



**#paternal involvement**

# **EU-Project: Men and Reconciliation of Work and Family: Supporting the Path to Gender Equal Distribution of Parental Leave and Working Time**

*Final report*

## IMPRINT

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During the project's implementation period from December 2015 to December 2017, the Directorate-General for Women and Equality was part of the Ministries of Education and Women (BMBWF) and of Health and Women (BMGF). Therefore, the BMGF/Women is mentioned as project partner in this report.

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## 1. FOREWORD

### **Director of Division Marc Pointecker:**

In Austria, reconciliation of work and family is still perceived to be mainly a “women's issue”. Our EU project entitled “Men and Reconciliation of Work and Family: Supporting the Path to Gender Equal Distribution of Parental Leave and Working Time” has helped to put work-family reconciliation much more on the radar as a “men's issue”. The project involved various research institutions and social partner representatives, as well as corporate project partners and project partners from organisations that disseminate information to the public. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody involved for their invaluable work and input. In this report, you will be able to read about the results of the EU project in detail.

A feature article in *The Economist* summed up the situation perfectly: it is only when men manage to reconcile work with family that women will also be able to do so. We still live in a country where the birth of a child triggers dramatic consequences for parents in terms of their place on the labour market. And these consequences still run along traditional gender role lines. Talented high potentials who once thought they had a glittering career ahead of them prior to pregnancy lose touch with their careers and end up as disappointed mothers. In the eyes of society, there is an unwritten rule saying that men are financially responsible for the family, which tends to help rather than hinder their careers. For women, parenthood usually means taking a long career break and returning to work part time. As for fathers – who frequently work overtime – the best they can expect is a short period of parental leave followed by a return to full-time work. This is the picture that emerges from the statistics available for Austria.

Within this context, many women want to be more involved in paid employment and to have better career opportunities. Meanwhile, many men would like to spend more time with their children and provide more support as they are growing up. Thus, the aim is to achieve an equal share of paid work and childcare (i.e. a 50/50 split). Although we are still miles away from this target, the trend is heading in the right direction. We are proud of the contribution that we have made here through our EU project.

Our EU project will continue to have an impact long after the official end date. Experience has been shared at a European level, tools have been developed, information has been disseminated and thought processes have been stimulated. The booklet on parental leave, parental part-time employment, family time, etc.”, the “gleich = berechnet” online household income calculator, the accompanying online media campaign, and the findings from the case studies that were conducted at the couple level and at companies in male-dominated industries and all the other project results will help us to work towards equality in the future.

**Marc Pointecker**, *Director of Social Policy Division at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection*

**Director General Ines Stilling:**

Dear Readers,

A successful reconciliation of job, family and private life is an important consideration for everyone. It affects employees and also managers, businesses and organisations and society as a whole.

In recent years many measures have been put in place to improve this balance both for people with children and family carers. These include expanding high-quality childcare facilities and all-day schooling arrangements, together with the regulations on parental part-time employment and reduced working hours/leave for carers.

Despite these measures, childcare and unpaid family and caring duties continue to fall predominantly on women, who experience and overcome the challenges of this balance in reality. To ascertain why men still take advantage of the existing opportunities for this balance less often and how men and women can be better supported along the road to a fairer division of paid working time and childcare, a two-year EU project was planned and implemented.

Within the project partnership between the Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, the research institutes FORBA and L&R Social Research, and the Chamber of Labour, the Trade Union Federation and Federation of Austrian Industries, research was initiated at household, business and social level to identify positives and negatives on the road to a fair division. Targeted information and increased awareness raising among experts, in businesses and among the public were also part of this cooperation.

This final report gives an insight into the research results on business practice and the real lives of parents and presents the materials and publications and further results. The research results also form the basis for formulating conclusions and recommendations for action which can also be found in this report.

A better reconciliation of work and family for men means taking a vital step towards more gender equality. Greater involvement of men in family duties and housework will enable women to access the labour market more quickly or increase their paid working time. Involvement and responsibility on the part of fathers from the beginning, which is now somewhat easier due to the newly created family time, will also promote their longer-lasting involvement in the joint parenting.

The redistribution of paid and unpaid work which a better balance for men will achieve offers the potential for a new debate on working times and their distribution in general. The

right balance is not just a matter for women, nor just for men – it affects everyone. Paid work must always allow time for family, caring and oneself.

Despite the progress achieved in recent years, it is clear that a further change in attitudes is necessary to make the reconciliation of work and family self-evident and a success for women and men at all levels. In addition to the commitment of many individual women and men, this also requires framework conditions to support a fair division of paid work and family duties within the partnership. They include the necessary further expansion of childcare facilities and all-day forms of schooling and also further improvements for family carers. Equal pay for equal work is also essential so that a fair share is also feasible financially. Leave and parental part-time employment must be allowed for all employees and become the norm in business. A better balance for fathers and mothers should not be a detriment or barrier to career advancement and enterprises but should be viewed as a win/win situation for all those involved.

This project has made an important contribution to providing further support for the change in attitude and in the reality – for parents, businesses, social partners and policy makers. The publications issued, the online information tools such as [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at) and the research results also presented in this report should allow further steps to be taken and supported on a sound basis in the future.

I wish you an enthralling read.

**Ines Stilling**, *Director General, Women's Affairs and Equality, Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs*

## **2. CHALLENGES, OBJECTIVES AND MAIN PROJECTS RESULTS (HARALD FUGGER, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION)**

### **2.1. Background information and challenges regarding gender equal sharing of parental leave, parental part-time work and employment in Austria**

With regard to many socio-political indicators, Austria ranks very highly among EU countries, but it still has some work to do in the area of gender equality. The most obvious challenges are the large gender pay gap and the considerable gender care gap. When it comes to male involvement in childcare, in particular, it has a tremendous amount of catching up to do: As at the date of the project proposal, data from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Families and Youth revealed that approximately 19% of fathers in Austria claimed childcare allowance in 2015; the figure for 2017 was 19.4% nationally but in Vienna it was as high as 28.7%, while in Vorarlberg it was 10.4% and in Burgenland it was 9.9% (Bundesministerium für Familien und Jugend, 21/04/2017 Analysis of childcare allowance uptake by fathers, births up until 28/02/2017). In connection with this, it is also important to highlight the fact that there are considerable gender-specific differences in Austria as far as parents' working hours are concerned.

In 2015, the percentage of women in part-time work stood at 47.8% but only 9.8% of men were in part-time employment in the same year. In parallel with this, the second quarter of 2015 saw approximately 33% of fathers to small children working overtime on a regular basis and not just occasionally (Statistik Austria, 2017). However, a survey by IHS (Institut für Höhere Studien, 2016) reveals – among other things – a high degree of convergence between the kinds of working hours that women and men want: women want to do more paid work and men less, the latter to have more time for the family. In addition, traditional concepts of gender roles often persist in people's everyday professional and personal lives. This insight is backed up by a recent special analysis of the “Working climate index” (Schönherr 2017): While 90% of mothers with children under the age of 15 stated that they took a career break for childcare-related reasons, only 3% of fathers said the same. This analysis also reveals that reconciliation of work and family is particularly difficult to achieve in the first two years after the birth. Overtime, atypical working patterns, irregular working hours as well as excessive working hours and time pressure are cited as other factors that create problems in relation to reconciliation of work and family. By contrast, flexitime or self-determined working hours facilitate a better reconciliation of work and family.

Another important point to note is that very little reliable data has been released in Austria as regards the uptake rate of parental leave among men. Across the whole of Austria,

approximately 3-4% of fathers take parental leave (EUROFOUND 2015), although the figure is 19% in the case of public servants (Bundeskanzleramt 2017).

The results of the latest “Return to work” monitoring exercise by the Chamber of Labour for 2006-2014 reveal an overall increasing trend in men drawing childcare allowance. However, men are taking less time off work while they draw this benefit (“Wiedereinstiegsmonitoring”, Arbeiterkammer 2017).

The horizontal segregation of the labour market, the ongoing lack of childcare facilities (primarily in non-urban areas) and stereotypical gender role concepts are perpetuating the traditional division between paid employment and unpaid childcare work.

Recent surveys in Austria have revealed that the majority of the population wants fathers to be more involved in childcare and working hours to be distributed more equally between mothers and fathers. However, given the realities of life for parents, there is a huge gap between those wishes and their concrete realisation in practice (IHS 2016).

## **2.2. Partners in the EU project**

In light of the challenges outlined above, Austria responded to an EU call for projects focusing on economic equality between women and men in 2015 as part of the European Union's “Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme” (2014 – 2020). The bid by the following project partners was successful and they were awarded a stake in the EU project accordingly: the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (project coordination), the Division for Women's Affairs and Equality of the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs (BMGF/Women's Affairs), L&R Social Research, FORBA (the Working Life Research Centre), the Vienna Chamber of Labour (AK), the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) and the Federation of Austrian Industries (IV). This EU project was implemented within the space of two years (December 2015 – December 2017) and was co-funded by the EU's “Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme” (2014 – 2020).

## **2.3. Focus and main objectives of the project**

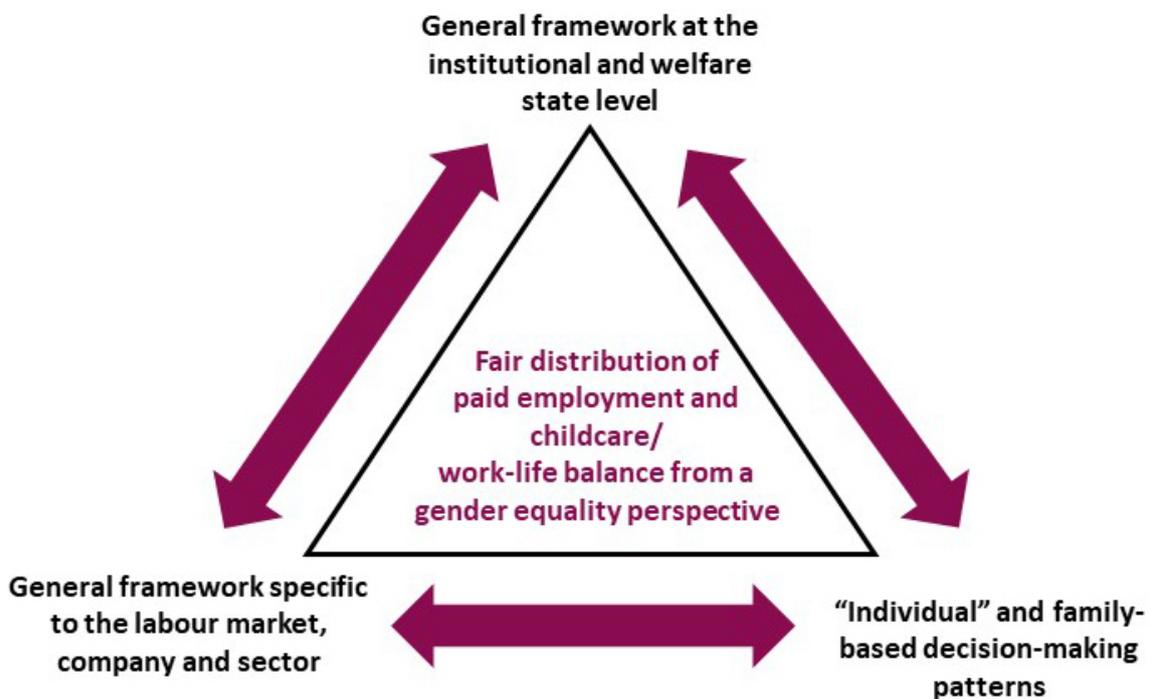
This EU project focused primarily on investigating and identifying obstacles, possible opportunities and effective initiatives to enable the future equal sharing of childcare between women and men in Austria. The project target groups included companies, working and expectant parents, social partners and members of works councils and political players, as well as organisations that provide advice in the areas of childcare and gender equality.

- To promote gender equality by increasing uptake of parental leave among fathers

- To enable (parental) part-time employment, including during (ongoing) childcare after the parental leave period
- To get work-family reconciliation strategies firmly established at companies, particularly in male-dominated industries, so that more men are able to take parental leave and participate in child rearing/childcare
- To increase awareness of how shared parental leave and shared (parental) part-time employment between parents can have a positive impact on households, companies and society

Research was conducted as part of this EU project to investigate how paid employment and childcare might be distributed equally between the genders. This research was conducted in a multi-dimensional context and examined the corporate, household and societal levels, as described in the following figure:

Figure 1: Factors for a gender-equitable distribution of paid employment and child care



Quellenangabe: L&R based on Eurofound 2012

## 2.4. Content, activities and results

**Household income calculator [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at)**

The Division for Women's Affairs and Equality of the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs has developed an online household income calculator called **gleich=berechnet**, which can be translated as both "equally calculated" and "immediately calculated". This straightforward tool provides a clear picture of how the family's total

income is affected by the working hours of both parents. It also offers an orientation guide to the financial implications of equally distributing paid employment and childcare equally between parents. Gleich=berechnet went live on the [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at) site in November 2016. An additional function was introduced in December 2017 in the form of a calendar that allows couples to plan their joint parental leave.

### **Improving the general corporate framework to get fathers more involved in childcare**

Project partner L&R Social Research analysed what kind of general corporate framework would get fathers more involved in childcare (such as working time models that are conducive to the reconciliation of work and family, paternity leave in the early weeks, parental part-time employment) in male-dominated industries. Among other things, this involved conducting interviews with experts, organising meetings so that Austrian and European experts could share information, and carrying out a survey with members of works councils. The research centred on ten company case studies covering the construction, goods manufacturing, transport, information and communications industries. These case studies were then used to identify what existing measures were in place as well as what employees and companies felt was required. On the basis of the findings, a handbook was also produced for companies (see “Väter im Fokus: Männer und Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie im Betrieb” [“Spotlight on fathers: Men and how to achieve a good reconciliation of work and family at your company”], which is available on the project website at [www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at)). In addition, L&R Social Research commissioned abz\*austria to organise and run two seminars for HR managers. These seminars were held in Vienna and Vorarlberg in the autumn of 2017 under the banner “Karenz und Teilzeitarbeit für Männer – vom Wollen zum Tun” [“Parental leave and part-time employment for men – From intention to action”].

### **Equal sharing of paid work and childcare between couples**

FORBA, another of the project partners, used qualitative case studies to investigate how parents put their plans for the equal splitting of paid employment and family management into action. Prior to the field research, a literature review was also undertaken. These couple case studies provide information about the decision-making processes that parents engage in as a couple and what kinds of general conditions help or hinder the successful implementation of plans to split paid work and childcare equally between the partners. A catalogue of results – along with real-life examples – has been published on the project website ([www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at)).

