed.

According to the Icelandic report it is not possible to estimate the average working hours per week at the Institution. There exists no institutionalised policy at the Institution related flexible working time. The arrangements concerning flexitime and part-time vary between the divisions.

The average work week at the Business is 42 hours and about 50 hours a week for managers. Also in the Business, full-time is the standard working time arrangement. The managers interviewed all have full-time work, and put in significantly longer hours. Also the other informants work full-time and to a varying degree overtime.

Generally flexible working hours are put forth as an alternative to the more rigid scheduled working hours. In the Norwegian work place study however, flexible working hours are compared to shift work, which is a widespread work scheme at NRK.

Both these ways of organising work time can be said to strengthen men's (and women's) possibilities of balancing work and family life. Shift work at NRK creates clearer boundaries between work and private life because working hours are more limited and more predictable than in the case of flexible working hours. On the other hand, shift work presents some obstacles to accommodating the needs of the family, for instance it may be

difficult for the employee to be flexible and pick up children in kindergarten. When NRK also has both night and weekend shifts, which many people feel interfere with the time spent with children and family, it demonstrates that shift work may be an obstacle to a good balance between work and private life. Moreover, the informants at NRK report that the shifts are not always predictable. Even though the day shift is supposed to end at 17.15, it may take much longer because a difficult news story has come up. (See figure 4.2).

On the other hand Microsoft Norway has flexible working hours, which in the most extreme form means that an employee can work anytime and anywhere. The informants at Microsoft Norway perceive the company as family friendly in itself solely based on the flexible arrangements regarding working hours and work place.

This flexible organisation of working hours can also be found at NRK. All the informants in executive positions had this kind of arrangement.

Flexible working hours and home office makes it possible to divide the working day into two sessions. The first session at work, and the “second shift” after the children have gone to bed.

According to the Slovene report the general work week at POP-TV is 40 hours, both for employees and management. In POP-TV the employees are not working flexible hours. In the interviews, they claim however, that flexible working hours can be made on the basis of informal agreements with the superiors. Moreover, this opportunity to work flexible hours is described by the informants at POP-TV as a difference between private and public companies. Flexibility appears however partly as a synonym to “more-time”.

In Radio Slovenia the employees either work shifts or they have regular working hours: 40 hours per week in general, and 45-hour working week for management. Working at Radio Slovenia is done in two forms: shift work and flexible working hours. It is mainly employees in radio production who works shifts.

*I chose this work knowing and accepting that there are five shifts, working Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. You've got to adapt your life to that properly. My family is used to it. ... Agreeing on things will solve everything. We've got no problems, as we've grown used to this kind of communication. Perhaps phones tend to ring more because of that. But in principle we try to arrange things a day in advance so that things flow smoothly. (Radio Slovenia informant).*

The majority of journalists do not work shifts, and their working day is not strictly defined. This usually means that they have to attend daily or weekly editorial meetings, and they organise the rest of their working time according to the demands of the programme, events they're covering, the availability of people they need to interview or talk to.

**Figure 4.2: Advantages and disadvantages of shift work contra flexible work.**

	<b>Shift work</b>	<b>Flexible working hours and home office</b>
Advantages	Clear boundaries between work and family life	Flexibility Easy to adapt to the family's needs
Disadvantages	Little flexibility Difficult to adapt to the family's needs	Unclear boundaries between work and family life

(Source: Norwegian national report)

In the two Spanish companies the working hours are flexible, however within quite strict limits. At MRW the working hours per week are 38 and the employees can choose between a timetable 8.00 to 16.00 or 9.00 to 17.00. Especially among the managers in MRW it is common to work longer hours.

*At times work is regarded as an obligation, that isn't so in my case. That's why I usually come in a little bit earlier and stay on ten minutes longer. (MRW informant)*

There was however those who mentioned that also managers should have the opportunity to work flexitime.

There was no consensus among informants about whether taking a shorter work day for personal or family reasons could damage their chances for promotion. According to the managers, however, such adjustments for reconciling work and family life would not change matters, nor be an obstacle to promotion. It seemed more like this would be well regarded, because it reveals positive traits.

The official working week at the Department of Education is 37.5 hours. That is 8.00 to 15.00, and 2 and 1/2 hours extra one afternoon a week. In the Department of Education, the informants, except for the managers, were on continuous work time-tables. Managers do not have the same possibility to flexible working hours as the rest of the employees. The informants did not think that taking a shorter working day in order to devote more time to family affairs was detrimental to promotion prospects.

In the Department of Education, reduced working time was not considered to affect possibilities for promotions:

*The fact that you have asked to work shorter hours or for some kind of leave is not taken into account in promotion. It isn't considered a drawback. (Department of Education informant)*

This may of course to some degree be due to promotion opportunities generally being restricted at the Department of Education.

In other words, the companies vary to some extent concerning the organisation of working time. Only with the exception of shift work being the working time model for parts of the employees in NRK and Radio Slovenia, different types of flexi-work models applies for the companies included in the work place study. The flexibility offered, is however severely restricted through the demands put upon employees, and especially managers, of accessibility, over-performance and long hours.

### **4.2.3. Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction may be closely connected to organisational culture and the organisation of working hours. The tendency is however that in spite of tough demands of over-performance and always accessibility, the informants' job satisfaction is generally described in positive terms. Thus, there is clearly a two-fold picture that is revealed, where pressure and expectations of work dedication restricts the opportunities for reconciliation of work and family/private life.

The German work place study shows that the informants at both EnerCom and UBA are clearly aware of the negative effects of the work load and pressure. Expectations of over-performance, understood as a combination of working long hours and over-identification

with work, creates an organisational culture that impedes the perception of the possibilities to change the work environment and the organisational culture.

A high degree of job satisfaction may however be closely interconnected with work dedication.

*What makes my professional life? It is a lot of communication, social networks. When I am travelling this region for the UBA, most is transferred via personal contact. I really like what I am doing, having contacts, talks, networking in a permanently changing way. Beyond that it is a great pleasure to successfully finish projects. If this is not possible in five days but six, so what? I do not suffer from this. Others would suffer terribly staying at the office nearly every Sunday, I do not. (UBA informant)*

Also in the Icelandic report, job satisfaction is to some degree interrelated to demanding organisational cultures, valuing long hours and over-performance. This applies in particular to the Business, where informants describe a great deal of content in relation to their co-workers, and with regard to the general morale within the company. On the whole, there is a flat management and what is called an “open door policy” within the company, meaning that everybody has access to everybody else. This is how a family feeling is maintained within the Business. Mainly the informants report that people are happy to work for the company and identify with it. And jobs in the Business are seen as being high in demands. In the minds of the general Icelander, the Business has a positive image, and its products relate to positive events in most people’s lives.

Also the Institution is described as being highly regarded in Iceland. This positivity is of course encouraging for the employees and creates a certain team spirit. Everybody seemed to agree about its existence, even though there was some dislike between divisions, and some complaining about the funding of the Institution. Moreover, the public political debate has lately created some uncertainty about the future of the Institution. Such factors were seen as having a negative impact on the internal morale.

