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WELLCHI NETWORK

The well-being of children: The impact of changing family forms, working conditions of parents, social policy and legislative measures

COORDINATION ACTION

Priority 7: Citizens and governance in a knowledge –based society

**Deliverable 10:
Report on the contribution to the Workshop
“Working flexibility and caring arrangements”**

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PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

WELLCHI NETWORK PROJECT
Workshop 3
Working flexibility and caring arrangements

Ecole nationale de la santé publique,
Rennes, 1st and 2nd of September 2005

This workshop is the 3rd one organised within the framework of the Coordination action (6th PCRD, European Commission): “Well-being of children: the Impact of changing family forms, working conditions of parents, social policy and legislative measures », (WELLCHI).

It has taken place in Rennes (France) on the 1st and 2nd of September, in the National school of public health on the following issue: « Working flexibility and caring arrangements ». During this workshop, some main questions has been discussed:

- What are the main policies in Europe to facilitate work-life balance, whether these policies are promoted at the European or national level?
- What is the role of the firms, private or public enterprises?
- What are the consequences of flexible timetables on the work-life balance?
- What are the main childcare solutions to these atypical times of work?
- What are the main ‘caring arrangements’ of bi-active or dual-career couples?

Organisation

This workshop was divided in 3 sessions with 3 presentations and a discussant, whose role consisted in opening the discussion.

14h-14h30

Opening and welcome speech: Pr Jacques Orvain, Director of Education and research in the National school of public Health

Presentation of the WELLCHI coordination action: Lluís Flaquer, University of Barcelona

Session 1: Work-life balance. Policy issues at the European level

Thursday 1st of September, 14h30-18h

In this first session, the objective was to present the main demographic and policy issues about conciliation and work-life balance at the European level. L. Flaquer focused on the main demographic and sociological changes at the household level. O.

Thévenon presented the main results of the OCDE research program “Babies and Bosses”, and J. Lewis proposed an analysis of the main policy shifts in the EU policies: from equal pay to work-life balance.

Chair: Claude Martin (CNRS, France)

- Lluís Flaquer (University of Barcelona): **Change of family structure and informal care work**

- Olivier Thevenon (DREES-MIRE, France): **Work and family reconciliation.**

European policies

- Jane Lewis (LES, UK): **The development of work / family reconciliation as a policy**

target at the European level. The policy shifts.

Discussant of the session: Ulla Björnberg (University of Göteborg, Sweden)

Session 2: Childcare and flexibility

Friday 2nd of September, 9h-12h30

This session focused on the flexibility of the labour market in France and their consequences on the households. D. Boyer and J. Fagnani concentrated mainly on the issue of fatherhood in the French households. A. Eydoux and M-T. Letablier presented the main results of a research about the impact of flexibility and atypical working hours on the side of the caring workers and services. B. Le Bihan and C. Martin analysed this impact on the families and the results of a quantitative research about the main caring arrangements of parents working on non-standard hours.

Chair: Pierre Strobel (MIRE, France)

Danièle Boyer (CNAF) et Jeanne Fagnani (Matisse, Paris 1 – CNRS), **Flexible working time schedules and childcare policies: What is at stake for working parents in France?**

Anne Eydoux and Marie-Thérèse Letablier (Centre d'études de l'emploi, France), **Working time flexibility, challenges and opportunities for childcare ?**

Blanche Le Bihan et Claude Martin (LAPSS-ENSP, France), **Conciliating work and family life with atypical times of work**

Discussant: Manuela Naldini (University of Torino)

Session 3: A policy of time? Actors and strategies

Friday 2nd of September, 14h-17h30

The last session focused on some main actors of this family/life balance issue. J. Larsson presented the main option of a doctorate research he is managing on the family's strategies to face time pressure and their perception of what pressure means. L. Alipranti and A. Nikolaou presented a paper about the impact of women participation in the labour market in Greece and the main policy measures in this country. Finally U. Klammer presented the evolution of the respective role of the State and the enterprises in Germany with the development of new programs at the national and local level.