### **Awareness raising, international experience sharing, “mutual learning meetings”, training sessions**

The release of the gleich=berechnet calculator tool was accompanied by a national online media campaign. In May 2017, Vienna hosted a European conference on the equal sharing of childcare between parents. Various models of paternity leave, parental leave and parental

part-time employment from ten different EU countries were presented here and the delegates discussed a wide range of factors that affect reconciliation of work and family. Three mutual learning workshops were organised for multipliers and stakeholders (such as NGOs, members of works councils), and conclusions relating to the corporate level were discussed with the participating social partners, experts and stakeholders. Moreover, training sessions were also designed and run for members of works councils and companies.

In addition, several information materials were produced in the course of the project. Alongside a comprehensive booklet about parental leave, parental part-time employment and childcare allowance, these included leaflets with information about the [gleich=berechnet](#) online calculator. Relevant press relations work was also carried out in a highly focussed manner. The information portfolio was rounded off by specific information geared towards the target groups, which was distributed via various information channels. On the basis of the company case studies, the case studies of couples and the international information exchange events, several recommended actions were drawn up. All the project results can be found on the website at [www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at) along with details of the activities undertaken and some further information.

### **3. INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK, INITIATIVES AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION/EXPERIENCE**

In the course of the project, different initiatives were launched at an international and a European level that were not only of relevance for improving reconciliation of work and family for women and men but also provided important reference points for this EU project. The fact that reconciliation of work and family is being addressed at both international and European level emphasises how important it is to grapple with ways of improving this balance for women and men, not just in Austria but all over the world.

#### **3.1. Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations**

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted 17 new sustainable development goals as part of its 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2017). Within this context, the following concrete targets were defined (among others) as reference points for gender equality in the area of work-family reconciliation for men and women: shared responsibility within the household and the family (5.4) and to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men (8.5). In addition, it was decided that a gender perspective should be systematically integrated when implementing the 2030 Agenda.

#### **3.2. General framework and initiatives for work-family reconciliation at European level (Harald Fugger, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection)**

##### **Existing legal situation at the EU level**

The current EU Parental Leave Directive 2010/18 is based on a framework agreement with the European social partners. Among other things, it lays down the following minimum standards for its implementation within the EU member states: Employees have an individual right to take parental leave in order to care for children up to the age of eight. Parental leave must be granted for a period of at least four months and – in principle – should not be transferable so as to promote equal opportunities between men and women. To ensure a balanced uptake of parental leave by both parents, this EU Directive stipulates that at least one of the four months must not be transferable to the other parent. Furthermore, the EU member states and/or the social partners are entitled to define appropriate part-time arrangements. This EU directive does not provide for a paternity leave period (usually understood as a leave period for fathers immediately following the birth of a child).

The EU equal opportunities legislation (EU Directive 2006/54/EC, EU Directive 2010/41/EU etc.) and the EU Directive on part-time work also play an important role with regard to reconciliation of work and family.

Due to the failed negotiations to revise the EU Maternity Leave Directive, the European Commission withdrew its proposal, instead initiating the “Roadmap - New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families” in 2015.

### **Gender Care-Gap in the EU**

The reality in the EU member states (see, for example, Eurofound 2015, European Parliament 2015, European Quality of Life Survey - Eurofound 2017, European Commission Joint Employment Report 2017, Gender Employment Gap – Eurofound 2017) is that

- the minimum standards stipulated in EU Directive 2010/18 have not been fully implemented in all EU member states,
- women are still mainly responsible for childcare,
- the uptake rate for parental leave and parental part-time employment among men is still relatively low and they tend only to take advantage of these options for a short amount of time,
- and there are still nowhere near enough affordable (and high-quality) childcare facilities in many EU member states.

The consequences of all this are – among other things – a low employment rate, high levels of part-time employment (particularly in Austria) and lower pensions for women.

### **Reconciliation of work and family in the context of European processes and procedures**

As part of its open coordination of social protection systems, the EU Social Protection Committee used the multilateral surveillance process and peer reviews to examine the parental leave and work-family reconciliation situation in selected EU member states (“Peer Reviews”, 2016/2017).

The country-specific recommendations for economic governance in the EU (European Semester) repeatedly drew attention to the considerable need for reform in the area of work-family reconciliation for women and men, including in Austria (Country-specific recommendations in the context of the European Semester 2017).

### **Work-family reconciliation initiatives of the European Parliament**

In its resolution of 9 June 2015, the European Parliament stressed the importance of equality between men and women in relation to parental leave and called for the necessary improvements to be made to the parental leave regulations (European Parliament, 2015). Furthermore, the European Parliament's resolution of 2 August 2016 stressed the need to

create labour market conditions that are conducive to reconciliation of work and family for both men and women (European Parliament 2016).

### **New EU directive on work-life balance proposed by the European Commission**

On 26 April 2017, the European Commission put forward a proposal for an **EU Directive on work-life balance of parents and carers**. The key points covered by this include:

- Obligatory introduction of paternity leave lasting at least 10 working days
- A parental leave period of at least four months for each parent that cannot be transferred from one parent to another (according to the “use it or lose it” principle)
- Income compensation at least equal to sick pay in the event of paternity leave, parental leave, carers' leave being taken

The **Informal meeting of EU Ministers of Employment, Social Affairs, Family and Gender Equality** took place in Tallinn on 19 and 20 July 2017. The main themes of the meeting were “work-family reconciliation, focusing on new forms of work, different family types and men's participation in sharing care responsibilities”. This means that the issue of work-family reconciliation for men and women has now been addressed as an important field of political action by high-ranking politicians at both the EU member state and the overall EU level.

### **European Pillar of Social Rights**

The **European Pillar of Social Rights**, which the European Commission presented in April 2017, is built on 20 key principles. Under chapter 2 “Fair working conditions”, the **principle on “work-life balance”** stipulates the following:

*“Parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to special leaves of absence in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them in a balanced way.”*

At the **EU Social Summit that was held on 17 November 2017 in Gothenburg, the EU Heads of State and Government and their ministers for social affairs** signed a declaration on the social rights of EU citizens, covering – among other things – the right to equal opportunities, fair working conditions and pay, and equal access to education. Within the context of this, reference was also made to shared childcare responsibilities.

### **3.3. Expert workshop “Men and reconciliation of work and family – Experience from six European countries” (Nadja Bergmann and Claudia Sorger - L&R Social Research)**

To kick-start the project at an international level, the L&R Institute for Social Research hosted a workshop with experts from various European countries on 3 June 2016. Here, experts from Austria were joined by representatives from Iceland, Sweden, Germany, Slovenia, Denmark and the Netherlands. The workshop revealed that reconciliation of work and family is still considered to be mainly a “women's issue” in Austrian discussions but that other countries are several steps ahead in this regard: For instance, Slovenia has introduced paid paternity leave lasting several weeks and corresponding collective bargaining agreements. In 2014, the parental leave legislation was completely amended with the aim of reducing the unequal uptake rates between men and women. In the opinion of the Slovenian expert, this amended legislation has also changed how the matter is viewed by social partners and within companies. Collective bargaining agreements focusing on men and reconciliation of work and family can now even be found in male-dominated industries. However, legislation has also made a difference in Iceland and Sweden. With its mandatory parental leave elements for fathers, this has helped to establish a strong “work-family reconciliation culture within companies”. This has played an important role in creating a system that is relatively fair overall with regard to how responsibilities are split between partners. The expert from Germany presented the new general legal framework that has resulted in around a third of fathers in Germany taking parental leave. This “new normality” has also helped bring about a culture change within companies there. Among other things, reference was made to the fathers' networks spanning different companies, the information policy that is aimed specifically at men to address work/family reconciliation issues, and the development of new solutions to reconcile the demands of management, paid employment and childcare.

#### Recommended reading: Selected highlights from the workshop

To access the information leaflet called “Männer und Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie – Ausgewählte europäische good practice Beispiele” [“Men and reconciliation of work and family – Selected examples of good practice from across Europe”], click this link:

<http://maennerundvereinbarkeit.at/eu-expertinnen-workshop>.

There was one thing on which all the workshop participants agreed: even though no European country can be said to have actually achieved an even split between men and women when it comes to dividing up childcare and paid employment responsibilities, many countries are well ahead of Austria in tackling the whole topic of “men and reconciliation of work and family” or achieving a fairer split – and Austria still has a few things to learn/improve.

An information leaflet summarising what was shared at this international event has been produced in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer

Protection. In addition, a 30-minute radio report on the project and the workshop was broadcast as part of Ö1's “Journal Panorama” programme.

### **3.4. International conference in Vienna “Promoting uptake of paternity and parental leave among fathers for an equal share of childcare” (Harald Fugger – Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection)**

The international expert conference on paternal involvement in parental leave and childcare took place on 16 and 17 May 2017.

A wide range of factors that affect paternal involvement in childcare were addressed and discussed in the course of this conference:

#### Recommended website: Selected highlights from the conference

All the conference presentations are available on the website of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. To access these – along with further information – click the following link:

[www.sozialministerium.at/conference\\_eu-project\\_workandfamily](http://www.sozialministerium.at/conference_eu-project_workandfamily)

- The current general framework within the EU and data from EU member states on the work-family reconciliation of women and men
- The legal framework in various European countries governing paternity leave, parental leave, parental part-time employment, and childcare benefits and their precise impact
- The role of social partners and measures at the corporate level
- Socio-economic factors, traditional role concepts and gender-based stereotypes
- Decision-making processes at partner level
- Information, public relations and raising awareness of gender role concepts

Within this context, the latest (intermediate) results from various related EU projects focusing on economic gender equality were presented.

### **Presentation by the European Commission on legal and non-legal measures at the EU level for improving work-life balance**

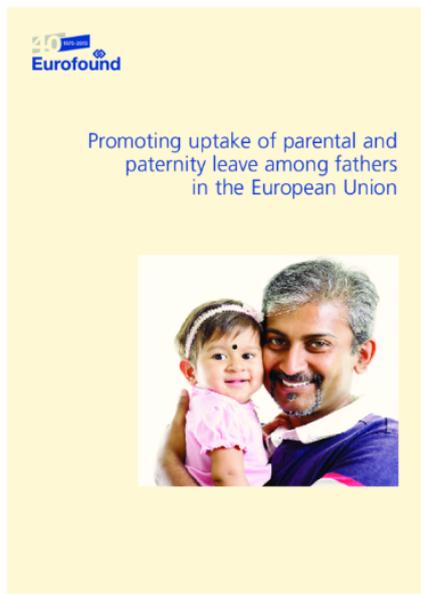
Among other things, the proposed EU Directive on “work-life balance” stipulates legal improvements aimed at achieving a more equal share of childcare between partners: a legal entitlement for fathers to take at least 10 days' paternity leave following the birth of a child and a non-transferable legal entitlement to at least four months' parental leave for each parent.

**Figure 2: Image illustrating the traditional gender role concepts that often still prevail**



*Source: Presentation by Muriel Bissières, European Commission*

From now on, the European Commission will also make greater efforts to ensure that EU law is better implemented (e.g. as regards protection against dismissal) and will step up its monitoring of how parental leave is shared between partners by relying on benchmarking activities as part of the European Semester framework. In the context of the European Semester, other focal points will be better access to high-quality affordable childcare facilities and the elimination of false economic incentives such as those that have been built into the tax systems of EU member states.



### Latest work-family reconciliation data in EU -Member States

**Eurofound** presented an international comparison that examined people's entire employment histories and the differences that this revealed between men and women, not least those attributable to work-family reconciliation (see the presentation by Jorge Cabrita and the EUROFOUND study entitled "Promoting uptake of parental and paternity leave among fathers in the EU", 2015). Consideration of a person's entire working lifetime and of household earnings, and "transformative" policies aimed at redistributing working hours are regarded as key factors for the future implementation of work-family reconciliation strategies at the political, legal and corporate levels. In addition, Jorge Cabrita made reference

to the updated review of work-family reconciliation provisions laid down by legislation and collective bargaining agreements within the EU member states. It was Harald Fugger (a member of the Eurofound Governing Board in addition to his other duties) who initiated the update of the available data (the results of which were published in October 2017, see "Eurofound, Developments in working life in Europe: EurWORK annual review 2016").

### Focus on equality within the Nordic countries

The approach to work-family reconciliation in the Nordic countries (**Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**) has traditionally always had a strong focus on equality and this stance is broadly supported across all political parties (see, for example, the presentations by Ásdis A. Arnalds and Tine Rostgard). Here, the emphasis is on adopting a "dual earner/dual carer model" that divides tasks equally between the sexes. With a view to increasing paternal involvement in childcare, the Nordic countries have introduced paternity leave (along with an accompanying legal entitlement) and "fathers' quotas" in relation to parental leave ("use it or lose it" provisions). Denmark has a special role to play in this regard. In this country, "fathers' quotas" were only introduced for a time-limited period (1998-2001) and the collective bargaining agreements that plug the gaps in essential legal provisions on parental leave and parental part-time employment only do so selectively and to very different degrees.

Analyses and data for the Nordic countries reveal that the introduction of paternity leave and "fathers' quotas" for parental leave proved to be the most effective measures when it came to achieving a substantial increase in paternal involvement in childcare. A noteworthy example in this regard is **Iceland**, where the uptake rate for "childcare leave" among fathers is 80% and the average leave period is 81.4 days.

### **Legal entitlement to paternity leave and high childcare allowances during the leave period**

**Estonia** and **Lithuania** stand out on account of the legal entitlement to paternity leave that has been established there for fathers following the birth of a child (Estonia: 10 days, Lithuania: 30 days) and their high childcare allowances of up to 100% of average earnings (see, for example, the presentations by Hanna Vsesiov, Vaidotas Kalinauskas). The high childcare allowances and the established legal entitlement result in a high uptake of paternity leave in practice (Estonia: 50%, Lithuania: virtually 100%). Furthermore, the majority of fathers also tend to take the maximum amount of paternity leave to which they are legally entitled (Estonia: 9.6 days, Lithuania: 30 days). In 2017, fathers in **Slovenia** were entitled to 25 days' paid paternity leave (childcare allowance paid at 90% of average earnings, 80% uptake rate) followed by another 25 days of unpaid leave (15% uptake rate). From 2018, fathers in Slovenia will be entitled to 30 days' paid paternity leave and the unpaid period will be abolished (see the presentations by Andrej Del Fabro and Pia Azman).

### **Obligatory uptake of paternity and parental leave by fathers**

Without going into excessive detail about the specific paternity and parental leave provisions of the countries listed below, it is worth singling out the following point (see, for example, the presentations by Monica Parella, Maria do Rosario Fidalgo): one thing that makes certain EU member states stand out with regard to work-family reconciliation is that they legally require fathers to take paternity leave for a certain number of days or weeks (**Belgium**: 3 days; **Italy**: 2 days, from 2018: 4 days; **Portugal**: 10 days) as well as – in the case of Portugal – a certain amount of parental leave (15 days). In these countries, it appears that legal obligations on fathers are an effective way of encouraging them to participate in childcare (at least to a minimum extent and primarily following the birth of a child). Thus, legal measures determine the extent to which fathers take (joint) responsibility for childcare and help to break down existing societal/traditional gender role concepts.