The Norwegian work place study directs attention to how the combination of flexible working hours, home office and strong expectations of accessibility, tend to appear as an individual responsibility. Both at NRK and Microsoft Norway the informants describe a high level of job satisfaction and a general feature of dedication to work.

*You know, it’s my childhood dream to work at NRK. Here I get to practice all my hobbies at once. Well, except golf, then. It’s a challenging and exciting job. (NRK informant)*

At Microsoft Norway the need for personal strategies to limit work were even put on the company agenda. At Microsoft Norway the company is regarded as family friendly because of the flexible organisation of work. Yet, they also emphasise how this flexibility, or freedom as they also call it, gives them the responsibility for drawing their own boundaries. The employees must be able to use their flexibility in a way that works both for the company, for themselves as workers and their family.

*Amazing! My job is my hobby. Microsoft is a great place to work. I have flexible working hours and great work tasks. I am very happy in my work! (...) Both me and my wife sometimes work at home in the evening. After the kids have gone to bed, that is. Then we often sit on different sides of the living room table and work. In those cases I define it as work. At the same time, my job is so closely tied to my*

*hobby, which is computers. So it's not always easy to separate between work and free time. For instance, occasionally I sit and work with stuff just for fun. Perhaps refine something that I've made at work. I do it because I want to and not because it'll be used by a specific customer. Then I don't define it as work. But if it turns out good, I'm happy to give it to customers later. So that's in the intermediate stage between work and hobby. (Microsoft Norway informant)*

This informant clearly experiences the flexibility offered, as a positive aspect of the working conditions. Still, or maybe precisely because of this, it is also typically experienced as very difficult to draw the line between work and family time.

In the Slovene report, problems related to job satisfaction were particularly prominent in the interviews at Radio Slovenia. Issues related to promotion and an ageing staff were emphasised in particular. Concerning the system of promotion, Radio Slovenia has no regulated system. A significant part of the problem lies in the fact that the levels of promotion are operated "from the outside of the radio", due to the fact that Radio is part of the bigger institution Radio and Television Slovenia.

Another problem relating to job satisfaction is connected to an ageing staff, which has produced a split between younger and older workers. Related to this, Radio Slovenia is described as change resistant. The nature, of the national radio lies in its "conservativeness". In spite of these problems, the informants at Radio Slovenia describe their work with quite devotion and loyalty to Radio Slovenia. Generally, there is expressed no criticism of the management.

The informants at POP-TV describe their professional lives as of exceptional importance. The relationship between work and family is to some degree described as a competition, where work life becomes prior to family. This does not mean that family is not highly regarded.

Generally, the informants at POP-TV express a high degree of job satisfaction. Otherwise, as they put it, they would have already changed it. Job satisfaction is related to the autonomy and creativity of the work. Still, they also express awareness of job-related demands and stress. However, due to the strong feature of a market and profit based rhetoric at POP-TV, they see this as an integral part of the job they do.

The Spanish report describes informants' job satisfaction in terms of a relaxed work environment in both organisations. In the Department of Education the informants express satisfaction with the work tasks and the general work environment. They did not criticise the repetitions and routine, characterising their work tasks. One aspect of the "relaxed" atmosphere can be understood as the momentum of the Public Administration as such. The work place atmosphere is described as friendly both on a professional and a personal level. The job security that the Department of Education provides encourages friendship ties. This organisation, together with the Public Administration in general, has more consolidated labour rights and greater job stability and security. These conditions influence the high degree of satisfaction.

*There is a very good atmosphere. There's no obligation to have results... The Administration doesn't make money, it loses money. There is no pressure. (Department of Education informant)*

*There's a good atmosphere. Many of us have been working together for quite a few years. People have grown up here and they have got promoted in their work and*

*we know each other very well, not all of us but some of us. There's a good feeling.*  
(Department of Education informant)

Dissatisfaction was only presented as an issue in relation to the situation of the managers, regardless of whether they had been politically appointed or not. Not so much due to the job or the work atmosphere but because they dedicate a lot of time to their work. This is an important issue in this organisation because employees with management responsibilities don't have the option like the rest of employees to ask for a continuous work timetable or to take advantage of reconciliation measures.

At MRW, job satisfaction is also described as generally high. Yet, work is described as demanding and time consuming. A particular problem relates to the exception of managers from arrangements of reconciliation of work and family/private life.

*You can't always do what you think you should do. But, on the whole I like my job even though it takes up a lot of my time. (...). Conciliation, or the chance of choosing our work timetable should also apply to managers and not just to administrative staff.* (MRW informant)

This is typical for managerial work. It appears to be connected to comprehensions of forms of hegemonic masculinity. Work satisfaction is connected to absolute devotion to work, measured according to the time spent in the company. Not all the informants at MRW fit into this picture, however. Most typically they were satisfied with the continuous timetable, because it helped to reconcile work and family/private life.

*I think it's a good idea. Because looking at how things stand today... The job has its own special characteristics but one very positive thing is that it allows me to see my kids. If I didn't have this timetable I couldn't give as much as I do. It is one of the positive things. I think the timetable is a very important matter.* (MRW informant)

Generally, the informants in the work place study describe their job satisfaction as high. To some degree however, job satisfaction appears to be closely tied to working life's demands of accessibility and dedication. Or as it is stated in the Spanish national report: "*More time, more satisfaction*". Thus, the functioning of work organisations and a high level of job satisfaction, may work contrary to reconciliation of work and family/private life, and in particular to the fostering of caring masculinities.

#### **4.2.4. Wages**

Wages were only mentioned as a central topic in two of the national reports: Norway and Slovenia. The influence of the company's wage systems on the scope of action and choice is presented as important in both at Microsoft Norway and NRK. The wage system at Microsoft Norway is based on a combination of a fixed salary and a bonus depending on the individual's revenue for the company. This system is based on individual negotiations, and there is little openness about salaries in the company. The share of the wages that is based on results varies between different job categories. For those who work in pure sales jobs, revenues are particularly important for their salary. Some informants emphasise that the wage system can be an obstacle to men who want to prioritise family life. For some employees, revenue demands may be so heavy that flexibility does not improve the balance between work and family life.

NRK applies a dual wage system. Journalists have an individual wage system, while other employees follow a wage system with a wage ladder. Informants at NRK regard the wage level in the company as low compared to competing companies.

*But the wage level is too low for all groups in the organisation. You can't compete with similar companies in the market in terms of wages. The result is that NRK loses some good job candidates. I could work another place and earn much more than I do here. But I'm happy at NRK, and therefore I want to stay on. You get to meet a lot of interesting people here. And as a man it would be more difficult to combine another job with family. As I see it, NRK is almost too kind-hearted in its personnel policy. (NRK informant)*

To compensate for "low wages", paid overtime is frequently used as a compensation for what is perceived as low fixed salary. Many of the employees have become economically dependent on overtime pay.