Chair: Jane Lewis (LSE)

- Jörgen Larsson (University of Göteborg): **Families' strategies for mastering time pressure**
- Laura Alipranti & Anna Nikolaou (University of Athens): **Women's participation to the labour market and reconciliation policy in Greece**
- Ute Klammer (Niederrhein University of Applied science): **Labour market participation and working time. The role of the State and the role of enterprises. Towards a new distribution of responsibilities in Germany?**

Discussant: Claude Martin (CRAPE-CNRS et LAPSS-ENSP)

SUMMARY

In the *first session* of this workshop, has been discussed the main demographic and structural changes in the European households and their impact on the way parents are assuming their parental responsibility. One of these important changes refers to the number of double income households, either by necessity and/or by choice, which impact directly on the parental availability for their children. In his presentation, Lluís Flaquer has suggested some main household and family models that may help to understand the conditions in which care work is organised.

In his communication, Olivier Thevenon has presented the main results of a large comparative inquiry about work and family reconciliation policy in different developed countries financed by the OECD in 2003. This research called “babies and bosses. Reconciling work and family life” help us to understand some of the main variables concerned and the gap between these countries in terms of work – family life balance. The objective of this research was also to identify and publicize some of the “best practices” to help experts and decision makers to frame these policies for the future.

Finally, Jane Lewis helped us to de-construct the role of European institutions in the definition of the work-life balance issue. She has presented the different policy shifts that characterize this field of public action: from equal pay (with hard laws) to equal opportunity (soft laws) and from equal opportunity to conciliation between work and family and then from conciliation to work- life balance. These policy shifts are mainly connected to employment issue, she argued, and in that sense are more market-related than social related.

The *second session* focused mainly on one phenomenon: flexibility and development of non-standard hours of work and on one country: France, with three presentations. In a first step, Jeanne Fagnani and Danièle Boyer have presented the main elements of background on the French case (development of atypical working hours and their impact on caring arrangements; role of the “35 hours” employment policy reform, etc.) and insisted on the particular issue of the role of fathers. They identify a relatively clear link between the non-standard hours of work of women and the implication of men in caring activities. The discussion concerns this co-variation and the way policy may be able to facilitate these caring arrangements.

In their presentation, Marie-Thérèse Letablier and Anne Eydoux have adopted another point of view about the development of atypical working time-schedules in

analysing the way these non-standard hours are transforming the offer of services, asking for a more flexible offer of formal service. But these new needs are also transforming the conditions of work of childcare professionals, which sometimes means a transfer of the constraints and pressure on these professionals.

In the last presentation, Blanche Le Bihan and Claude Martin analysed the impact of these non-standard hours of work on French families' caring arrangements. In a first part of their presentation they concentrate on the notion of atypical working hours, showing that this notion recovers many different conditions of work (long days of work, work shifts, working on Saturday and Sunday, etc), but also different modalities (variability, regularity and predictability). With these distinctions, they presented in a second step a research whose objective is to define quantitatively some main categories or types of atypical workers with different levels of pressure and the concrete formal and informal caring arrangements they have adopted to face this double implication: work and family responsibility.

The *last session* concentrated on the actors of this family life/ work balance. Jörgen Larsson presented his doctorate research in a Swedish context, whose main objective is to catch different family strategies to face time pressure and the perception of what pressure means for the parents. The discussion of this communication concerns mainly different theoretical and methodological choices, which may enable to reach this objective.

Laura Alipranti and Anna Nikolau analysed in their presentation the main available data about women participation to the labour market in Greece and their evolution in the recent years and discussed the Greek employment policies and their possible contribution to the promotion of this enhancement of women's labour market participation. They also presented the main family policy objectives and measures to conclude about the weakness of the conciliation issue in this country.

In the last presentation, Ute Klammer has presented the German case in European context. After a synthetic presentation of the main data about women's labour force participation rate and the different aspects of gender inequality on the labour market in Europe, with specific focus on Germany (East and West), she has insisted on the role of enterprises and mainly on some recent initiatives called "Alliances for family". These local initiatives involve different actors: local authorities, big enterprises, social partners, associations, etc., and have the objective to promote some concrete measures to facilitate work – family life balance. The discussion concerned the capacity of these new experimental initiatives to frame a new policy

regime on conciliation issue and underlined the impact of the political agenda on the framing of family policy in Europe.

In summary, this seminar developed a large and very well documented point of view on what the last developments of the European labour market impose in terms of flexibility on the working parents, changing their capacities and opportunities to face their parental responsibility. The well-being of children is directly connected to these challenges.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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