### **Incentives to encourage partners to share parental leave, to claim childcare benefits (in a flexible way) and “fathers' quotas” for benefits**

**Germany** has established more flexible arrangements for shared parental leave. If the leave is shared by the partners, they are granted two additional months instead of just twelve. Parents of children born on or after 1 July 2015 are entitled to **Elterngeld Plus [parental allowance+]**, which gives them more flexibility in drawing their parental allowance. In addition, a **Partnerschaftsbonus [“partnership” bonus]** is granted to parents who work between 25 and 30 hours a week at the same time. This means that their parental allowance is paid for four extra consecutive months. In the second quarter of 2015, 35.7% of fathers in Germany were claiming basic parental allowance; in the second quarter of 2017, 15.2% of fathers were claiming ElterngeldPlus (for an average period of 7.9 months compared with 2.9% for the basic parental allowance) and 6% of parents were claiming the “partnership” bonus (Statistisches Bundesamt –Deutschland 2017 and Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2016). In 2014, approximately 79% of fathers opted to draw

their parental allowance for the minimum period of two months; by contrast, the majority of women (87%) chose the maximum period of twelve months. (Various sources including Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2016).

In **Austria**, the existing childcare allowance models covering births up until 28 February 2017 allow the second parent to draw the benefit for between 2 and 6 months, depending on which model is selected. Among other things, this has definitely resulted in a higher childcare allowance uptake rate among fathers (February 2017: 19.4%, Federal Ministry of Families and Youth), particularly in cases where the models involving just two to three months (“12+2” option, “15+3” option) were selected. Austria has introduced new childcare allowance rules for births that occur on or after 1 March 2017 (see, for example, the presentation by Regine Gaube and the booklet on parental leave, parental part-time employment, family time, etc.).

As of that point, parents will be able to choose between a flexible lump-sum childcare allowance account and an income-dependent childcare allowance scheme. In the case of the lump-sum account, 20% of the benefit is protected and cannot be transferred to the other parent. In the case of the income-dependent scheme, 61 days out of a total of 426 days are protected starting from the birth of the child and cannot be transferred to the other parent. Parents who divide their childcare allowance almost equally (subject to a minimum ratio of 40% to 60%), will also receive an additional **“partnership” bonus** in the form of a one-off payment of EUR 1000 (EUR 500 per parent). In cases where the second parent decides to dedicate all their time to caring for the family immediately following the birth of a child, they can claim a **“family time” bonus** of up to around EUR 700 (although there is no legal entitlement to this and no protection against dismissal). This “family time” bonus has to be consumed over 28 to 31 (consecutive) days and within 91 days of the child's birth. Any “family time” bonus that has been paid out is deducted from any childcare allowance that the father subsequently draws.

Initial data on uptake of the “family time” bonus among fathers indicates that approximately 2.55% are claiming the benefit (Federal Ministry of Families and Youth). Initial data on uptake of the “partnership” bonus will become available in 2018.

#### **Option of transferring leave periods to close relatives**

A point worth noting in relation to the parental leave models adopted by **Slovenia** and **Portugal** is that the periods reserved for the second parent can also be transferred to other carers (such as grandparents). This option should be of particular interest to single or very young parents.

#### **Work-family reconciliation provisions in collective bargaining agreements**

As well as featuring in legal regulations, work-family reconciliation provisions also appear in collective bargaining agreements in various EU member states (Eurofound, 2016). In **Denmark**,

gaps in essential legal provisions on paternity leave and parental part-time employment are selectively “plugged” or compensated for by relevant provisions in collective bargaining agreements. In practice, this means that employees have different levels of entitlement depending on the industry/company in which they work (see, for example, the presentation by Tine Rostgard). **Sweden, France, Austria and Italy** are examples of further countries that also supplement their legislation with other work-family reconciliation provisions covering aspects such as working hours for a good work-life balance, several weeks' paternity leave, parental leave periods that can count towards career-related benefits or additional entitlements.

This conference on equal sharing of childcare between women and men provided a platform for European experts to share their experience with one another. The results revealed that countries which

- have an obligation or legal entitlement to take paternity leave,
- have a period of parental leave reserved exclusively for fathers (the “use it or lose it” principle),
- provide high income compensation during paternity/parental leave,
- have adequate and affordable childcare facilities
- and, for example, allow top-up social insurance payments during parental part-time employment for the benefit of the parents

achieve a particularly high uptake of paternity leave, parental leave and parental part-time employment among fathers and a significantly higher employment rate among women.

The (intermediate) project results from project partners FORBA and L&R Social Research, and the results of the public relations work (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection/Federal Ministry of Health and Women’s Affairs) were likewise presented at the conference and are outlined in chapter 6 of this report.

Presentations were given on some of the projects currently underway in various EU countries. These encompassed topics such as public relations (Finland, Slovenia), a “Gender Bias Check” (Germany) and working hours to enable reconciliation of work and family (Italy), and generated some very interesting ideas and suggestions (see also chapter 6 on public relations work).

Recommended website:  
Gender Bias Check 2017

[http://www.gb-check.de/gb-check/DE/Information\\_in\\_English/english\\_node.html;jsessionid=90C2D45FE1C66DA77C0A0B07F3054BC1.1\\_cid322](http://www.gb-check.de/gb-check/DE/Information_in_English/english_node.html;jsessionid=90C2D45FE1C66DA77C0A0B07F3054BC1.1_cid322)

For instance, those involved in the German project developed the “**Gender Bias Check**” as a “sister tool” for the income check so that companies can scrutinise all their processes and structures from an equality perspective and revise them as necessary. In the course of the project, more companies turned out to be

interested in participating than anticipated, which shows how much demand there is.

### **Expert workshops on male leave in the early weeks/paternity leave and parental leave**

The conference also included two expert workshops. One – facilitated by Katja Gerstmann (BMGF/Women's Affairs) – focused on paternity leave while the other – facilitated by Jorge Cabrita (EUROFOUND) – concentrated on the sharing of parental leave between partners. These were used to discuss current challenges and carefully targeted regulations such as measures for increasing paternal involvement in childcare in the EU member states (see also the project homepage at [www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at)). At the workshop on paternity leave, the experts highlighted that one of the particular advantages of paternity leave in the early months is that it “prepares” fathers for childcare during the subsequent parental leave period – ultimately, strengthening the relationship between the parents and their relationship with the child as well. In addition, paternity leave in the early months helps to combat gender stereotypes – e.g. in the sense that it mitigates the disadvantages women experience in the labour market based on the assumption that they will “get pregnant” – because it means that such stereotypes are now “directed at” men as well.

The participants in the discussion identified several challenges. The first would be to ensure that paternity leave in the early months was geared towards supporting the partner and young family rather than leaving fathers to care for the children on their own (while the mothers went back to work, for instance). This should only happen later, e.g. during the subsequent parental leave period.

During the discussion, the participants stressed that the only way to create sustainable regulations would be to secure state funding and successfully convey the idea that an expansion of parental leave rights for fathers does not mean restricting the parental leave rights of mothers or the joint rights of both parents in any way. For this reason, paternity leave in the early months should be established through additional regulations.

Legal entitlement and protection against dismissal were identified as key success factors for achieving a high uptake rate among fathers, along with the payment of high childcare allowances (paid as state benefits). Participants felt that it would take time to change attitudes held by the population and also by businesses and social partners. In addition, stricter obligations would also have to be imposed on companies in terms of planning parental leave cooperatively, setting a good example (internally) and adopting a dedicated approach to implementation. This would include, for example, getting companies to publish equality reports with details of their work-family reconciliation schemes for men and women. According to the international experts, this could also be adopted as a criterion for the award of public contracts to ensure that these endeavours received governmental backing.

Among other things, the following aspects were discussed at the workshop on parental leave during the conference:

- Incorporation of carefully targeted work-family reconciliation provisions into the relevant substantive laws of the EU member states and establishment of implementation-related (support) measures that help partners to split childcare responsibilities between them in reality.
- Concrete implementation strategies in collective bargaining agreements aimed at improving work-family reconciliation for both parents could play a major role in actually enabling parents to split their childcare responsibilities between them in the future.

## **4. ENCOURAGING PATERNAL INVOLVEMENT AT THE CORPORATE AND SECTORAL LEVELS (NADJA BERGMANN AND CLAUDIA SORGER, L&R SOCIAL RESEARCH)**

### **4.1. Research aims and design**

The subproject undertaken by L&R Social Research examined the necessary conditions and potential for implementing work-family reconciliation strategies for fathers at the corporate level. The aim of this study was to survey the needs and experiences of male employees and their employers within the corporate context in order to draw conclusions about how corporate strategies for fathers can be more effectively established. The research focused particularly on companies operating in male-dominated industries because it would seem that the men employed here face even more obstacles to engage in childcare than those who work in other industries. For the purpose of the study, a “male-dominated” industry was defined as one where more than 70% of the employees are men. In Austria, the branches of the economy that fall into this category are “construction”, “goods manufacturing”, “transport” and “information and communications”.

The researchers carried out a detailed literature review, researched national and international case studies on the topic, put on an international information sharing event with representatives from seven countries (see section 3.1), conducted interviews with experts from across the whole of Austria and organised mutual learning meetings on the topic with representatives from social partner organisations, companies, advisory bodies and other experts (see section 4.3). In addition, a survey of works council members was conducted in collaboration with the women's secretaries from the PROGE trade union and the GPA-djp union. The results of this were then analysed.

The research work by L&R Social Research hinged on company case studies, which were carried out at ten carefully selected companies operating in male-dominated industries. With the aid of these company case studies drawn from across the whole of Austria, the researchers were able to identify the general corporate conditions required to increase paternal involvement. As a prerequisite for selection, the companies had to be actively involved in the area of “reconciliation of work and family for men” in some way already, i.e. they had to have men who were on parental leave already and/or working time models that were conducive to achieving work-family reconciliation such as parental part-time employment. Another important selection criterion was that there had to be a good mix of regional and industry-specific companies as well as a balanced ratio of small, medium and large ones.

For the survey, the researchers managed to get companies of all sizes on board, from big companies such as ÖBB, Cisco and Mondelez right through to small and medium-sized enterprises from all sorts of industries and various regions of Austria. A total of 48 interviews were conducted at these companies with employees, directors, HR managers and members of works councils. The interviews were transcribed word for word and analysed with the MAXQDA analysis software using the content analysis method.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the participating companies.

**Table 1: Overview: Participating companies listed according to total number of employees**

	Number of employees	Industry	Austrian Regions
Brimatech	7	Market and opinion research, aerospace	Vienna
JIPP.IT	14	IT	Styria
Malerei Nutz	14	Painting services	Lower Austria
Schloffer	40	Carpentry	Burgenland
Weichenwerk Wörth	Approx. 130	Metalworking industry	Lower Austria
Münze Österreich (Austrian Mint)	206	Coinage	Vienna
RHI	300 in Leoben, approx. 8000 worldwide	Refractory products, systems and services, industry	Upper Austria
Mondelez	307 in Bludenz, approx. 104,000 worldwide	Foodstuff production	Vorarlberg
ÖBB-Produktion	5975, ÖBB Group: 40,000	Railway company	Vienna
ÖBB-Rail Cargo	73, ÖBB Group: 40,000	Railway company	Vienna
Cisco	155 in Vienna, approx. 72,000 worldwide	IT	Vienna

*Source: Own list based on interviews and Internet research*

At this juncture, L&R Social Research would like to thank all the interviewees for giving up their time and, above all, for sharing their experiences with us.

More in-depth information about the companies can be found on the following site together with a detailed report on the company case studies:

[www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at/unternehmensebene](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at/unternehmensebene)

## 4.2. Main results

A closer look at how paid working hours, parental leave and unpaid reproduction work are distributed reveals that gender-specific biases are changing only very slowly. **Particularly in male-dominated industries, childcare leave for men and measures and working hours to**

**help them achieve a good reconciliation of work and family tend to be the exception** rather than the rule. In addition, there are still many obstacles to achieving a better division of paid employment and unpaid childcare between men and women. This is also backed up by the evidence that has been gathered to date:

- The Vienna Chamber of Labour's "return to employment monitor" (see Riesenfelder & Danzer 2017) shows that men's willingness to claim childcare allowance depends on the industry with which they are associated: For example, male employees in the "goods manufacturing" sector take less time out to look after their children than those who work in the services sector. This suggests that it is **more difficult to get men/for men to take parental leave in male-dominated industries**. Nevertheless, one positive point to note is that even male-dominated industries have seen a continual increase in the number of men claiming childcare allowance over recent years: between 2006 and 2014, there was a twofold increase in the proportion of men drawing childcare allowance.
- In addition, studies reveal that male-dominated industries are not just difficult environments for achieving a high uptake of parental leave but also for achieving reconciliation of work and family in general. In male-dominated industries, men with childcare obligations work a lot of overtime and reconciliation of work and family is primarily facilitated through monetary support (such as bonuses) and **barely at all through working time policies or a working culture that is conducive to achieving reconciliation of work and family**. For instance, male-dominated industries have a significantly lower proportion of flexible working hours models than other industries. At the same time, they have a higher share of shift models and rigid working hours models that can make it more difficult for men (and women) to achieve reconciliation of work and family (see Bergmann, Danzer & Schmatz 2014, Sorger 2014, Bergmann & Schiffbänker 2016).
- A look at the **average number of paid working hours** likewise indicates that **male-dominated industries tend to be difficult environments for achieving reconciliation of work and family**. These figures reveal above-average numbers of men (and to some extent women) in full-time employment: the **percentage of men employed full time** in the "construction" and "goods manufacturing" sectors stands at **more than 95%**. And if the percentage of **part-time** male employees with children under the age of 18 was not low enough already, in the industries under consideration here it is **virtually 0%**. At the same time, employees are expected to work **a huge amount of overtime**, with more than 30% of male employees working overtime in the "information and communications" and "transport" industries, in particular. Even though the average number of hours worked by men has decreased slightly over recent years, including in the male-dominated industries, this trend is still apparent. However, the figure for women decreased even further, meaning that the working time gap in Austria is not closing – in contrast to the trend that can be observed across the EU as a whole (all data:

Sonderauswertung der Mikrozensus-Arbeitskräfteerhebung 2004-2016 [Special analysis of microcensus/labour force survey 2004-2016], own calculations).

Against this rather sobering backdrop of evidence concerning reconciliation of work and family in male-dominated industries, carefully targeted company case studies were carried out in these industries, revealing yet another new trend: company managers are responding to the increasing desire of young fathers to play a more active role in childcare than previous generations. Below is a summary of the most important findings.