*Overtime pay has been an important part of many NRK employees' wages. Over a period of time many have become economically dependent on a certain amount of overtime pay. (...) We have tried to reduce the use of overtime among employees, but it has proved difficult. (NRK informant)*

In the Slovene report we find a similar divide between the public and the private sector company connected to wages. The salaries in POP-TV are relatively high, and are seen as a compensation for a demanding and stressful work situation. The salary is part of the mutual relationship between the employees and the company; the answers to the question of what the company expects from its employees can be summarized by the thought of a management representative who says: "*certain devotion, professionalism and in return good payment*". Stress and pressure at work are understood as something that is a matter of personal preference, a matter of each individual's choice of work.

The informants at Radio Slovenia express an overall satisfaction with the work they do. Nevertheless, those in non-management positions claim that the payment is not satisfying. In their opinion, they are not paid adequately with regard to their investment in their work. This discontent with wages was mixed with an ideology saying that "money surely isn't everything". This kind of attitude is essentially different in POP-TV, where high wages is perceived as a prime motive for employment. Putting journalism as a satisfying way of life first seems to be the orientation that prevails at Radio Slovenia, with financial gains coming second.

However, in different ways, the wage systems have an impact on structures of over-performance and long hours in both of the Norwegian companies and in POP-TV.

### **4.3. Family/Private life: ideals and experiences**

#### **4.3.1. Family life and fathering**

Most informants express the importance and value of family life and emphasise that their families are given high priority. Both in the Norwegian and Spanish workplace studies as well as in the Icelandic and partly in the Slovene one, ideals and norms pertaining to men's roles in their families and as fathers indicate a weakening of the traditional male breadwinner model, where men are ascribed the role as financial providers. Values such as presence, care, love, dedication, spending time with their children and participating in



their lives, and sharing domestic responsibilities with their partners, were all mentioned as important.

Two informants in the Spanish public organisation said this about what they believed their families expected from them:

*Above all being beside them, warmth and company.* (Department of Education informant)

*To be with them. We don't have any ambition of becoming rich or anything like that. What they expect is what we have... They expect me to be at home, look after the children, to look after her.* (Department of Education informant)

When the Norwegian informants were asked what advice they would give to fathers-to-be, presence, seemed to be very important to many:

*Become better at not working late. Especially the first year. As a father you feel so unnecessary the first year. At that time daddy falls short. But he should still put in that time and be there.* (Microsoft Norway informant)

*You should work less overtime and perhaps even work part-time if it's possible. It could be smart to work out a flexible working arrangement with your boss.* (NRK informant)

*When the kids start in school I'd like to be there more for them, either by taking a leave, by working more from home or by changing to a less demanding job.* (Microsoft Norway informant)

This point to the conclusion that men want to play a more significant role in their family lives, and especially take an active part in their children's upbringing and everyday activities.

While informants at the Slovene public company, Radio Slovenia, stressed that “*family comes first*”, the informants at the private company, POP-TV, said that in the context of balancing work and family life, the last is second to the first. Family is also valued highly, but as mentioned earlier, the capitalist profit-oriented ideology is strong in POP-TV, and professional life is given tremendous importance. Among these informants, securing your family economically is a vital element of what constitutes care, and thus, the male breadwinner model is still going strong. Also, the managers in the Spanish public company, the Department of Education, place work above family life. They do not have access to reconciliation measures such as continuous working days, and take for granted they have to “set an example” for the organisation and give their professional lives first priority. It is not evident however, that this is what they actually prefer:

*I would like to have more free time to be with my children. In the near future I will force myself to find more free time to be with the family. I can't even think about doing the minimum work timetable of 37 and a half hours right now because it wouldn't be an example for the organisation. I can only afford to leave early on Friday afternoons to pick the kids up from school. My work obligations are above my family ones.* (Department of Education informant)

Despite this, it is a clear finding from the Spanish national report that the informants do not feel their working obligations cause any problems in their families. This is in some

cases, due to the fact that their partners take on much of the reproductive work while in other cases it has more to do with reconciliation measures provided by the company, such as continuous timetables and other flexitime arrangements. With an eye to this, the Spanish authors stress that the reorganising of working time (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.1) are definitely fostering more caring masculinities.

The Spanish informants' perception however, is not representative for the other case-countries, perhaps with the exception of the informants at the Slovene private company, POP-TV. The interviewees here feel that the decision to work for a company such as POP-TV where prioritizing both family life and working life is nearly impossible, is a deliberate one, which each individual is responsible for. According to these informants, you have to settle for either, high incomes and loads of work (in private companies), or less work but also lower incomes (in public companies), as you can not have both.

Informants in other companies, express varying degrees of frustration with their professional lives eating away into their private lives. Many of the Norwegian respondents feel that the high degree of accessibility via mobile phones and e-mail constitutes a stress factor both for their families and themselves, and flexibility often means long working hours and time-pressure (Norwegian national report). Most of the Icelandic informants agreed that work makes up to big a part of their lives, and more time available for family life is high on their list of wants. It is emphasised by the author though, that many feel individual responsibility for this situation, as they consider having chosen it themselves (their profession/work) (Icelandic national report). In the Slovene public company, Radio Slovenia, the older informants express certain regrets for not having spent more time with their families as compared with the time spent on their careers:

*With years going by you learn that, proportionally, the investment of time in professional work gives back less than the investment of time in family, private life. Although it is, in term of hours, smaller, it definitely gives back more. This disproportion is probably one of life's rules. While our jobs can be the end of us, the two hours you devote to the family pay back enormously. (Radio Slovenia informant)*

The German national report is worried that the strong culture of (over-)performance evident in the German companies, especially at management levels, poses serious obstacles to the employees' possibilities to be carers, as well as negative health effects. Firstly, over-work presumes neglect of one's own health, and thus, makes conditions harsh for self-care. Secondly, caring is potentially seen as performing, as "just another task to handle", and fulfilling expectations and being dutiful take centre stage, irrespective of one's own needs. According to the authors, this is present in the following reply from one of the informants in the German public company, UBA, when asked what his family expects from him:

*Of course more than I can give at the moment. And there is, potentially, a conflict in this situation. At the moment my wife has to bear two-thirds of the household commitments. And she is there when the kids are sick. But our aim is to get a balanced situation, so I am confident that I can meet the expectations better. And I want that, too. (UBA informant)*

The German national report describes a situation of double demands in which the individual tries to meet expectations, both from work and family, which in turn can lead to serious straining and stress.

### **4.3.2. Sharing domestic responsibilities?**

When asked about the distribution of domestic chores and responsibilities, a pattern of similarities across (some) country and company borders are evident, but there are also important differences to be noted. One common trait emphasised both in the Norwegian and Icelandic, as well as in the Slovene cases, is the tendency to negotiate about the division of different tasks, thus adapting the carrying out of domestic responsibilities to the changing schedule of each partner, in a flexible day-to-day manner. This pattern of negotiation counteracts a traditional and purely patriarchal division of labour, where women are solely responsible for the reproductive work (and men for the productive work), but nor is gender made completely irrelevant. As the Slovene report states; “*gender roles*” affecting the division of labour in the household are not irrelevant, but they are also not unbridgeable” (Slovene national report). Of course, the exact meaning of this is not fixed, as the national reports show.

The Norwegian report concludes that “*it appears that most of the couples are relatively equal with regard to the distribution of responsibilities and tasks in the home*”. Differences in tasks performed exist, but these seem to depend mostly on individual preferences. The Icelandic male interviewees feel that the distribution of domestic responsibilities is fairly even, but it is often their female partners who take the initiative, and in a sense “administer” the household responsibilities. In addition, it is more common for the men to perform tasks such as gardening and repairing (the house and car), whereas the women do more “inside” the house. The Slovene informants emphasise equal sharing with their partners, but gendered divisions of tasks performed exist and some defend existing boundaries between “male” and “female” domains. Routine housework is often done by women, while men mostly participate by “helping out”.

Moreover, the Slovene respondents mostly enter the domestic arena through upbringing and caring for the children, a finding also reported in the Spanish case. Playing and assisting with homework are common “male” activities related to children, but when a child gets sick it is most often the mother who stays at home. Among the Spanish informants, there are interesting differences in time spent with their children, corresponding to position: the ones with management responsibilities devote on average 15 hours a week to playing with and looking after their children, while their spouses spend 26 hours. The employees without management responsibilities however, devote on average 29 hours a week, compared to their partners’ average of 24 hours. The only (Spanish) respondents who devote more time to household chores are the ones who work fewer hours than their partners. In the instances where they work the same amount of hours as their spouses, even with adapted schedules like continuous timetables or afternoons off, the women spend more time doing domestic tasks.

### **4.3.3. Experiences with paternity and parental leaves**

In chapter 2, we saw that in all five countries, options now exist for fathers to take some form of leave following the birth of a child. According to Holter (2005), a “daddy track” allowing for care as well as career, is a promising one for the fostering of caring masculinities.

Out of the five countries, it seems that the Norwegian informants are the ones who most often have taken paternity leaves. 9 out of 10 male informants have done so, while the last one did not have the opportunity as his children were born prior to the introduction of the daddy quota in 1993. Moreover, all nine men took leaves that extended the daddy quota, on average two to three months. Only 17 % of the Norwegian fathers entitled to parental

leave take longer leaves than the daddy quota. Therefore, the men in this study can be regarded as innovators (Norwegian national report).

Those of the Icelandic (male) respondents who have had children after the parental leave reform in 2000, have used (some of) their right to paternity leave. Out of 4 male respondents with children in the Slovene private company POP-TV, 2 had taken paternity leaves as they had children after the introduction of the paternity leave in 2003. In the public company, Radio Slovenia, 2 out of the 3 representatives of the employees had taken paternity leaves, as their children also were born after the leave became an option, and 1 had taken a regular leave in the period he could have taken paternity leave. All of the management representatives were not entitled to paternity leave at the time of their children's births, but one had nonetheless stayed home for more than half a month at the births of his two children. In the German private company, EnerCom, paternity leave was nearly unknown, while in the public organisation, UBA, the authors had talks with several men who had used the option of paternity leave. In the Spanish case, no information is provided on the use of paternity leaves among the informants, but most of them wished for the paternity leave of 2 days to be lengthened<sup>23</sup> (when the Equality Law comes into effect in January 2007, the paternity leave will be extended to 10 days).

Most of the Norwegian respondents felt that the time during their leaves was very rewarding and many of them also felt that the child grew more closely connected to them in this period. For one of the informants, this was particularly evident in comparison with earlier experiences:

*After I had long parental leave with our youngest daughter I realized what I had missed when I didn't get to stay home with the oldest. (...) I never had a contact point with my oldest daughter. (...) It is important that fathers take long leave so that they see for themselves that they can take care of the children. And then the mother becomes confident that the father can handle it. I had a lot of conflicts about that with my ex-wife. I was not allowed to take responsibility for our daughter. (...) The situation is different now. When I had parental leave with my youngest daughter, my wife was back in a full job. That's why she's confident now that I can take care of our daughter. (NRK informant)*

The respondents in the public company, Radio Slovenia, also stressed the importance of the father being present at birth and afterwards, both for establishing an early connection with the child and for supporting the mother. They felt the time before and at birth as something special they wanted to be part of. A management informant at the private company, POP-TV, expressed similar views:

*Emotionally, it's (paternal leave) absolutely welcome and I support it and I've got good experience with it ... It's great if you are with your partner and the child to offer this support at least in the first two weeks. (POP-TV informant)*

However, not all the Norwegian respondents felt comfortable with taking a long leave, and as a consequence they would prefer a shorter leave on a later occasion. This is due to different reasons; for one informant, his wife wants her leave to be as long as possible and he did not like to have a long leave. Others explained they were worried that a long leave put too much stress on their co-workers, and would therefore take a shorter leave if more children were to arrive. Some felt it hard to disconnect mentally from work, but for most this was only present during a transitional phase. Keeping in touch with work and

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<sup>23</sup> According to the Spanish authors, almost all men in Spain make use of their right to the paternity leave.

colleagues to some extent via phones and e-mail, was widespread, especially with the informants at Microsoft Norway. The interviewees at the public company NRK, believed it more important to shut out work completely.

Worrying about one's absence causing a burden on colleagues was also mentioned by respondents at Radio Slovenia. One informant had experienced little acceptance with a former employer, but the informants did not agree on whether paternity leave is stigmatised or not. Some believed it to be more accepted among younger people, and the importance of publicly known men acting as role models were emphasised. In private POP-TV, the first 15 (paid) days of paternity leave were largely taken for granted by the respondents, but the possibility of taking another 75 days of unpaid leave, was not.

The managers in both Icelandic companies, stressed that taking paternity leave was considered perfectly normal, and would not be hindered by the company in any way. If anyone was to receive negative feedback for taking paternity leave, it would most likely come from older men, as paternity leave is largely taken for granted by the young.

Based on the interviews, the Norwegian authors have made an overview of the different factors working to incite as well as to hinder men in taking (longer) paternity/parental leaves, and it gives valuable insight beyond the Norwegian case.

**Figure 4.3: Parental leave – Driving forces and obstacles**

<b>Driving forces</b>	<b>Obstacles</b>
Economic measures	Lack of cultural acceptance
Role models	Job insecurity
Targeted initiatives	Lack of replacements
Job security	Loving your job

*(Source: Norwegian national report)*

Economic measures are an important factor for men to take (longer) leaves. Both the measures at national level, but also at company level (for example economic compensation for loss of income, provided by the Norwegian companies), may act as driving forces in this respect.

Male executives taking leaves and thereby acting as role models can have a positive effect, thus creating increased cultural acceptance in the company for men taking paternity/parental leave. Targeted initiatives, like the daddy package offered by Norwegian company Microsoft, have a similar function.

Feeling sure that taking a leave does not hurt your career (job security) is probably a prerequisite for many to do so. Related to this is the worry that one's absence causes an extra burden on co-workers. This can be counteracted by putting in replacements during the leave period.

Loving your job in terms of perceiving it as a way of life or a hobby can act as an obstacle to taking paternity/parental leave, making it harder to stay away from work for longer periods of time. Strong identification with one's profession or work is evident in most of the companies studied.