#### **4.2.1. Demand from men for reconciliation of work and family solutions is rising – and companies are responding**

*“As soon as the first fellow takes parental leave, the second one says 'well if he can do it, I can do it too'. (...) Six years ago, there was this guy who set the ball rolling. The others then started grappling with the issue, which led to men taking parental leave as well as women.”*

*(Interview with the management of a small company)*

*“We've currently got a young colleague who is a technician and who went on parental leave for three months. But it really isn't an issue. It's completely accepted.”*

*(Interview with the management of a large company)*

*“We have motivated our new father to take parental leave as well. All the men who work for us have taken it.”*

*(Interview with the management of a small company)*

The interviews with male employees and managers indicate that a shift in roles is taking place and that men now have a new definition of normality, which is bound up with a desire to spend time with their children and get actively involved in childcare. Over recent years, more and more male employees have started to make their wishes felt and, increasingly, have been actively expressing them. A certain snowball effect can be observed here: if one male employee takes parental leave or switches to parental part-time employment, others will follow his example (he “lights the way”). Our company case studies also contain reports of older colleagues who are largely understanding of these developments and who are accepting of young colleagues that take parental leave.

As a result, the proportion of young men taking parental leave has increased significantly at the companies we surveyed. The trend towards male parental leave is particularly apparent in the company case studies, where there is a clear tendency towards short male parental

leave periods, i.e. in most cases, the period ranges from two to six months, with only a small number of men opting for six. In the words of one senior manager we interviewed, short-term male parental leave is becoming “more and more cool”.

A change in attitudes is also evident at the management level. Many of the senior managers we surveyed were, themselves, having time off to look after their families. They described this time as extremely important and said that it played a key role in shaping their stance as line managers. In this regard, there is clearly increased awareness of the fact that employees with small children do not have the same amount of time to offer as other employees.

Senior managers who have taken parental leave themselves are also seen as role models within the company. As soon as reconciliation of work and family starts to be regarded as fairly normal at management level, this acceptance has a positive impact on how work-family reconciliation requests from (male) employees are handled. For instance, at one of the small companies studied by L&R Social Research, both the Managing Director and the Technical Director were on parental leave. These examples show that even senior managers do not necessarily have to be present continuously if appropriate organisational arrangements are put in place.

### **Positive proactive communication concerning “men and reconciliation of work and family” and a company climate that is “father-friendly”**

In order for the work-family reconciliation preferences of men to be accommodated, the men involved think it is particularly important for the company to have a positive attitude towards the issue. At many companies and within society as a whole, it is still not considered the norm for men and women to share childcare tasks and parental leave between them. Consequently, there is clearly a need for companies to give the right signals.

*“For example, when I mentioned at a team meeting that I was going to be a father, everyone jumped up out of their seats to congratulate me. And then I was asked: Well? How do you intend to share the work between you? How long are you going on parental leave for?”*

*(Interview with employee at a small company)*

*“It was at that very moment that I decided to take parental leave for any subsequent children as well, because the company facilitated it. Some of my colleagues have already been allowed to take parental leave. (...) Most companies do not allow their male workers to go on parental leave that easily.”*

*(Interview with employee at a large company)*

The interviews with the male employees (both with and without children) clearly reveal a perception that parental leave requests within the company are (at least to some degree) dealt with positively and that work-family reconciliation concerns can be raised in general and are taken into account where possible.

Virtually all companies encourage their male employees to talk about parental leave and reconciliation of work and family, and to take advantage of what is on offer. They do this by actively communicating with them at team meetings, during appraisal interviews or during direct conversations with line managers.

#### **4.2.2. Male parental leave is supported – predominantly for a period of two months**

*“They were only ever away for two months, which is not really such a big deal. In that amount of time, employees are not going to fall out of the loop.”*

*(Interview with the HR department of a medium-sized company)*

*“I think that two months is a bit short. A longer period would have been nicer. A colleague of mine went on parental leave for six months, which allowed him to share in the child's life massively.”*

*(Interview with employee at a small company)*

At the companies we studied, parental leave for fathers has become a corporate reality, i.e. leave requests from men are regarded as fairly normal. Most of the men who were on parental leave in the examples we studied had opted for a period of two months. Of these, nearly all were drawing income-dependent childcare allowance (12+2 months). From the perspective of the companies, an absence of two months is relatively easy to organise because it is not usually necessary to appoint a stand-in person. Instead, the work is “absorbed” by the team, e.g. through overtime.

Longer periods of absence are seen as a problem by line managers (and also by the employees themselves) and it is often argued that the employee is “irreplaceable”. Even though the arguments against a longer period of parental leave also apply to women, they are interpreted differently in relation to men. This is because taking a longer period of time off work to fulfil childcare obligations is still regarded as “more normal” for women than for men. This calls for a change in thinking and a willingness on the part of companies to reorganise their systems. In our company case studies, the men who took parental leave reflected on their experiences, revealing that they are clearly aware of how a two-month period of parental leave does not have the same effect as a longer one.

*“For me, it was more like going on an adventure holiday. Two or three months, and it was even summer, and so it wasn't exactly real life. I think that*

*six months would have been a tad more stressful. I don't think that a year's parental leave would be quite so much of an adventure as two months."*

*(Interview with employee at a medium-sized company)*

None of the companies we surveyed had any provision for a paid or unpaid period of paternity leave (i.e. male leave in the early weeks). However, given that most fathers are especially keen to spend the first few weeks after the birth with their partner and baby, many interviewees made their own arrangements so they could stay at home at the beginning (see also section 5.2.2). Most of the employees surveyed managed this by taking longer holidays during the period straight after the birth. Although this self-arranged time at home is supported by the companies in principle, it is seen as a "decision by the individual". By contrast, the idea of introducing binding paternity leave regulations is generally rejected by senior managers.

#### **4.2.3. Working hours: The current focus within companies is on working patterns rather than on reducing the number of working hours**

*"Word has got around about a leave model but when it comes to a guy being able to reduce his normal working hours, that's something that I don't think has filtered down at all."*

*(Interview with employee at a medium-sized company)*

*"We work shifts in Production. We've now arranged with the boss for some of us to start at 6 a.m. so that we can get home earlier. We wouldn't be able to start any earlier than that anyway. The arrangement works very well."*

*(Interview with employee at a small company)*

It is striking that discussions around male work-family reconciliation strategies at the companies focus very heavily on flexible working hours to enable a combination of full-time employment, paid employment and childcare. Although there are also a few examples of men reducing their working hours for a certain period of time, the emphasis is generally on how reconciliation of work and family can still be achieved even though the employee carries on working full time.

#### **Development of working hours models to facilitate reconciliation of work and family**

Many companies are currently focusing on the development of demand-based working hours models that also take account of employees' needs – within this context, companies are increasingly coming to realise that men may have work-family reconciliation needs as well and the topic is not automatically treated as a "women's issue".

An important starting point for such models is the option of flexible working hours or – where possible – the extension of flexible working hours to all groups of employees. Smaller companies, in particular, have to juggle what they call “hand-knitted working hours” in an attempt to facilitate well coordinated working hours in consultation with their employees.

Medium and, in particular, larger companies are increasingly developing structured working hours models that are designed to help as many employee groups as possible to work the hours that match their needs. For example, companies are offering models with different clocking on and off times and/or are developing models that manage to function with just four working days, etc. The idea behind these is that the employees are able to choose the model that suits them best.

It is relatively rare to find examples of companies that actively promote the option of reducing one's working hours. However, here are two: a large company that allows its employees to choose how many hours they want to work a week from a minimum of 15 up to a maximum of 40 with the option of changing this (employees get to choose every two

#### Example: Maximum accommodation of working hour preferences linked to reconciliation of work and family

*“Our approach is to ask people: What would the ideal situation be for you?”*

(Interview with works council at a large company)

At this large company, the HR managers and works council came up with a common aim: the working hour preferences of employees should be accommodated to the maximum possible extent, not only with regard to working patterns but also the number of hours worked. The **Anchoring reconciliation of work and family in collective bargaining agreements and employer/works council agreement** to switch to **parental part-time employment until the child turns seven has been extended up to the age of ten**. Within this context, efforts are made to satisfy all the parties involved by devising arrangements that meet the needs of both the company and the individual. The works council is playing an active role here and corresponding agreements have been concluded between the company managers and the works council. As well as extending parental part-time employment up until the child's tenth birthday, great importance was also attached to enabling all groups of employees/all working areas to have the option of parental part-time employment.

years), and another one that promotes (extended) parental part-time employment.

#### **4.2.4. Reconciliation of work and family in conjunction with shift work?**

When it comes to accommodating the needs of employees who want to reconcile work with family commitments, shift work poses a particular challenge to the organisation of working hours. Both the literature and various company case studies reveal that companies often differentiate between different groups of employees: it would appear that the childcare needs of some groups are easier to accommodate than those of others. However, even in the problematic areas – such as shift work – greater efforts are being made to find solutions for those groups of employees that are so often greeted with the premature response: “it's just not possible”.

At this juncture, various approaches covering every aspect of shift work should be highlighted. The companies we studied are having to juggle different working hours models or are attempting to modify existing models to match the work-family reconciliation preferences of their employees.

The process of designing new shift models or adapting existing ones in line with the work-family reconciliation needs of employees often starts with a survey to find out what employees actually want. If the childcare duties of male employees are also factored into the planning, it can go a long way towards creating shift models that are conducive to achieving a better reconciliation of work and family life.

In fact, our examples reveal that a key starting point is to engage in active communication and to grapple with the preferences of employees.

### Example: How shift work is organised

The companies affected by shift work (in the widest sense) or by coordinated working hours are attempting to tackle the issue of reconciliation of work and family and shift work in very different ways. In summary, the following starting points were identified on the basis of the survey of needs:

- **Adapt clocking on and off times** to meet the need for the reconciliation of work and family
- Establish **separate “family-friendly” (part-time) shifts or specific shifts** alongside the “normal” shifts
- Experiment with **different planning models** with the involvement of the employees and the works council: “How can we find the solution that works best for the majority of people?” (focus on reconciliation needs rather than on rank or age)
- Establish **separate and fixed working hour ranges** for specific need situations – often time-limited
- Customised **individual, interim and emergency solutions**
- In addition, it is helpful – regardless of which model is offered – to have a **longer planning phase** so that employees have more time to make arrangements with their partners and any other carers.

Particularly in medium-sized and large companies, active works councils have an important role to play here – both in terms of communicating relevant information to (male) employees (e.g. the fact that they are also entitled to switch to parental part-time employment) and in terms of designing the working hours models so that they line up properly with work-family reconciliation needs.

The company case studies analysed by L&R Social Research definitely show that the issue of reconciliation of work and family for men is – albeit only slowly – making its way into everyday corporate life even in the case of male-dominated sectors. Overall, there is still a lot of persuading to do within the sectors so that they come to regard childcare not merely as a “women's issue” and not just as a matter for the “individual” but also as a “men's issue” that falls under the responsibility of the company. The examples demonstrate that – in principle – this can even be achieved within these working areas. They also show how the process of better aligning company norms with the work-family reconciliation needs of employees can succeed.

### 4.3. Conclusions and recommendations

The results of the empirical surveys were presented and discussed at three mutual learning meetings in Vienna, Salzburg and Klagenfurt that had been organised by L&R Social Research as well as at a meeting with social partner organisations. FORBA presented the results of the interviews it had conducted with (expectant) couples about the uptake of male parental leave, a switch to parental part-time employment by the father and how the couples divided (planned to divide) the childcare between them (see section 5.2). L&R Social Research reported back on the results of its company case studies in the male-dominated industries of “construction”, “goods manufacturing”, “transport” and “information and communications”. Together with experts – from social partner organisations, companies, advice centres and regional organisations – strategies were discussed with a view to encouraging a fairer distribution of parental leave, childcare and paid working hours.

On the basis of these, the participants then discussed some recommended actions for society, politicians and businesses.

Below is a summary of the conclusions and recommendations that were reached for the corporate level:

#### **Anchoring reconciliation of work and family in collective bargaining agreements and employer/works council agreements**

At both the company and sector level, there is a lack of work-family reconciliation strategies that expressly consider fathers as well as mothers and that actively encourage more men to take parental leave and switch to parental part-time employment.

Even at the collective bargaining agreement level, the issue is still not being given enough attention. For instance, although paternity leave has been incorporated into a few collective bargaining agreements, it is not always accompanied by protection against dismissal and a legal entitlement.

The company case studies show that members of works councils have an important role to play in terms of ensuring that work-family reconciliation strategies become firmly anchored in corporate life. They can introduce initiatives for improving work-family reconciliation that also get included in employer/works council agreements, e.g. they can ensure that work-family reconciliation questions are firmly incorporated into appraisal interviews or can initiate company nurseries.

#### **Positive communication, information and networking on the subject of reconciliation of work and family for male employees**

Positive communication around work-family reconciliation that also appeals to men has a major contribution to make when it comes to creating a company climate that is father-

friendly. As revealed by the company case studies, men think that it is particularly important for them to know that the company has a positive attitude towards male work-family reconciliation if their preferences are to be accommodated. At many companies and within society as a whole, it is still not considered the norm for men and women to share childcare tasks and parental leave between them. It is precisely for this reason that there is a need for the right signals to be given. Actively communicating with male employees at the company so that they are encouraged to talk about parental leave and work-family reconciliation, and to take advantage of what is on offer can be seen as an initial step in the right direction. The issue can be addressed at team meetings, incorporated firmly into appraisal interviews or discussed directly with a line manager. In this way, reconciliation of work and family life stops being perceived as a purely “private” matter and – particularly in highly specialised occupations – it encourages loyalty to the company among employees.

By ensuring that active fathers are visible and able to network with one another, companies can help to counter the “exotic status” that these men often feel gets attributed to them. It also enables companies to adapt to what society and individuals want to see in terms of fathers getting more involved in childcare. In this way, key contact people can be established within the company and they can pass their experience and information on to other (expectant) fathers.

Men in management positions who have taken advantage of parental leave and parental part-time employment are very strongly perceived by employees to be role models; that is why their actions should be made more visible.

In the case of large companies, mission statements that incorporate work-family reconciliation for men as well as women are also beneficial.

### **Management of parental leave: Legal regulations and the ability to plan for the benefit of fathers as well as mothers**

At the companies we studied, fathers generally take parental leave for no more than two or (as a maximum) three months. At those companies where several fathers (and also mothers) were on parental leave, it was clear that male parental leave is “negotiated” on a case-by-case basis between the employees and the company, and that the employees feel very responsible for the amount of leave they take and – in particular – for the conundrum of who will be able to do their work while they are away. In this regard, there are not enough positive examples to show that taking parental leave for more than two or three months is actually feasible.

At a legislative level, it is particularly important to have legal regulations in place to govern parental leave, male leave in the early weeks, childcare allowance and parental part-time employment. The possible childcare allowance periods that are offered determine how individuals and couples respond in terms of claiming this benefit. Women tend to choose the

longest possible option while men tend to select the shortest possible childcare allowance/leave period available (as was also evident from the company case studies). Consequently, stipulating a longer minimum claim period for childcare allowance would result in fathers taking parental leave for longer.

The interviews with male employees clearly revealed that most fathers want to take time off work in the weeks following the birth of a child and that this is very important to them. Given that there are no regulations for paternity leave in the early weeks, the fathers have to organise this time themselves by taking holiday or time off in lieu. The flip side of individual solutions such as these is that they result in considerable legal uncertainty. In addition, they create unequal access to this form of informal “paternity leave” depending on how willing a particular company is to accommodate it. Even the recent introduction of the “family time” bonus seems to have done little to change this state of affairs because there was no accompanying introduction of a legal entitlement under employment law. Consequently, it is particularly important that a legal entitlement to paternity leave be established in the employment legislation governing the private sector as well so that fathers no longer have to worry about losing their jobs. This would send out a clear signal about the importance of paternal involvement in childcare – including at the corporate level.

Overall, it seems that very few companies have so far adopted a “parental leave management” system. Establishing a systematic system of this kind that also applied to fathers could greatly facilitate the practical implementation of work-family reconciliation at companies.

### **Father-friendly working (hours) models and parental part-time employment for fathers as well as mothers**

Specifically in the male-dominated industries we studied, full-time employment is the norm and any prolonged deviations from this norm are difficult for employees and employers to countenance. In this context, it is obvious that there is a lack of information about parental part-time employment; for instance, people are unaware that fathers and mothers are both allowed to work part time at the same time. Most are also unaware that it is not just possible to reduce your working hours but also to change your working pattern. Given that the legal entitlement to parental part-time employment only applies to companies with 21 employees or more, it is important to establish equality with regard to parental part-time employment so that everyone has a legally protected right to reduce their working hours for a better reconciliation of work and family.

In the context of shift work, different shift models can facilitate improved work-family reconciliation – contrary to the widespread argument that shift work at male-dominated companies cannot be organised in any other way. There are positive examples to demonstrate that reconciliation of work and family can be improved at male-dominated

companies (as well) by adjusting the shift models or introducing additional shifts. The important thing here is to keep an eye on shift-specific pay and bonuses and – in particular – to identify the working time needs of employees as a first step.

Different levels of importance are attached to full-time work and (near full-time) part-time employment and this view needs to be challenged, particularly within the male-dominated industries studied by L&R Social Research. Although there are also a few examples of men reducing their working hours for a certain period of time, the emphasis is generally on how a good work-family reconciliation can still be achieved even though the employee carries on working full time. This calls for a change in thinking and a willingness on the part of companies to reorganise their systems so that men are also able to reduce their working hours, at least in certain phases. In this regard, senior managers have a particular responsibility to set a good example by adopting models such as job sharing or top job sharing and by dealing sensitively with a pronounced long-hours culture.

## 5. HOW COUPLES DIVIDE PAID EMPLOYMENT AND CHILDCARE BETWEEN THEM (INGRID MAIRHUBER AND KARIN SARDADVAR, FORBA)

### 5.1. Aims and methodological approach

As part of the main project on Men and Reconciliation of Work and Family: Supporting the Path to Gender Equal Distribution of Parental Leave and Working Time, the Working Life Research Centre (FORBA) carried out the subproject “Fathers’s Involvement in Family Care Work: Plans and Practices”. This study investigated the decision-making and bargaining processes that parents engage in as a couple when deciding how to split parental leave, parental part-time employment and childcare between them. The aim of the research was to gain a better understanding of why there are such striking differences between the **desired level of paternal involvement** in parental leave and childcare, **and the level that is actually achieved**. Consequently, the FORBA project concentrated on the **yawning gap between wants and reality** for partners wishing to share their childcare responsibilities.

To explore this question, Dr Ingrid Mairhuber (a political scientist) and Dr Karin Sardadvar (a sociologist) carried out both an **international literature study** and an **empirical study**. The empirical research was based on an **innovative qualitative research design**, which involved interviewing couples at two different points in time. Qualitative empirical social research usually focuses on a small number of cases but these are carefully selected and examined in depth using special analytical methods.

The heart of the empirical research consisted of detailed **interviews with nine couples at two different points in time**. One interview took place during the pregnancy or in the early phase of parental leave and another just before the parents started sharing parental leave or at a later point during the parental leave period. In the initial round, ten mixed-sex couples from various federal states and with different employment and family configurations were interviewed. The researchers managed to interview nine of these a second time several months or a year further down the line.

Specifically, what this approach allows is an examination of how **expectations concerning the division of childcare change over time**. In particular, however, it can be used to trace the point at which a pre-planned division of responsibilities by partners may **fail in reality** – or what **can help to make the plans achievable**.

For the purpose of understanding the results, it is important to realise that all the couples interviewed were still subject to the **childcare allowance models that applied prior to the reform for births occurring on or after 1 March 2017** (for details of the exact regulations, see Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz, 2017).

Information on **case selection**: This project focused a) on parents living together as a couple, b) parents in mixed-sex partnerships and c) couples where the plan was for the father to be involved in childcare in some form. Thus, certain other relevant family configurations within society were not investigated by this project, e.g. single parents, separated parents, same-sex couples with children or parents who wanted to split their responsibilities in a completely traditional manner. Consequently, the ten couples studied had some characteristics in common but also differed in various respects: The sample varied in terms of region (federal state; urban/rural setting), sectors (the emphasis was on male-dominated sectors); company size (large, medium-sized and small companies were all featured among the employers); education (the level of formal education attained by the parents varied: apprenticeship, secondary level, university degree) and the arrangements for paternal involvement (parental leave/childcare allowance model, (parental) part-time employment, (informal) paternity leave in the early weeks, sabbatical). With regard to field access (i.e. the process of finding suitable interviewees), FORBA was assisted by two other project partners: L&R Social Research and the Vienna Chamber of Labour.

The results of the research project were discussed with L&R Social Research at a series of **workshops attended by political players and special interest groups**. Based on the results of the empirical research, the literature research and the workshops, FORBA and L&R Social Research drew up some **recommended actions** for society, politicians and businesses (see sections 5.3 and 4.3). Selected findings and case studies have been published on the project website at <http://maennerundvereinbarkeit.at/haushaltsebene> These are presented in an easy-to-understand form so that they are accessible to nearly everybody.

## **5.2. Main results**

### **5.2.1. Male parental leave: The fear of being disadvantaged and the desire for a career break**

The total percentage of fathers in Austria who claimed childcare allowance in April 2017 stood at 19.4%. However, fathers usually only take advantage of a small part of what the selected childcare allowance model has to offer. They clearly tend to take the smallest possible number of months (for details of the exact regulations, see Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz, 2017).

#### **Unclear regulations**

The fact that the legal entitlement to parental leave under employment law is separate from the childcare allowance entitlement and that the rules covering the different childcare allowance options (including the additional earnings limit) are so complex means, firstly, that it is difficult for expectant parents to get the information they need. Secondly, the case studies reveal that male parental leave preferences cannot always be implemented due to a lack of information. The new childcare allowance regulations covering births from March

2017 will not really change anything in this regard. Particularly in less common situations (e.g. frequent changes to the number of working hours in the past), parents sometimes plan their leave with a great deal of uncertainty because they do not have essential information

#### Case study: Mr I., salaried employee

Mr I. was on parental leave with his second child and was drawing childcare allowance, although he would also like to have done this in the case of his first child. However, Mr and Ms I. did not grasp the difference between parental leave and childcare allowance until very late on in the process. As a result, they missed the point at which Mr I. could have taken over responsibility for childcare as the father in their scenario.

*“Somehow we just didn't manage to get our heads around it; it simply didn't register. (...) But I still thought that everything would work out OK. It was only in the middle of the process that I – that I realised: 'Oh, bother! – It's not going to work'. And that's because the systems for parental leave and for childcare allowance are completely separate from each other.” (Mr I.)*

to hand.

#### **The desire for a career break as a motive for taking parental leave among fathers**

Different men have different motives for taking parental leave. These can be family-related, child-related, partner-related or personal to the man concerned (see Pfahl/Reuyß 2009; Richter 2012; Kapella et al. 2011; Possinger 2013; Holzinger et al. 2014; McKay/Doucet 2010; Almqvist et al. 2011). This research reveals an additional motive: for men, a period of parental leave or parental part-time employment can come as a welcome opportunity to take an already longed-for career break or reduction in working hours. A key pattern to emerge from the couple case studies was that many men are keen to create some distance from their job after many years of focusing heavily on their career. This suggests that closer connections should be forged between the different discussions that take place within society on the subjects of the male breadwinner model, the full-time norm and fatherhood.

### Case study: Mr C., media engineer

Ever since he started working for his current employer, Mr C. has never been away from the office for more than two to three weeks. Consequently, he also wants to use the parental leave period to create some distance between himself and his job. At the same time, he thinks that the parental leave period will provide him with fresh motivation for his job.

*“The way I currently see it is – well perhaps it's partly about being able to let go of work so that I actually start missing it a bit. Of course, you do have a child and you have to spend time looking after it, but perhaps it's something a bit different from having to go to the office every day.” (Mr C.)*

#### **Sole responsibility versus the desire for “family time”**

Two fundamentally different motives for taking parental leave can be discerned among men. Firstly, some fathers want to be the child's main carer for a while so that they can establish their own relationship with her/him and so that they can also come to appreciate what the situation is like for a parent on leave. Secondly, there are those who want “family time”, i.e. a period during which the entire young family can spend a lot of time together. In this sort of scenario, the mother may, for example, remain at home unpaid or work short part-time hours while the father is on parental leave. The reality is that male parental leave takes many different forms with regard to how tasks are actually split between the parents.

#### **Anticipated disadvantages of parental leave**

Fathers spend a lot of time reflecting on how a period of parental leave or a reduction in working hours is likely to affect their career, career prospects or job security. This is an important aspect of the decision-making process (see Bygren/Duvander 2006; Vogt/Pull 2010; McKay/Doucet 2010; Possinger 2013; Mairhuber et al. 2010; Wagner-Pinter 2014; Dechant/Schulz 2014). By contrast, women nearly always take parental leave and/or go part-time even if they expect this to have a negative impact on their career.

In some cases, men – and women – find themselves professionally disadvantaged if they go on parental leave. However, the case studies reveal that the mere fear or anticipation of being put at a disadvantage can be enough to deter men from taking advantage of parental leave (or the option of parental part-time employment). Sometimes, simply the fear of negative reactions is sufficient to stop men from going on parental leave or from even expressing a desire to do so. However, case studies of men taking parental leave reveal that the anticipated disadvantages do not necessarily actually materialise.

### Case study: Mr A., IT employee

Mr A. had taken parental leave for his first child and intended to do the same for his second. However, he subsequently decided against this because of restructuring measures at his company and his career plans.

*“Yes, and as far as the projects are concerned, I don't know what the overall impact would be if, in the middle of the interviews, I were – so to speak – if I were to then go off on parental leave.” (Mr A.)*

Although nobody had explicitly raised any objections to the idea of parental leave, Mr A. was too worried that a period of parental leave at the current time would damage his career prospects.

*“Exactly, nobody said anything to me, but I still felt it.” (Mr A.)*

The empirical results show that a sharper distinction needs to be drawn between the disadvantages that fathers fear will result from parental leave and those they actually experience – as well as between the different types of disadvantages involved. For some men, it is the fear of career disadvantages, for others it is the atmosphere within the company and for others still it is worrying about how to survive or whether they might lose their job.

#### **Short male parental leave periods and how tasks are split between the partners**

Even if fathers do manage to fulfil their desire for parental leave, they generally take it for a much shorter period than mothers. The manner in which the childcare allowance models have so far been presented (“12+2” option, “15+3” option etc.) plays a role here. This format suggests an uneven split; couples typically take this to mean that the father is only meant to have the couple of “extra” months.

However, short male parental leave periods can only bring about a permanent change in the way tasks are divided between the genders to a limited extent (Bünning 2015). At the same time, only short periods of male parental leave have so far been accepted at a corporate level in many places – while long periods of female parental leave are a reality (see also chapter 4). In addition, the study shows that the **general legal framework** also serves as an important guide: some couples split childcare allowance between them based very closely on the existing models – e.g. because they think it would be a shame to miss out on what they are entitled to.

#### **Financial losses and the gender pay gap**

One of the key enablers of authentic joint decisions by couples is the closure of the gender pay gap. At the same time, income only goes some way towards explaining how parental

leave and paid employment are split between couples. If both partners have a similar income or if the woman's is higher, "income" becomes less significant as an explanatory factor and other aspects come to the fore, such as the desire to breastfeed for a certain period or gender-specific ideas about parenthood (see Bekkengen 2002; Ehnis 2009; Nentwich 2000; Peukert 2015; Schmidt et al. 2015, Almqvist 2008).

### **Optional for men but the "norm" or the "duty" for women**

On the whole, male parental leave is still currently seen as optional while female parental leave continues to be regarded as the "norm" or the "duty" of the mother if the father decides not to take it (see Bekkengen 2002). Thus, although male parental leave is changing the opportunities for fathers to get involved in childcare at a societal level, it is not challenging the structural conception of where the mother's main sphere of responsibility lies. In order to bring about a fundamental shift in society, extensive changes are, therefore, still required with regard to gender-specific ascriptions and responsibilities.

### **5.2.2. Paternity leave: When reality is ahead of the legal situation**

As regards male leave in the early weeks following the birth of a child (also referred to in Austria as "Papawochen" = "daddy weeks" or "Papamonat" = "daddy month"), Austria only has legal provisions in place for public service employees and as part of individual collective bargaining agreements (see Bundeskanzleramt 2017).

Although the "family time" bonus for births occurring on or after 1 March 2017 will bring about a financial improvement, no separate regulation is being introduced under employment law at the same time (for the exact regulations, see Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz 2017).

### **Intensive need for paternity leave in the early weeks felt by both parents**

According to the results of the case studies, the introduction of the "family time" bonus meets some very real needs: even in the case of couples with relatively traditional attitudes who do not necessarily want to share their parental leave, there is a clear need for the father to take the first few weeks after the birth off work so that the couple can adjust to their new way of life together and spend time looking after the newborn baby.

There are many reasons why fathers want to take paternity leave in the first few weeks. A particularly important one is the desire to ease the burden for the mother and provide her with practical support, particularly after a difficult birth or a caesarean section (see also McKay/Doucet 2010).

### **Self-arranged paternity leave**

Due to the lack of legal entitlement for private sector employees, the men from the interviewed couples had to organise their own paternity leave for the first few weeks – or at least the first few days – after the birth (see also section 4.2.2). They did this by combining holiday leave, unpaid leave and other individual arrangements. Thus, paternity leave in the first few weeks is already a reality in families and for employers – although no broad legal

#### **Case study: Mr B., software developer**

Mr B. is setting some of his annual holiday leave aside so he can take paternity leave. The couple has already calculated how much holiday he will need to take: thanks to the two or three extra days granted under the collective bargaining agreement and a couple of days' flexitime, he will be able to spend about four weeks at home after the birth. He will then still have a couple of days left for Christmas and a week's holiday towards the end of the summer.

framework has been put in place so far.