The company culture is also of tremendous importance; the existence of economic and other measures, is probably of little worth if taking paternity/parental leave is stigmatised,

ridiculed and/or looked down on. Creating change in organisational cultures is a slow process, but many of the measures listed here may have positive effects.

#### **4.4. Work-life balance**

As we have seen, several informants feel that work obligations are eating away into their family lives, and more free-time available is a wish shared by many. There are different expectations regarding what the employer can and should do in this respect as well as various strategies in use to balance professional obligations with one's private life. Informal arrangements and agreements are widespread mechanisms to better the balance between work and private life in many of the organisations, and for the most part, it seems that a majority of the informants are content with how their needs are being met by their employers. But, while some see the reconciliation issue as something the company should care about, others believe reconciliation first and foremost to be an individual responsibility.

##### **4.4.1. Experiences with and expectations towards the employer**

Both in the Spanish and the Slovene companies, as well as in the private Norwegian company, Microsoft Norway, and in the Icelandic companies, the informants appear to be happy with the reconciliation options they are provided with by their employers. There seems to be a bit more variation among the interviewees in the Norwegian public company, NRK, mainly along the manager/non-manager divide. In the German case, work/life balance and reconciliation are important issues for the informants, but in practice, personal lifestyles, especially in the private company, are mainly structured in accordance with an over-performer culture, reproducing an exclusion of carers.

The importance of reconciliation is emphasised by management representatives in both Spanish companies. This viewpoint is also shared by the employees, who are very pleased with the different reconciliation measures at hand. However, in the Department of Education, it is not always clear to all employees which measures are available to them, or which ones they are entitled to. In the private company, MRW, employees are generally better informed, but there is a need for information targeted specifically at men, providing them with knowledge on their rights. An information campaign should therefore be instituted in both places, for example on the rights and options available for fathers. It is also evident from the interviews, that it is much more common in both companies, for women to make use of the reconciliation measures. The authors believe this to be a result of company cultures and traditions, as neither of the companies creates any (official) obstacles for men who ask for reconciliation measures.

In the Slovene companies, the question of reconciliation is not addressed at the institutional level, but informal agreements and arrangements with co-workers and managers, are often made on the middle or operational levels. The employees do not see this as a problem. Among the informants in the private company POP-TV, it is a very widespread notion that reconciliation is not a company responsibility, as the company's goal number one is making profits which is, (according to the respondents) incompatible with family life:

*You can't say the company is obliged to take care of that [balance between family and work life] ... You've got to accept certain rules in order to be able to work at Pro Plus, the rules are what they are. If you've decided to work at Pro Plus, you simply accept this. (POP-TV informant)*

*People who join our company know it and considering the specifics ... a journalist can't expect to be understood if he/she doesn't prepare a report at 7 in the evening if that's the time when the Parliament happens to be sitting. ... I think everyone is aware of that, even before they send an application letter. (POP-TV informant)*

One respondent (a management representative) thinks the company can contribute more with respect to reconciliation, but the dominating perception among the interviewees, suggests that reconciliation is mainly an individual responsibility.

4 out of 5 Microsoft respondents in Norway are of the opinion that their company cares about the employees' possibilities to balance work and family life, and they view Microsoft Norway as a family friendly company. This is mainly due the high level of flexibility, but also because of the initiative to encourage fathers to take longer paternity leaves, because of executives' behaviour and because of the annual organisational climate survey, which deals with reconciliation. In the public company, NRK, the sentiments are more varied, but the management representatives tend to have a more positive attitude towards the company on this issue. The NRK informants however, have numerous ideas on possible company initiatives to help the employees attain a better work/life balance, and the union is seen as a natural vehicle for promoting claims and suggestions. This is not the case in Microsoft Norway, where individualism is much stronger and unions are non-existent. In fact, they expect little from the company in this area, but as already mentioned, Microsoft Norway is indeed a family oriented company in the eyes of the informants.

In both Icelandic companies, management representatives believe the employee interviews reveal an increasing need for measures to make it easier for the employees to reconcile their working and family lives. An increase in flexible working hours and home offices, were foreseen by some, and it was made quite clear that the growing number of fathers taking paternity leave, is welcomed by the companies. However, it is emphasised by the author that neither company provides any measures to promote caring masculinities and the managers did not see this as a specific issue. From both managers and non managers, few concrete measures to promote caring masculinities were suggested. Overall, the informants seemed to be content with the way their needs were being met by their superiors, but many were not aware of what their rights and options really are. Therefore, a certain uneasiness was expressed regarding what requests are seen as reasonable by the managers. At the same time, it was emphasised many times, especially in the private company, that it is the individual's responsibility to make sure that working life does not dominate one's existence entirely, and invades the private life.

The German case reveals a discrepancy between rhetoric and practice regarding work/life balance. Reconciliation issues are important for the informants, and in particular, one of the management representatives in private EnerCom, makes advanced reflections upon balance, personality and work/non-work issues. Despite this, personal lifestyles more or less follow the lines of the over-performer, especially in the private company. Thus, the actual working structure limits the possibilities for those who have (or would like to have) caring responsibilities, and for men it is rather unusual, and not always approved of by colleagues and superiors, to work part-time. All the same, there are examples of individual options of flexibility and compensation for overtime, but this might depend to a large extent upon the individual manager or culture in the respective department. So, the German authors conclude that; *"it is a striking fact that reconciliation is individualised in the context of an over-performer culture"* (German national report).

#### 4.4.2. Strategies in use to balance professional and private life

To end this section, we give an overview of the different informal strategies and mechanisms in use by informants, to ease reconciliation between working obligations and private life.

Planning and negotiating, are widespread mechanisms for balance, reported in the Norwegian, Slovene and Icelandic reports. It is common for the Norwegian couples to carefully plan their time, often by having a specific “planning day”, where the spouses sit down and divide the responsibility for the different tasks to be done each day. This ensures that both are given time to family as well as to work.

Planning and making agreements are also central balancing mechanisms for the Slovene respondents, but they also emphasise another aspect of “making agreements”; their partners need to be sympathetic to the respondents’ working situation, i.e. that it is unpredictable and often difficult to plan in advance. If not, endless conflicts will arise. In one of the informant’s situation, this implies that it is he who mainly prioritises career:

*Somehow my wife and I decided, I mean, I've got better possibilities here, perhaps I'm more ambitious than her. So it's been agreed I'm the first choice for a career and she' the first choice, perhaps, for the family. This doesn't mean I hold her back, but if we've got the same possibilities, it's her who would opt for the family. And if there really are no other options, then I'll do it, no problem, but she is the first choice as far as the family is concerned. There is 1 in 10 chances that I'd go from work earlier because of the child. (POP-TV informant)*

Compensating for compromises made to fulfil one’s working obligations, is another strategy mentioned by the Norwegian respondents and the Slovene informants in public Radio Slovenia. This means spending “quality time” during weekends and holidays (travelling and so on), with the whole family, or only with the partner.