### **Lack of security within the new model**

The desire for paternity leave in the early weeks after the birth of the child is typically shared by mothers and fathers alike and the “family time” bonus that was introduced in 2017 to help make this a reality offers some financial improvement. However, the new model still fails to take account of the factors that parents regard as important and which – because they are lacking – currently deter some men from taking paternity leave in the early weeks if their job is insecure or their income is low: a legal entitlement, specific protection against dismissal and an allowance that does not entail any financial losses (currently, the bonus is approximately EUR 700 per month and this is deducted from any childcare allowance that the father subsequently claims.)

### **5.2.3. Parental part-time employment: Freedom versus disadvantages**

Since 2004, both parents have been legally entitled to switch to parental part-time employment until the child reaches the age of seven. In addition, there is a specific protection against dismissal until the child turns four. Alongside this, parents are also able to make changes to their working patterns. Nevertheless, these provisions only apply to those who have at least three years of service at a company with more than 20 employees. However, in all other cases, it is still possible for parental part-time employment to be agreed between employers and employees (for details of the regulations, see Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz 2017).

### **Information gaps in the knowledge of parents**

According to the case studies, there are also gaps in the knowledge of parents as regards the details of how parental part-time employment can be put into practice – e.g. the fact that parental part-time employment can be agreed at smaller companies, that parents can just change their working patterns instead of reducing their working hours and that both parents can switch to parental part-time employment at the same time.

### **Motives for men to switch to parental part-time employment**

With regard to parental part-time employment, both the legal aspects (such as a specific protection against dismissal) and the family-related ones (such as the opportunity to care directly for your child as a parent) are perceived as benefits. Other important motives that encourage fathers to switch to parental part-time employment are the desire to facilitate their partner's career or to broaden their own life so that it does not focus exclusively on paid work.

### **Negative experiences and challenges**

The experience of switching to parental part-time employment does not always turn out to be positive in reality: some fathers have witnessed sanctions being imposed on colleagues or report work intensification. This means that although there is a reduction in the number of hours worked by the father – and in turn his income – there is no corresponding decrease in workload. Moreover, a reduction in hours does not just affect current income but also the employee's future pension amount. Currently, these consequences are predominantly borne by women because, overall, it is still rare for fathers to be employed on a part-time basis. In 2016, for instance, 75.1% of female employees aged 25 to 49 who had children under the age of 15 were employed on a part-time basis. For men in the same age bracket, the figure was just 6.9% (Statistik Austria 2017).

### **Booklet: PARENTAL LEAVE, PARENTAL PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT, FAMILY TIME, ETC.**

There is a booklet available on the website of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection that contains the exact details of the childcare allowance rules for births occurring on or after 1 March 2017 as well as information about the “family time” bonus and parental part-time employment. To access this booklet, click the following link:

<https://broschuere.service.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=393>.

### Case study: Mr I., salaried employee

Mr I. switched to parental part-time employment for two years following the birth of his first child by reducing his working hours to 32. However, there was no change in his actual workload during this period of parental part-time employment, only a reduction in his income. Therefore, he did not opt for parental part-time employment in the case of his second child. Nevertheless, he reached an agreement with his employer to work from home one day a week.

#### **Part-time work for both partners is both an opportunity and a challenge**

If both parents decide to work a high number of part-time hours (e.g. if each parent works 30 hours per week), this can also mean – depending on how much external childcare they use – that although they can meet their childcare needs effectively and achieve an adequate income, they are not able to spend very much time together as a couple. Some of the couples featured in the case studies also give rise to the concern that if both parents concentrate simultaneously on paid employment and on childcare under a given set of parameters (e.g. if the norm within the company is to work full time), then the demands on them may become excessive. Among other things, this calls for a shift in corporate culture and a change in thinking with regard to the view that the ideal employee is someone who can devote all their time and energy to the company (see Acker 1990).

#### **5.2.4. Working hours and flexibility: Protection against overtime and long-term impact**

##### **Part time versus overtime**

Men do not always regard part-time employment as desirable or feasible. On becoming a father, it is sometimes much more a question of reducing the amount of time spent working over and above the official number of full-time hours. The main reasons why men want to limit the number of hours they actually work are to have time for their children and to be able to support their partner. However, in the real lives of these men, parental part-time employment is not very attractive – what they really need is help in reducing the amount of overtime. It is particularly difficult to reduce the amount of overtime in the case of “all-in” employment contracts and when the company has a “long-hours culture”. This calls for a debate within society that not only centres on full-time and part-time work, but also on overtime, and which addresses issues such as “all-in” employment contracts and the “long-hours culture”.

### Case study: Mr E., IT employee

Mr E. has returned to his full-time job after a two-month period of male parental leave. Having already taken one year of female parental leave, Ms E is now taking a further year of unpaid leave. Since the birth of his son, Mr E. has been trying to work less overtime so that he can spend more time with his son and assist his wife with the childcare tasks.

***“The thing is that I now feel a stronger urge to get away from work. Not just because of our child but also because she [the partner] needs me more. Before, it was perhaps easier to think – oh well, it's only my wife who's at home waiting for me. But now they are both there waiting for me and she needs me there much more.” (Mr E.)***

### Flexible working hours and informal arrangements

In addition to – or in connection with – a limit on/reduction in working hours, a flexible working hours arrangement or the option of working from home can be helpful for achieving reconciliation of work and family. Some of the fathers in the case studies are, at least to some extent, trying to adjust their working hours so that they fit flexibly around their childcare needs. They do this by putting in extra working days (or at least extra working hours) elsewhere to allow them to take time off for their families. Some fathers also take advantage of the teleworking days/home office days that they have agreed with their employers. Although these days do not constitute free time that can be spent on childcare, they do increase flexibility significantly.

### Case study: Mr D., salaried employee

After a four-year period of parental part-time employment, Mr D. has switched back to full-time work for financial reasons. However, he has come to an informal arrangement with his boss that permits him to take one afternoon off a week by making up the lost hours on the other days. This allows him to collect his children from nursery (and in the future, from school) and look after them for the rest of the afternoon.

***“I will definitely be taking at least one afternoon off – so that I can at least play with the kids and stuff – I've recently come to an arrangement with my boss so that the situation can continue.” (Mr D.)***

## **Breadwinner model and gender-specific concepts of parenting**

The idea that mothers make better carers of children and the attitude that the man has to

### **Case study: Mr A., IT manager**

Mr A. works full time, his partner is currently on parental leave and intends to go back to work on a part-time basis at a later point. Mr A. cannot really envisage reducing his own working hours. He feels responsible for meeting his family's material needs and his basic assumption is that mothers and fathers have different skills and roles.

*“Well I suppose I will almost certainly want to work a bit less because of the children – although it's important to take your own role seriously – because she perhaps has a lot more to offer the children than I do at the beginning. On the other hand, I need to make sure that their financial needs are satisfied, so to speak.” (Mr A.)*

be the breadwinner can also act as obstacles to a reduction in fathers' working hours.

### **Reconciliation of work and family at the couple level and the financial security of the individual**

The empirical research indicates that decisions about the number of working hours and parental part-time employment are largely taken jointly by the couple in some cases. The arrangements represent an attempt to achieve the best possible balance between paid employment and childcare for the couple concerned. In spite of paternal involvement, this still results in a fairly traditional division of tasks, i.e. women reduce their working hours dramatically and for long periods while men do not switch to parental part-time employment at all, or only cut their full-time hours for a short period and by a relatively small amount. No thought is given to the impact that this will have on the financial security of the individual (de facto that of the woman), particularly in the medium and long term.

### Case study: Couple I.

Ms I. has already been working short part-time hours for several years and plans to continue doing so for some time. When asked what consequences this will have for her own security in old age, she responds by saying that her husband earns a good salary and has a secure job.

*“I am quite good at burying any thought of that. (...) Yes, of course it's an issue – I have to admit that – but I'm still too naive in that regard and I always brush aside the thought that people also need money later on when they're no longer earning as much. But I'm always very happy that he works there [for his employer] and will stay there for ever.” (Ms I.)*

## 5.3. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the empirical results and the discussions with the experts, stakeholders and project partners involved, the following recommendations and proposed measures were drawn up for politicians, businesses and society (see also section 4.3).

### **Enable all fathers to actually take paternity leave in the early weeks:**

- This demands the introduction of an entitlement under employment law/a legal entitlement for those working in the private sector as well as the public sector, a specific protection against dismissal for fathers while they are on paternity leave, and a higher allowance.

### **Encourage partners to share childcare allowance:**

- Simplify the employment law rules on parental leave and the rules on childcare allowance models, which (even after the changes in 2017) are very complicated
- Run further information campaigns on childcare allowance and parental leave to increase the knowledge of (expectant) parents and give them confidence in their actions
- When presenting the new childcare allowance account and the income-dependent childcare allowance scheme, care must be taken to ensure that no highly uneven split between the parents is suggested.
- Higher financial incentives for the “partnership” bonus in the context of childcare allowance

### **Encourage fathers to actually take male parental leave:**

- Introduce “use it or lose it” approaches, i.e. keep entitlements reserved for one particular parent, including in relation to parental leave (alongside childcare allowance models)

- Raise awareness of, reflect on and challenge established societal ideals of what constitutes a “good” mother or a “good father” from the perspective of gender inequality
- Develop implementation strategies and put measures in place at the corporate and sectoral level (see also chapter 4)

**Encourage fathers to actually take a longer period of male parental leave:**

- Raise awareness of and reflect on the medium and long-term impact of only having a short period of male parental leave: does not achieve a fairer redistribution of unpaid work in the long term, sets in stone the traditional division of tasks, has less of a long-term impact on the father/child relationship
- Put work organisation measures in place at a corporate level – e.g. by appointing a stand-in person (see also chapter 4)

**Encourage partners to share the opportunity for parental part-time employment:**

- Run an information campaign focusing on existing options that are not so well known: primarily, the option to change working patterns, the option for both parents to switch to parental part-time employment at the same time, the ability to agree parental part-time employment at small companies
- Discuss new models for parental part-time employment and create the general framework required – e.g. a 30:30 split (each parent works 30 hours a week) with wage top-up payments; top-up payment for those who opt for parental part-time employment (subject to a minimum number of working hours) and credit awarded as part of the pension scheme

**Encourage partners to share childcare equally in the long term:**

- Highlight and raise awareness of how a more traditional split/long phases of short part-time hours can affect the individual – such as large gaps in a woman's provision for her old age
- Limit the number of hours that full-time employees actually work by means of legal regulations and collective bargaining agreements or employer/works council agreements; critical discussion of “all-in” employment contracts
- Enable and encourage overtime compensation through time off (while allowing for situations where people with low levels of basic pay are reliant on income from overtime)
- Encourage employees to work flexible working hours and enable teleworking/home working (for men as well)

**Close the gender pay gap:**

- As well as being important as an equality objective in general, this is also vital for enabling/promoting more equal sharing of parental leave, childcare allowance and (parental) part-time employment between men and women, and for creating the conditions for “freedom of choice”.

## **6. PUBLIC RELATIONS WORK: INFORM, RAISE AWARENESS, SPUR TO ACTION (KATJA GERSTMANN, BMGF/WOMEN'S AFFAIRS AND OLIVER GUMHOLD, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION)**

Another focus of this EU project was the implementation of extensive accompanying measures in the areas of public relations and the distribution of information. The target groups for the project were members of the general public, parents, media representatives, members of works councils and special interest groups. Tailored communication offerings were devised for and in cooperation with these target groups.

In addition to the conventional public relations methods (seven press releases, two press conferences, contact with journalists), there was also a specific focus on online communication. The information offering was rounded off by conventional advertising and information material/information leaflets.

In addition to the central communication tasks performed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection as project coordinator, the project partners also placed a strong emphasis on providing information in their communication channels and media – for more details, see the subsequent sections of this chapter.

One of the key outcomes of this project is the online information tool at [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at), which was developed by the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs. Gleich=berechnet is an online calculator that expectant and new parents can use to calculate their joint net household income. The promotion of this tool was accompanied by an extensive online media campaign by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

Two press conferences at ministerial level demonstrated that the issue of reconciliation of paid work and family has support at a high political level. Various other public events organised as part of this EU project (kick-off event, international conference and closing event) rounded off the public relations activities.

### **6.1. [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at) information tool**

Whether parents will succeed in sharing their responsibilities equally always depends – not only on the basic employment parameters – but also on financial factors: “Will we be able to afford it if we take parental leave in turns or if we both switch to (parental) part-time employment?”, “Which childcare allowance option is the best one for us?”, etc.

To help parents address these questions, the gleich=berechnet online calculator was developed as an orientation guide. Gleich=berechnet can be translated as both as “equally calculated” and “immediately calculated”. It has been available at [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at) since November 2016. Family benefits (such as family allowance and childcare allowance) are factored into the calculation as well as taxes and social insurance contributions. The aim is to provide parents with a guide to their joint household income with only few necessary details so that they can better estimate the financial implications of sharing the childcare between them.

All they have to do is enter a few details about their child's/children's month of birth, their income, how many hours they work a week and their selected/planned childcare allowance option. The tool then calculates what their monthly net household income will be. This value provides an indication of their joint household income (including family benefits, earnings and childcare allowance) and enables them to see at a glance how much they will have left over each month.

By performing comparative calculations or changing their entries, they can quickly identify the financial implications of sharing parental-part time employment more equally or of a childcare allowance model combined with additional/extra employment earnings.

The results can be downloaded in PDF format or saved online. In this case, users are provided with an individual link so that they can share their calculation or access it again at a later point.

The concept behind gleich=berechnet was developed by the Division for Women's Affairs and Equality, its technical implementation was handled by Kaindl Communications and the graphic design work was done by Angelika Krenn-Hazmuka. The prototype was tested by the project partners as well as by experts from the organisations represented on the project advisory board. They provided feedback on the functionality and content of the calculator and on the help and information texts. Feedback was also obtained from some anonymous testers drawn from the target group of future users. This was then used to enhance the tool.

As indicated by the qualitative research findings of this project (see chapter 5), (expectant) parents plan and consider joint and shared parental leave periods very carefully and find themselves faced not only with financial challenges but also with those of an organisational and legal nature. Within the context of this planning, gleich=berechnet is intended to serve as a helpful guide that is easy to understand and intuitive to use.

However, childcare does not suddenly stop at the end of the parental leave period granted under employment law or when the parent(s) is/are no longer entitled to draw childcare allowance. Rather, subsequent childcare has to be planned and reconciled with work. For this reason, gleich=berechnet also allows parents to plan increases and/or decreases in their

weekly working hours and offers an orientation guide as to how – e.g. within the context of parental part-time employment – childcare and paid employment can be split (more equally) between partners at the household level.

### Example calculations: Splitting the responsibilities between partners pays off

The following example calculations illustrate how gleich=berechnet works. In example 1, the household income of a couple with one child is compared using two different scenarios. In scenario 1, one parent draws childcare allowance and the other one works full time. In scenario 2, the first parent receives earnings from marginal employment in addition to the allowance while the other parent reduces their working hours. The anticipated income is calculated based on the number of weekly hours entered.

Figure 3: Example 1, Extra earnings on top of childcare allowance and a reduction in weekly working hours

## gleich = berechnet

Partnerschaftliche Aufteilung der Kinderbetreuung nachgerechnet



### € Ergebnis

#### Verfügbares monatliches Einkommen Ihres Haushalts

	Variante 1	Variante 2
Beihilfe für Ihr/e Kind/er	170,20 €	170,20 €
1. Elternteil (Einkommen/Einkommen)	1.831,14 €	1.592,58 €
2. Elternteil (KBG/KBG)	1.000,00 €	1.000,00 €
2. Elternteil (Zuverdienst zum KBG)	0,00 €	300,00 €
<b>Einkommen gesamt</b>	<b>3.001,34 €</b>	<b>3.062,78 €</b>

Source: [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at)

Result of illustrative calculation gleich=berechnet:

Disposable monthly income of your household

Beihilfe für Ihr/e Kinder – family allowance for your child/ren

1. Elternteil (Einkommen) – 1st parent (income from employment)

2. Elternteil (KBG/Zuverdienst zum KBG) – 2nd parent (childcare allowance/additional income)

Einkommen gesamt – total income

The second example compares different ways of dividing up the number of paid working hours. In scenario 1, both parents work 32 hours a week – i.e. they reorganise how the number of paid hours is split. This is possible since both parents can opt for parental part-time employment simultaneously. In scenario 2, the parents work 38.5 and 25 hours a week

respectively – a model frequently adopted by households with children in Austria (Bergmann et al 2014). In both scenarios, their joint household income remains approximately the same.

Figure 4: Example 2, Both parents change their weekly working hours

## gleich = berechnet

Partnerschaftliche Aufteilung der  
Kinderbetreuung nachgerechnet



### € Ergebnis

#### Verfügbares monatliches Einkommen Ihres Haushalts

	Variante 1	Variante 2
Beihilfe für Ihr/e Kind/er	178,00 €	178,00 €
1. Elternteil (Einkommen/Einkommen)	1.398,10 €	1.161,36 €
2. Elternteil (Einkommen/Einkommen)	1.592,58 €	1.831,14 €
<b>Einkommen gesamt</b>	<b>3.168,68 €</b>	<b>3.170,50 €</b>

Source: [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at)

Result of illustrative calculation gleich=berechnet:

Disposable monthly income of your household

Beihilfe für Ihr/e Kinder – family allowance for your child/ren

1. Elternteil (Einkommen) – 1st parent (income from employment)

2. Elternteil (KBG/Zuverdienst zum KBG) – 2nd parent (childcare allowance/additional income)

Einkommen gesamt – total income

#### Module: Parental leave calendar

In 2017, an extension to gleich=berechnet was developed to enable users to plan their parental leave and family time, and work out how to share it. Whereas the gleich=berechnet household income calculator focuses on the financial implications of sharing childcare and working hours (including during parental part-time employment at the end of the parental leave period), the additional calendar enables partners to plan together exactly how they want to split the parental leave between them in a clear and transparent manner. Users can export the planning results to their own electronic calendar.

The calendar function went live on 1 December 2017 and people were informed of the additional function by a press release and a Facebook post from the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs.

Figure 5: calendar – plan your (parental) leave

**gleich = berechnet**

Partnerschaftliche Aufteilung der  
Kinderbetreuung nachgerechnet



Rechner | **Kalender** | Willkommen | FAQ | Links

## Kalender - planen Sie Ihre Karenz

Mit diesem Kalender können Sie Ihre Familienzeit und die Aufteilung der Elternkarenz planen. Nach der Eingabe des Geburtsdatums Ihres Kindes finden Sie hier bereits die Blöcke zu Mutterschutz, Familienzeit und Elternkarenz vor. Mit Klick in den Kalender können Sie die Länge und den Beginn der Blöcke verändern, um die für Sie passende Aufteilung zu planen. Unter „Kalender bearbeiten“ können Sie auch einen weiteren Karenzblock hinzufügen, oder Blöcke entfernen. Sie können abschließend das Ergebnis Ihrer Planung anzeigen und auch in Ihren Kalender exportieren.

Dezember 2017	Jänner 2018	Februar 2018	März 2018
01 <b>Geburtsdatum</b>	01	01	01
02 <b>Mutterschutz</b>	02	02	02
03	03	03	03
04	04	04	04
05	05	05	05
06	06	06	06
07	07	07	07
08 <b>Familienzeit</b>	08	08	08
09	09	09	09
10	10	10	10
11	11	11	11
12	12	12	12
13	13	13	13
14	14	14	14
15	15	15	15
16	16	16	16
17	17	17	17
18	18	18	18
19	19	19	19
20	20	20	20
21	21	21	21
22	22	22	22
23	23	23	23
24	24	24	24
25	25	25	25
26	26	26	26
27	27 <b>Karenz E1</b>	27	27
28	28	28	28
29	29		29
30	30		30
31	31		31

Kalender bearbeiten

Ergebnis der Planung anzeigen

Kalender exportieren (ics)

Source: [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at)

Screenshot of the calendar module to plan parental leave.

Includes entries for date of birth (Geburtsdatum), maternal protection (Mutterschutz), paternal leave (Familienzeit) and parental leave (Karenz).

### Further information and usage statistics

Since the [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at) website was launched, approximately 207,000 unique users have made use of the online information within the first year. More than 1,650 results PDFs have been downloaded. The online offering at [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at) is supplemented by a set of extensive and easy-to-understand FAQs covering every aspect of parental leave, parental part-time employment and childcare allowance, as well as the contact addresses for some key advisory bodies.

### Dissemination

The launch of the online calculator was accompanied by a four-week online campaign (see section 6.4). People were also made aware of the website and the information about gleich=berechnet at the project events and by the printed leaflets. In addition, the partner organisation links (e.g. on the Chamber of Labour's webpages or on the project website at [www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at)) and also the link on the [www.help.gv.at](http://www.help.gv.at) web portal

#### Read more: Information leaflet on gleich=berechnet

Information leaflets on the gleich=berechnet tool are available in German and English from the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs. These provide a concise over-view of the calculator's functions. Thanks to a special cooperation with the consultants on women's affairs of the Public Employment Service (PES), these leaflets have been successfully distributed throughout Austria and are available at women's information centres.

If you would like a copy for yourself, you can obtain one from the publication service of the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs ([iv@frauenministerium.gv.at](mailto:iv@frauenministerium.gv.at)), from the PES advice centres ([www.ams.at](http://www.ams.at)), from the citizens' services team at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (Stubenring 1, 1010 Vienna) or from the [www.frauenministerium.gv.at](http://www.frauenministerium.gv.at) website.

helped to increase awareness of the calculator even further.

## 6.2. Conventional public relations methods – Press releases, press conferences, radio

The media relations work began with the project kick-off event on 22 January 2016 and a press conference on 6 April 2016. Here, the responsible ministers, Social Minister Alois Stöger and Women's Minister Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek provided the journalists present with an initial overview of the intention and subject matter of the Austrian project. This kick-off

press conference met with great interest from the media. A total of 16 representatives from the media attended (including all the major national TV stations) and, as a result, the project received extensive coverage.

A second press conference was hosted by Social Minister Alois Stöger and by Ines Stilling (Head of the Division for Women's Affairs at the Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs) on 16 November 2017. Here, the household income calculator developed by the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs ([www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at)) and the associated online information campaign were presented to representatives from the press. The national public service broadcaster Österreichischer Rundfunk and several daily newspapers reported on this press conference.

On 13 June 2016, a 30-minute report on the Austrian project was broadcast by national station Ö1 as part of its "Journal Panorama" radio programme. The interviews with the experts had been recorded in the course of the expert workshop entitled "Men and reconciliation of work and family – Experience from six European countries", which had been organised by project partner L&R Social Research as part of the project (see section 3.2).

The conference "Promoting uptake of paternity and parental leave among fathers for an equal share of childcare between women and men" that was held in Vienna on 16 and 17 May 2017 (see section 3.3) also received coverage in the form of three press releases, as well as Internet messages and posts on various social media channels.

Further press releases in the course of the press conferences and meetings rounded off the conventional public relations work. The project results were presented to a wide public at the final event on 18 October, which also received media coverage through press releases. A "save the date of the event" message was sent out via the APA-OTS media platform to 800 Austrian media and press offices (including all the Austrian daily newspapers and ORF) and around 8,000 journalists, press officers and users from the worlds of politics, the media and business.

In the context of the event, "Radio Wien" interviewed four scientific experts from L&R Social Research and FORBA about the results of the project. These interviews were broadcast on 19 November 2017 as part of the International Men's Day.

On 25 October 2017, the "Der Standard" daily newspaper published some of the core research results in its "Forschung spezial" scientific section as part of an interview with the scientific cooperation partners involved in the project.

Adverts were placed in print media to publicise the booklet on parental leave, parental part-time employment and childcare allowance that was produced in the context of this EU project. This helped to ensure that the relevant target groups were better informed.

### 6.3. Online communication

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection has set up a dedicated project page on its website so that visitors can access information about the project.

Finally, a separate website was created in the course of this EU-project:

[www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at). This information platform provides access to all the results of the project, such as research reports, case studies and information materials. It also brings together various other materials, links and events relating to the topic and presents them online. A forum has also been set up to enable discussion and networking. The main target group for the website consists of companies, experts and men/fathers or parents who have an interest in the topic. The website is an important tool for publicising the project and its subject matter.

The content of this website is managed by project partner L&R Social Research.

**Recommended websites:  
Project pages**

[www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at)  
...brings together all the information and documents relating to the project

[www.sozialministerium.at](http://www.sozialministerium.at)  
...provides information on the latest activities of the Ministry

[www.frauenministerium.gv.at](http://www.frauenministerium.gv.at) >  
**Frauen & Gleichstellung** >  
**Gleichstellung am Arbeitsmarkt** > **EU-Projekt Männer und Vereinbarkeit**

Figure 6: Screenshot of the project website



Source: [www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at)

The social media accounts of the project partners have also been used as information channels. For instance, details of the project, events and information materials have been communicated to the online community in several posts at [www.facebook.com/sozialministerium](http://www.facebook.com/sozialministerium). Similarly, information about gleich=berechnet and the project events has been made available on the Facebook page of the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs at [www.facebook.com/bmgf.gv.at](http://www.facebook.com/bmgf.gv.at).

The monthly newsletter issued by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection has more than 2,000 subscribers and in seven editions of this monthly newsletter information about current activities and results of this EU-project was provided.

## 6.4. Online and print advertising

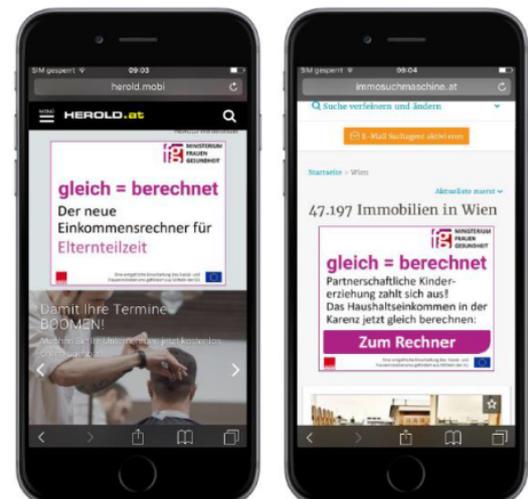


As part of the project, the online calculator ([www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at)) was developed by the Division for Women's Affairs and Equality of the Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs (see section 6.1). From 16 November to 14 December 2016, an accompanying online media campaign of the Ministry of Social Affairs was targeted at a wide audience of 18 to 45-year-olds to make them aware of the new calculator. For this, the campaign relied on far-reaching online media used by the specific target group (desktop and online). This online information campaign managed to attract more than 100,000 users as soon as the tool went live.

The adverts were aimed specifically at the target group and were placed, for example, on the far-reaching websites of major Austrian daily newspapers and on special interest websites. The advertising took the

form of low-barrier mobile content ads, medium rectangle ads, sidebar ads and domain ads.

In the course of the campaign, a total of 5,147,639 ad impressions were generated. The adverts that were placed on social networks received a particularly strong response: the Facebook campaign ran from 16 November 2016 to 11 December 2016 and resulted in 41,568 clicks. Furthermore, the 133 comments, 814 page likes and 715 responses confirmed that the information posted on Facebook was indeed relevant.



## 6.5. Print publications



A new publication entitled “Karenz, Elternzeit, Familienzeit & Co” [“Parental leave, parental part-time employment, family time, etc.”] was released in May 2017. This is the first ever document to provide information about the entire employment/social law framework governing parental leave, parental part-time employment and family time.

The booklet was produced in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Families and Youth, the Federal Ministry of Health and Women’s Affairs, and the State Secretariat for Diversity, Public Services and Digitalisation of the Federal Chancellery. It was presented at the conference entitled “Promoting uptake of paternity and parental leave among fathers for an equal share of childcare between women and men”, which was held on 16 and 17 May 2017.

This booklet is available on the website of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection that contains the exact details of the childcare allowance rules for births occurring on or after 1 March 2017 as well as information about the “family time” bonus and parental part-time employment. To access an up-to-date version of this booklet, click the following link:

<https://broschuere.service.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=393>

At around the same time, carefully targeted advertisements were placed in 11 Austrian daily and weekly newspapers to raise awareness of this new service booklet. Across the whole of Austria, a net coverage of 74.6% was achieved among members of the target group identified by the media planning: “adults aged 20-40 with children” (roughly 905,000 people).

To further raise awareness of the new publication, these advertisements were supplemented by a press release, two posts on the [facebook.com/sozialministerium](https://www.facebook.com/sozialministerium) page and an article in the newsletter of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. As a result of the publicity measures, more than 1,000 copies of the new publication were requested.

Furthermore, there is a leaflet that provides information about the aims and intentions of the project. Also, a fact sheet was released to coincide with the expert workshop held on 3 June 2016. This provides a concise overview of selected good practice examples of how to promote reconciliation of work and family for men in European countries (see section 3.1).

#### Recommended reading: Selected highlights from the workshop

To access the fact sheet called “Männer und Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie – Ausgewählte europäische good practice Beispiele” [“Men and reconciliation of work and family – Selected examples of good practice from across Europe”] and the presentations by the international experts, click this link:

<http://maennerundvereinbarkeit.at/eu-expertinnen-workshop>

## 6.6. Information and awareness raising events

Three public events took place as part of the project. The kick-off event on 22 January 2017 was attended by all the project partners and other relevant stakeholders and provided information about the project aims, activities and the expected results.

The international conference on fathers' participation and parental leave and child care on 16 and 17 May was – among other things – an opportunity to present and discuss international best practices and initiatives (see section 3.4). As far as the public relations work is concerned, the following projects/aspects are particularly worth highlighting:

In the course of the conference, some of the things pointed out by the Finnish expert were that paternal involvement in childcare is of relevance to all classes and social strata, and that visual imagery ought to portray parenting in a more realistic way than through the standard pictures of “polished white collar fathers” that are so commonplace at the current time – because, after all, parenting sometimes also means getting “dirty”.