Making use of informal networks, especially family (grand parents), is reported to make up an important element of balancing strategies among the informants in the Slovene and German companies. Some of the informants at private POP-TV in Slovenia, also argue that time can be bought, for example by means of paid domestic assistance.

Informal arrangements available in the companies are also relevant, as this phenomenon is reported in many of the companies. In the Slovene organisations studied, reconciliation matters are only addressed informally at operational levels, and the Slovene national report reveals a number of measures in use by (different) informants, many of them similar to the more formal mechanisms in (some of the other) companies.

In the public company, Radio Slovenia, the most important measures are; a) working from home, b) flexible working time, and c) the use of modern means of communication. Flexible working time includes three strategies. Firstly, it means an individualisation of the working process, where a majority of the journalists do not have fixed working hours, but to a large extent regulate their working hours themselves (their hours of attendance are recorded though). Secondly, for those who do not have the option of flexible working hours (employees in technical production), mutual agreements with co-workers, for instance swapping shifts, can provide more flexibility in working time. Thirdly, “the method of fine tuning” opens up for flexible working hours arranged via agreements with superior editors. The last mechanism, using modern means of communication, is specific to radio work, as it allows workers to “freeze” time, and not having to listen to programmes when they are aired. Instead, they can spend time with their families, and listen to a show later in the



evening or the next day. In the private company, POP-TV, flexible working hours can be arranged with one's superior, and agreements with colleagues at departmental levels, are also strategies in use to balance professional and family life.<sup>24</sup>

In the Norwegian public company, NRK, shift work is common, but for parents with young children, accommodated shifts are possible, on initiative from the individual employer. It is mostly female workers however, who make use of this informal mechanism.

In the Icelandic companies, informants (can) ask for individual solutions to adjust their working arrangements in case of temporary family responsibilities, although many respondents felt a bit uncertain about what requests are reasonable.

Also, in the German case, there are possibilities for individual, informal options for flexibility, but these may be dependent on individual managers and departmental cultures.

#### ***4.5. Conclusions: Patterns of variation***

The questions addressed in this chapter concerns how challenges of reconciling work and family/private life, and particularly efforts to foster caring masculinities, are handled in specific European work places. The comparative analysis shows relative large variations across companies; across positional level; across sectors and across countries.

First, a main pattern of variation follows across companies. There are quite large differences between the companies according to the conditions for reconciliation of work and family/private life. The two Norwegian companies included in the work place study distinguish, however, by presenting the most systematised focus on strategies to balance work and family life. Both Norwegian companies present relatively extensive packages of measures for promoting the work and family balance of employees. However, these two companies are rather different in how personnel policies of reconciliation are adopted. The private company Microsoft Norway emerges as the only company in the FOCUS project targeting men, by actively encouraging men to share the paternity leave equally with the mother of their child. Certainly, the aim is to reduce the length of women's paternity leaves. In other words, Microsoft Norway attempts to change the behaviour of women, through changing men. However, since men and women at Microsoft Norway not generally are married to each other, an explicit personnel policy to increase the paternity leave period of men clearly is an initiative to foster caring masculinities – and making the men at Microsoft Norway act as role models for changing masculinities. The personnel policy at NRK is also quite developed according to reconciliation issues, but it is not targeted at men in particular and their situation in relation to family and caring tasks. The personnel policy of NRK also seems less dynamic in relation to the changing needs of employees. Similarly the two Spanish companies emphasise personnel policies of reconciliation, but also here the measures adopted varies to a large degree. Especially, the Department of Education offers leave arrangements and reduced working hours to reconcile work and family life. The German company UBA also exhibit efforts to reconcile work and family/private life.

Comparatively, the Slovene company POP-TV separates as the most reluctant to address issues of reconciliation of work and family/private life on a company level. There are no personnel policy initiatives for reconciliation and the organisational culture is described as counter to introducing such initiatives. The balancing of work and family/private life is seen as an individual problem, and hence, as an issue that should be solved individually.

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<sup>24</sup> In POP-TV, paternity, parental and paid leaves, are also mentioned as a strategies for balance, but as the authors state, these are legal rights of all employees, and not informal mechanisms.

Generally, a distinctive mark of the reconciliation policies adopted is that these programs either are gender neutral or directed at women. A significant problem in relation to the balance of work and family life is that men are invisible as gender, thus personnel policies tend to presuppose reconciliation to be a “women issue”.

Second, another main pattern of variation according to reconciliation applies to the distinction between managers and non-managers. Reconciliation appears to be particularly problematic for managers. This is a general feature across companies. Managers are met by expectations of over-performance and putting in long hours. Generally these expectations also appear to be internalised by the managers themselves. It is not possible however, to conclude finally on whether these kinds of organisational and leadership cultures also negatively affect men that are not in management positions. Nevertheless, the reconciliation of work and family/private life is probably perceived as difficult to combine with career ambitions.

Third, a central pattern of variation follows the private – public sector divide. Generally, the public sector organisations offer the best conditions for balancing work and family life. There are however two significant exceptions from this: Microsoft Norway and the Spanish company MRW. Both are private companies with active and systematic personnel policies to reconcile work and family/private life. In both companies, the adoption of reconciliation policies emerge as initiated from top management. In other words, public companies seem to be the most likely to offer personnel policies of reconciliation. However, when these policies exist in private companies they appear as more dynamic and creative.

Fourth, a final pattern of variation applies to country differences. The companies selected are not representative, thus the work place study should not give the basis for conclusions of national differences. Still we will mention some variances that might indicate differences across countries. The two companies included in the Norwegian work place study emerge as the most developed according to institutionalising measures to promote reconciliation of work and family/private life. Also the Spanish work place study indicates that these issues are higher up on the national agenda in Spain compared to other countries.

The Slovene workplace studies on the other hand, report no or few initiatives for reconciling professional, family and private life. Especially, the situation of men appears to be a non-topic. Additionally, both the Slovene and the Spanish informants describe a clearly gender traditional sharing of family and household responsibilities, which differs rather clearly from the striving for gender equality described by most of the other informants.

The non-existence of measures to reconcile work and family/private life in the two Icelandic companies are among the more surprising findings. Partly, because we would suspect Iceland together with Norway to have the longest tradition for reconciliation of work and family/private life, due to the high labour participation of women and the tradition of Nordic social democracies. Furthermore, this is surprising in relation to the recent efforts made on the national political level in Iceland to foster gender equality and caring masculinities by enlarging the father quota of the paternity leave. The particularities of Iceland, may however be connected to the small population in Iceland, and also to the companies being comparatively small. This may have the effect that individual solutions are easier to find and put into effect. Managers are described as rather flexible, and if this is the general picture there may be less pressure to establish formal rules.

## **5. Summary and conclusions**

The purpose of the FOCUS study has been to investigate the ways in which some selected companies in five European countries contribute to the reconciliation of work and private life for their employees in general, and to the fostering of caring masculinities in particular. In turn, the findings from the company studies should provide the basis for recommendations for the participating companies (and hopefully for other companies) on how to improve conditions for their employees. Before we turn to the recommendations, we give a brief summary of the main findings and tendencies and some conclusions.

### **5.1. Summary**

Despite inter-country variations, all five participating countries, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain, confirm the ongoing existence of gendered differences in working life. Both employment rates (and for some countries unemployment rates), part-time rates, overtime rates and pay show important differences between men and women. Labour markets continue to be segregated along gender lines, both horizontally and vertically, and women in general adapt their working lives to their families' needs, mainly by reducing their paid working hours, to a greater extent than men do. Women also take on a larger share of the household chores, although a tendency towards more equal sharing has been evident during the last 30 years, especially in Norway and Iceland (along with the rest of the Nordic countries). Concerning reproduction, only Iceland has a fertility rate that ensures the population's replacement at 2.1, followed by Norway at 1.8. The other three countries all have fertility rates below 1.5.

National reconciliation policies – included here are flexible working time arrangements, childcare facilities and maternity, paternity and parental leaves – show relatively great differences between the five countries. Concerning part-time, national policies range from part-time as a legal right for all employees in Germany, via Norway and Slovenia where the right to work part-time is directed at working parents, to part-time being addressed (additionally or only) at the company level. There are no comparable and systematic data on other flexible working time arrangements in the national reports. The supply of public childcare facilities is often distinguished by intra-country variance such as regional differences. At the national level, all five countries, except for Slovenia, meet the Barcelona target of 90 % coverage or close for the age group 3 years to mandatory school age, while with the age group 0-3 years, only Iceland exceeds the target of 33 % coverage, with a rate over 50 %. Spain and Germany are way below, whereas Norway and Slovenia are close to the target. All five countries offer some possibilities for parents to share parts of the leave period following the birth of a child. Norway, Iceland, Slovenia and Spain have periods specifically assigned to fathers, i.e. paternity leave, ranging from 3 months paid leave in Iceland, six weeks paid leave in Norway, 15 days of paid leave and another possible 75 days of unpaid leave in Slovenia, to two days paid paternity leave in Spain (which will be extended to 10 days from January 2007). Germany has no such system of paternity leave, but the German national report states that the new parental allowance regime entering into force in 2007 will provide an option comparable to paternity leave.

As the organisational level is important for the structuring of opportunities for reconciliation and caring masculinities, informants from one public and one private company in each country, were interviewed in the workplace studies. Important topics discussed were existing measures offered by the companies, perceptions and ideals concerning both private/family life and work, and especially the relationship between these two spheres. There are some differences in focus however, between the reports.

Regarding the existing measures to promote reconciliation and caring masculinities, variation is evident. Adopted measures are generally gender neutral or targeted at women. The only company with an initiative directed specifically at the fostering of caring masculinities, is Norwegian Microsoft, with the daddy package, encouraging men to take longer paternity leaves. Both Norwegian companies, as well as the Spanish and the German ones, offer measures to ease the reconciliation between private/family life and work, whereas the Icelandic and Slovene reports, mainly report non-initiative. The measures offered are for the most part flexible working arrangements (different flexitime systems, home office and telework) and different leaves (mainly to take care of sick children) (see figure 4.1). However, more informal mechanisms to balance work and family are reported in both the Slovene and Icelandic cases, but the existence of such mechanisms are not strictly confined to these companies.

Organisational culture and the organising of working time are important factors influencing the possibilities for the employees to find a functional balance between their working obligations and private/family needs. The descriptions of organisational cultures show a wide variety, and the split between public and private is evident in most of the reports. Cultural norms prescribing over-performance and total accessibility, rise serious obstacles to the combining of career and care, and such norms may as well be powerful in organisations that communicate care positive messages from the top. This phenomenon is described as particularly acute in the private German company EnerCom, and to a somewhat lesser extent in the public one, but traits of over-performing and high pressure are reported in most of the companies, at least at management levels. This is also evident in relation to working time. While flexitime systems are widespread among the informants and presented as a mechanism that facilitate reconciliation, a norm of “more-time” often accompanies flexibility. Increased flexibility opens up for more freedom, but can also result in a blurring of the boundaries between work and private life, where the individual takes on much of the responsibility for separating the two spheres from each other. In the Norwegian case, the organising of wage systems is also reported to influence the employees’ opportunities to balance work and private/family life.

Job satisfaction is generally high among the informants, despite the fact that negative aspects are also mentioned in some companies, especially in the public companies in Spain and Slovenia.

Family life is held in high regard by the majority of informants, and most place values such as presence and participation – especially in their children’s lives – above the role of the financial provider. The respondents in the Slovene private company POP-TV, stand out for explicitly placing work obligations above family life, accompanied by ongoing support of the financial provider role. Family is nevertheless expressed as important to these informants too. The managers in the Spanish public company also make the same priority, but while placing work in front of family is portrayed to be an individual choice among the Slovene interviewees, it seems to be more of a (necessary) sacrifice for the Spanish informants. Most informants also seem to be happy with their family lives, but a wish for more time available is repeated numerous times. Planning time carefully and compensating for loss of time with one’s family and/or partner through special “quality time”, like weekends and holidays, are widespread strategies. The Spanish informants claim that their work obligations do not pose any problems for their families, and this is due to the reconciliation measures provided by the company, and/or the fact that their partners shoulder much of the reproductive work. The Slovene informants at POP-TV, argue that working for a (private) company such as POP-TV is incompatible with prioritising family life, and it is up to the individual to settle for either or - if discontent, change jobs.

Making reconciliation into a private and individual issue, is not exclusive to the informants in POP-TV; similar opinions are voiced by informants in Microsoft Norway (although these informants do find Microsoft Norway to be a family friendly company) and in the Icelandic companies, especially in the private one. The German report also emphasises that the over-performance culture evident in the German case, results in the individualisation of the responsibility for reconciliation. So, it does not seem that having problems with striking a balance between work and family/private life, necessarily result in expectations of the employer taking responsibility for improving the situation. With only a few exceptions, the respondents appear happy with company arrangements and reconciliation measures offered, and in cases where formal options are unavailable or non-existent, informal mechanisms may compensate to some extent.

## **5.2. Conclusions: Main findings**

- In the Norwegian, Spanish and German companies measures to promote the reconciliation of work and family/private life is adopted as a part of the companies personnel policies. The measures adopted mainly are: flexitime, home office and different kinds of leave arrangements. In the Icelandic and Slovene companies measures to balance work and family/private life are mainly non-existent.
- Predominantly, the companies personnel policies for reconciliation of work and family/private life are either gender neutral or targeted directly at the situation of women (as mothers).
- Generally, very little attention is directed at men and how to encourage and foster caring masculinities. Measures targeted specifically at men concerning reconciliation of work and family/private life are generally not adopted in the companies studied. The Norwegian company Microsoft is the only exception. In this company men's reconciliation of work and family/private life is targeted through the daddy package and in particular by encouraging men to share the paternity leave equally with their partner.
- Cultural norms of over-performance and always accessibility characterise the organisational culture in most companies included in the work place study. This seriously impedes reconciliation of work and family/private life. However, the perception of this varies to a large degree. In some companies loving the job implies that high demands are not regarded as a problem. In others, the companies' expectations of high performance are evidently perceived as problematic and as an obstacle for participating fully in family life.
- A gender equal parenthood is the principal norm among most informants. The ideal is that men and women should share family obligations and caring for and upbringing of children, equally. A normative preference of a traditional family model, with the man/husband as the main provider, appears at least on the ideal level as a marginal phenomenon.