In **Slovenia** a humorous and eye-opening approach to **public relations work** is being adopted. This consists of five short clips that are being disseminated in two ways: via YouTube and during special broadcasting slots on public TV that are provided free of charge.

**Recommended website: Selected highlights from the closing event**

Information about the final event held on 18 October 2017 is available online at [www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at/veranstaltungen](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at/veranstaltungen) together with the associated programme and presentations..

The final event to this EU-project took place on 18 October 2017, where the project partners reported on the results of the research undertaken at the corporate and household levels (see chapters 4 and 5) and the public relations activities (see sections 6.1-6.5). Two panels of experts and company representatives discussed the kinds of general framework that would encourage or hinder progress, and they came up with some necessary and recommended future steps for

improving work-family reconciliation. In addition to the progress that has already been achieved over recent years – e.g. in terms of getting women back to work more quickly – they felt that it was still necessary to raise awareness not only within companies but also among members of works councils and (expectant) fathers themselves. They thought that the issue of reconciling work and family needed to become firmly embedded in the regions as well, and freed from taboos so that it could become normality for everybody involved. They were of the opinion that broad ongoing cooperation with all social partners would make it possible to discuss the idea that businesses are responsible for changing working time norms as part of a positive discourse about reconciliation of work and family. They believed that, in addition to having supportive corporate cultures, the right general legal framework and financial security were key factors for ensuring a proper balance between work, family and private life for women, men, employees and employers in practice.

The project results and publications were not just presented and discussed at the project workshops and conferences. In addition, the information materials were disseminated at other events that were linked to the subject matter of the project (improving reconciliation of work and family for men and women). For instance, the information leaflets about the gleich=berechnet tool were also distributed at the “Baby und Beruf” [“Baby plus career”] exhibition organised by the Chamber of Labour in the spring of 2017. Gleich=berechnet was also presented within the context of the annual “Bundesländerdialog” meetings between the Federal Ministry of Health and Women’s Affairs and the heads of women's affairs divisions from the Austrian federal states.

## **7. ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS**

In Austria, social partner organisations have traditionally played a major role in the labour market, working hours and reconciliation of work and family. Therefore, the involvement of the Chamber of Labour (AK), the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) and the Federation of Austrian Industries is very important from the perspective of ensuring the sustainability of this project. In their capacity as associate project partners, these social partner organisations actively participated in the meetings of the project steering group, the project advisory board, in the kick-off event, the international exchange events, the mutual learning events, and the project closing event. In their capacity as experts, they were also involved in the research subprojects, in developing *gleich=berechnet* and in the public relations work for the project as a whole.

### **7.1. Accompanying activities of the Chamber of Labour**

Improving reconciliation of paid work and family work for men and women is one of the Chamber of Labour's central concerns. For this reason, the Chamber of Labour supported the project through a wide range of different activities. For instance, it provided information about the EU project as part of its regular information events focusing on childcare allowance, parental leave, parental part-time employment/changes in working hour patterns. Within this context, it also managed to find interviewees for the couple case studies that were carried out as part of this project.

In addition, it tackled the issue of “gender role concepts” by running a reflective workshop on “Images of women, images of men in an advice context – How can I help to break down traditional images of men and women through my advice work?” with advisers from the Chamber of Labour and various other institutions.

The Chamber of Labour also plays an active role by providing ongoing training courses for members of works councils and lay judges. At the latest training sessions, attention was drawn to this EU project, participants were made more aware of the issue and some possible corporate measures were discussed (e.g. employer/works council agreements covering work-family reconciliation). Moreover, the Chamber of Labour produced a booklet for members of works councils on the existing legal options for changing working hour patterns that are available under the laws on the protection of pregnant workers and on parental leave for fathers (“AK Aktuell” bulletin, 2016). As regards research activities, the Chamber of Labour supported a master's thesis (by Claudia Kuenz, 2016) as part of the “Science Network”.

In addition, the Chamber of Labour reported on the project via its various media channels. For instance, the *gleich=berechnet* tool was also made available to parents via the Chamber of Labour's homepage and it was publicised in the "AK für Sie" magazine.

Furthermore, there are plans to publish a newsletter for members of works councils and two entries for the "Arbeit und Wirtschaft" ["Work and the economy"] blog (one by FORBA and one by L&R Social Research) following the release of the final project report.

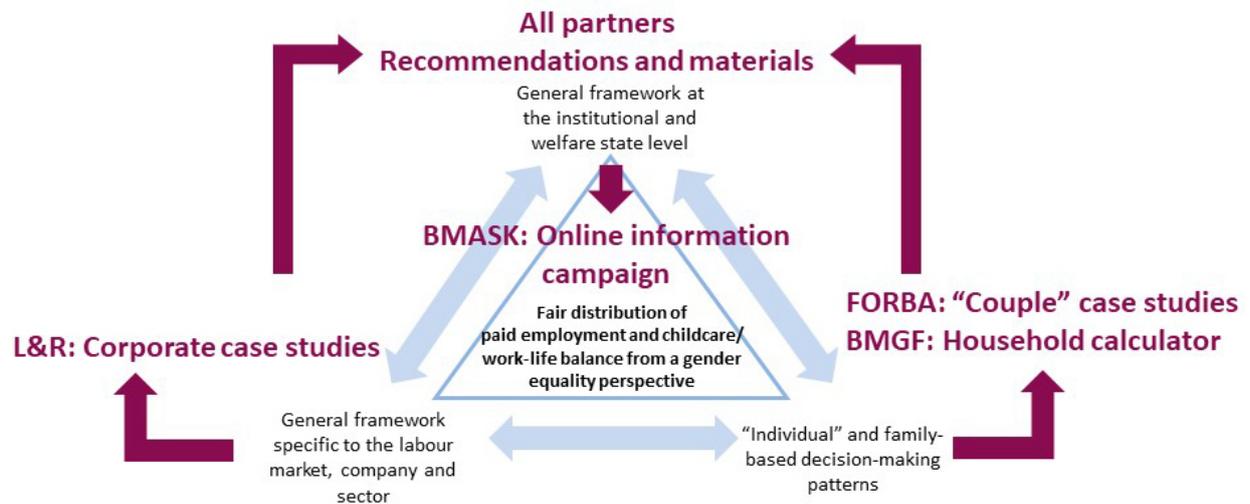
## **7.2. Accompanying activities of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB)**

- The Austrian Trade Union Federation systematically integrated the subject matter addressed by the project ("Men and reconciliation of work and family: supporting the path to gender equal distribution of parental leave and working time") into a series of training events for multipliers. As early as May 2016, reconciliation of work and family was discussed extensively at a seminar entitled "We can do it – Women yesterday, today and in future". Based on the results of this discussion, the decision was taken to make "reconciliation of work and family" a fixed component of training for multipliers (the BRAK training programme for works council members, the SOZAK social academy and the "Frauenpolitische Lehrgang" course focusing on women's politics).
- Further seminars followed, such as the one on "diversity and equal opportunities", where the issue of reconciliation of work and family was addressed in detail.
- The Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) presented this EU project to its employees in its regular newsletter.
- There are also plans to publish an article on "Men and reconciliation of work and family" in *Solidarität* magazine (anticipated date: spring of 2018).

## 8. SUMMARY

As part of this joint EU project, activities were carried out by the partners at various levels, as described in the following figure:

Figure 7: Levels and processes



Source: L&R based on Eurofound 2012

The subproject **Fathers' Involvement in Family Care Work: Plans and Practices**, undertaken by FORBA, focused on how couples make decisions about splitting parental leave, paid employment and childcare between them. This involved (a) studying the research already available at an international level, (b) undertaking a qualitative empirical study of nine mixed-sex couples with children, who were interviewed at two different points in time, (c) discussing the results with the project partners and with experts from the social partner organisations, and (d) drawing up some recommended actions based on the results of all these steps.

The results concerning the uptake of **male parental leave and childcare** allowance that were obtained through this subproject reveal – among other things – that a distinction must be drawn between the negative professional consequences that fathers fear and those that they actually experience. In addition, men who do take parental leave or claim childcare allowance generally do so for a much shorter period of time than women, which raises questions about sustainable outcomes. The manner in which childcare allowance models are officially presented (“12+2” etc.) – particularly prior to the introduction of the new regulations that came into force on 1 March 2017 – likewise suggests that men are only

supposed to claim the benefit for a short period. This official presentation format should be challenged along with the general complexity of the current regulations governing parental leave and childcare allowance. Another key measure that will create the right conditions for decisions at the couple level is the closure of the gender pay gap. At the same time, the interviews with the couples – together with the findings of existing research – show that factors other than income also play a key role in determining which childcare allowance model is selected and how couples decide to split parental leave between them.

As regards **male leave in the early weeks after the birth /paternity leave**, the research revealed that this was already a reality that was being practised within some families and companies prior to the 2017 reform. However, with the exception of the public service sector and certain collective bargaining agreements, this was not supported by a corresponding general legal framework. Although the “family time” bonus that was introduced in 2017 represents a financial improvement that can help realise the desire for paternity leave in the early weeks after the birth, there is no accompanying regulation under employment law. Given the lack of a legal entitlement and protection against dismissal, and also the loss of income incurred, the legal framework and the level of security provided are still not adequate.

For men, parental leave – and also **parental part-time employment** – can come as a welcome opportunity to take an already longed-for career break or reduction in working hours, although they are also driven by other motives as well. Therefore, closer connections should be forged between societal discussions on the male breadwinner model/the full-time norm and other discussions about fatherhood. As regards parental part-time employment, there is a need for better information about the existing legal entitlements in Austria. However, for some men, the idea of part-time employment is inconceivable; instead, what they really need is a lot more support in terms of reducing overtime. In cases where couples have jointly decided that they should split the tasks between them in quite a traditional way, their deliberations barely ever consider the long-term consequences of this – particularly as regards the impact that years of part-time employment (with short hours) will have on the amount of pension that women

In its research, project partner L&R Social Research decided to shine a spotlight on the corporate level: **What necessary conditions and potential for implementing work-family reconciliation strategies for fathers at the corporate level** can be identified? Among other things, this involved conducting interviews with experts, organising meetings so that Austrian and European experts could share information, and carrying out also interviews with members of works councils. The research centred on ten company case studies covering several male-dominated industries. These case studies were then used to identify what existing measures were in place as well as what employees and companies felt was required. On the basis of these findings, a handbook on the reconciliation of work and family was also produced for companies ([www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at)).

Upon analysis, the case studies revealed that paternal involvement is achievable within these male-dominated industries as well: the proportion of young men taking parental leave has increased significantly at the companies surveyed. **The trend towards a short period of male parental leave** is particularly apparent in the company case studies, where – in most cases – the period ranges from two to six months, with only a small number of men opting for six. From the perspective of the companies, an absence of two months is relatively easy to organise because it is not usually necessary to appoint a stand-in person. Longer periods of absence are seen as a problem by line managers and also by the employees themselves (employee is viewed as “irreplaceable”). Even though the arguments against a longer period of parental leave also apply to women, they are interpreted differently in relation to men. This is because taking a longer period of time off work to fulfil childcare obligations is still regarded as “more normal” for women than for men. Establishing parental leave management for fathers as well as mothers would help to enable longer absences.

**None of the companies we surveyed had any provision for a paid or unpaid period of paternity leave (male leave in the early weeks).** Many interviewees made their own arrangements by taking longer holidays so that they could stay at home during this important initial period. Although this self-arranged time at home is supported by the companies in principle (as a “decision by the individual”), they reject the idea of a binding regulation. A legal entitlement to one month's paternity leave would stop fathers from worrying about their job and would also send a clear signal about the importance of paternal involvement in childcare.

It is striking that discussions around reconciliation of work and family at the companies focus very heavily on flexible working hours to enable a combination of full-time employment, paid employment and childcare. Although there are also a few examples of men reducing their working hours for a certain period of time, the emphasis is generally on **how** reconciliation of work and family **can still be achieved even though the employee carries on working full time**. This calls for a change in thinking and a willingness on the part of companies to reorganise their systems so that men are also able to reduce their working hours, at least in certain phases of life.

**Positive communication around reconciliation of work and family that also appeals to men** has a major contribution to make when it comes to creating a company climate that is father-friendly. As revealed by the company case studies, men think that it is particularly important for them to know that the company has a positive attitude towards male work-family reconciliation if their preferences are to be accommodated. At many companies and within society as a whole, it is still not considered the norm for men and women to share childcare tasks and parental leave between them. It is precisely for this reason that there is a need for the right signals to be given so that people come to regard childcare not merely as a “women's issue” and not just as a matter for the “individual” but also as a “men's issue” that falls under the responsibility of the company.

Whether parents will succeed in sharing their responsibilities equally always depends on financial factors as well, such as whether they can both afford to take parental leave or go part-time and which childcare allowance option is the best one for them. To help parents address these questions, the *gleich=berechnet* online calculator was developed as an information tool. This has been available at [www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at](http://www.gleich-berechnet.gv.at) since November 2016. For (expectant) parents living in a couple, *gleich=berechnet* offers an orientation guide to the financial implications of sharing paid employment and childcare between them more equally, both during and after the parental leave period. The release of the *gleich=berechnet* calculator tool was accompanied by a national online media campaign. Links were included on project partner websites and an information leaflet was produced to provide further information about this online tool. In December 2017 an additional calendar function was added to the *gleich=berechnet* website so that parents can quickly plan how they want to split their parental leave in a clear and transparent manner. Parents can then export the result to their own electronic calendar.

The research results and documentation arising from the project were also disseminated more widely via events and publications, and on the [www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at](http://www.maennerundvereinbarkeit.at) project website set up by L&R Social Research. The project implementation phase was accompanied by comprehensive public relations work in the form of press conferences, newsletters and events staged by the project partners.

The latest changes to the legislation governing reconciliation of work and family were introduced in Austria in 2016 and relate to childcare allowance (they include the introduction of a flexible childcare allowance account, a “family time” bonus and a “partnership” bonus). Since March 2017, 1295 men in Austria have so far claimed the “family time” bonus, which equates to an average of 185 men per month (Bundesministerium für Familien und Jugend 2017).

However, Austria currently has a birth rate of approximately 87,000 per year and so when the figure for the whole year is extrapolated it means that only around 2.55% of fathers are currently claiming the “family time” bonus. Initial data on uptake of the “partnership” bonus will become available in 2018. So far, there has also been a considerable lack of reliable and up-to-date data in Austria on the uptake rate of parental leave and parental part-time employment among fathers.

The research work undertaken as part of this EU project, the opportunities for sharing experience at a European level and the workshops with experts and stakeholders have clearly demonstrated that considerable efforts still need to be made at all kinds of levels and in many areas to turn the ideal into reality – both within Austria and across the entire EU – when it comes to sharing childcare equally between partners. The recommendations devised and examples of good practice identified within this EU project offer lots of inspiration, and not just to the Austrian strategies as they continue going forward.

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