## **6. Best practices: recommendations**

In this final part, we give an account of the various recommendations addressed to the companies by the national reports to promote reconciliation of work and private life and to foster caring masculinities.<sup>25</sup>

### **6.1. Flexibility**

Increased flexibility seems to be a key issue, providing working people with more room to adapt their private and working lives in a day to day manner.

Some kind of flexible working time arrangement has been introduced in most companies studied, and there is an over-all content with such measures. Flexitime, reduced hours, continuous timetables (Spain), working time accounts, and service time models are important examples, but it is called for further development and wider use. Especially important, is to extend measures to groups or positions who are currently excluded from them; in some of the companies, managers on certain levels do not have such options or they are hindered in practice to make use of them. The same goes for more flexible organising of working place and technologies, such as home offices, telework and so on.

Although companies should opt for increased flexibility for their employees, the potential dangers and dark sides related to increased flexibility can not be ignored. More flexibility does not only imply more freedom, but also increased responsibility assigned to each individual. To some extent the drawing of boundaries between work and private life is moved from company level to the individual level, and there is a danger of the two blending into each other. Over-work is a further possible problem related to this. Therefore, companies should carefully monitor and evaluate the functioning of flexibility measures to make sure they do not place an extra burden on (some) employees.

Some informants also wished for the reconciliation measures and options offered by the companies, to be more flexible in use, so as to make them more adaptable to different persons in different circumstances and family situations.

### **6.2. Management**

Management behaviour is highly relevant for the (re)production of organisational culture, especially when it comes to regulating norms and values on what is considered “normal” and “desirable” behaviour and what is not. Managers often function as role models and thus it is important that their behaviour does not imply incompatibility between work and private life, particularly evident in over-work and total accessibility cultures. Managers should therefore be given the opportunity to make use of reconciliation measures if they are excluded from them formally or informally, and new ways of structuring the management function, methods for job-sharing for instance, may serve as a tool. In the perspective of promoting caring masculinities, male managers should in particular be encouraged to make use of reconciliation measures such as parental and paternity leaves.

### **6.3. Policies on gender, diversity, reconciliation and care**

Some of the companies have action plans and policies on gender (from somewhat different perspectives) and some have not. Such policies should be in place and they should also be

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<sup>25</sup> For more information on recommendations given to specific companies, see the national reports.

taken seriously, meaning concrete and measurable goals to be formulated and evaluated, and known to the employees.

Gender policies have often made *gender* equal to *women*, whereas men have been the more “invisible” sex. Men should therefore be included to a much greater extent in company gender policies, especially in relation to reconciliation and care. It is important that carers are not excluded from career, and strategies to include and promote carers should be in place. In this regard, companies can scrutinise both their formal rules and informal norms and conventions, to find out whether certain workings of the organisations make it hard for employees to combine work with care and family life. There are examples in the reports of wage systems, overtime use and organisational cultures placing obstacles in the way of reconciliation and caring masculinities.

Numerous suggestions are put forth in the national reports on how to promote reconciliation and caring masculinities:

- Work-life balance trainings for men: seminars and work-shops targeted at male employees in general or specific target groups to start with (fathers of young children and male managers wanting to reduce their working hours). Such meetings and seminars should be held during normal working hours, and not in weekends and evenings. Possible topics are working hours (men should be encouraged to limit overtime), private/family life and the balance between work and private life, health and self-care, existing rights and possibilities.
- Life phase discussion: the idea behind a life phase discussion is to develop a routine for a conversation between male employees about to become fathers and their closest superiors, and its purpose is two-fold: raising awareness and information. The goal is to initiate reflections on how to balance work and private life and to provide the father-to-be with information on rights and possibilities (with national legislation and company measures as a point of departure).
- Days off: the company can offer special paid days off, to fathers with young children, intended for fathers to spend time with their children.
- Special events: encouraging active fatherhood can also be promoted via events like a company arranged activity day for fathers and their children.
- Targeted initiatives: Specific, targeted initiatives like the daddy package in Norwegian Microsoft encouraging men to take longer paternity/parental leaves, is a further possibility, and such initiatives are closely connected to the subject below

## **6.4. Information**

It is evident from several of the national reports, that many informants are not aware of (all) rights and possibilities available to them, neither legal rights, nor company specific measures and options. In particular, it seems that male employees in many cases are less informed than their female equivalents. To counter this, companies should provide their employees with the necessary information, something that also would contribute to a better utilisation of existing company measures and resources (for instance the awareness found in Human Relations - and other departments working on reconciliation etc.). Companies could set up a web page informing about rights and possibilities, arrange

information campaigns and so on. Many of the above mentioned initiatives (6.3), serve the same function.

## **6.5. Childcare**

Many informants would like the company to set up kindergartens for the children of employees (only the Norwegian public company, NRK, offers this to their employees). Alternatively, a “crisis kindergarten” can be made available in special situations, i.e. after the regular kindergartens close in instances where the parents have to work late. Financial aid to assist parents in arranging childcare on their own is also suggested. On occasions when a parent has to bring a child to work, there should be a playroom or a corner available. A family canteen in the company, where employees can have dinner with their families, or bring a warm meal home with them, can ease the stress of everyday routines.

## **6.6. Making informal arrangements formal?**

It was evident from many of the company studies, that various informal mechanisms exist in companies for employees to make it easier to adapt working obligations to family needs (see section 4.4.2 in chapter 4). These often involve arrangements and agreements with superiors and colleagues, on initiative from individual employees with family commitments, and they are often made use of by persons who do not have access to more formalised flexible working arrangements. Companies where this is the case (reported especially in the Slovene workplace study and concerning shift workers in the Norwegian public company NRK, as well as in the Icelandic case) may consider making these informal mechanisms more formal (one example is making the possibility of adapted shifts in NRK, a formal option for all employees with young children). In this way, it would be easier for employees to feel certain about what requests are reasonable and that their wishes are considered in a positive way. At the same time, such options should be made open for flexibility and individual adaptations, as this is a quality many informants value with the informal arrangements.



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Fostering Caring Masculinities (FOCUS) seeks to examine and improve men's opportunities for balancing work and private/family life, and in turn increasing their ability to develop their role as caregivers in the home.

To reach this goal the project will focus on companies' framework conditions to perceive and include men as actors and target groups in equality policies.

This trans national project involves five countries:  
Germany, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain.

The project is funded through EU's Community Action programme to promote Gender equality between men and women. FOCUS is grounded in one of priority themes of the program, "the role of men in the promotion of gender equality, in particular the role of men and fathers in the reconciliation of work and private life".

FOCUS was initiated by the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Equality, co-funders of the project.

**For more information see [www.caringmasculinities.org](http://www.caringmasculinities.org)**



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