

Between Job and Care: Conflict or Opportunity?

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Why is a successful reconciliation of work and care of importance?

- an increasing ageing of societies combined with rising number of older people being in need of care,
- changes in the family structure,
- withdrawal of the welfare state also with regard to care aspects,
- the increase in female employment,
- globalisation of the economy,
- the renewed Lisbon targets for increased participation in the labour market,
- the realization of equal opportunities.

The Carers@work Project: A Comparison of four European Countries

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The Partners in Four European Countries

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Aims of the project and some research questions

Our aims

- to identify gaps in existing knowledge about successful measures to enable family carers to combine paid work and care
- to analyse individual reconciliation conflicts and strategies also in comparing different welfare-/care-regimes
- to analyse company initiatives for workers with care responsibility
- to search for international ‚best practice‘ models

Some research questions: Working carers

- What conflict- and stress-situations between work and care are typical among carers?
- What strategies do carers use to manage conflict and stress situations?
- What factors (e.g., qualification level) influence the reconciliation of work and care?
- Which kind of support at the public, company or societal level is most efficient from the carers perspective?

Some research questions: Companies

- Do companies recognize the problem of combining work and care?
- What is the estimated prevalence rate of working carers?
- Which kind of measures do exist in companies?
- How high is the usage rate especially with regard to eldercare?
- In what kind of companies do we find measures?
- What are the reasons for implementing measures?
- If no measures exist – what are the reasons?

What are the main benefits for employers and employees if a company offers measures for the reconciliation of work and eldercare?

Benefits for the employer

- improved recruitment and retention;
- less absenteeism and sick leave;
- time savings;
- avoidance of health related problems;
- higher productivity;
- reduced labour turn over;
- better corporate image;
- costs savings;

Benefits for employees

- higher job satisfaction;
- more flexible work time patterns;
- better career and skill development;
- less stress
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Summary: Main goal

The project wants to show that a successful reconciliation of work and care is possible if accompanied by company and socio-political measures.

Method

Methodology I

- Literature review (responsible: D);
- Secondary data analysis (responsible: I, PL);
- Carers perspective: Topic-guide interviews with 60 employed family carers in each of the four participating countries (responsible: D, I, PL, UK);

Methodology II

In Germany:

- 10 case studies in German enterprises, i.e. expert interviews with managers and trade union members
- Expert interviews with members of the employers associations and the main political parties
- Analysis of collective bargaining agreements and other agreements between employers and employees
- Analysis of the resulting costs at enterprise level if combining work and care is difficult to realise

In all countries (D, I, PL, UK):

- Search for examples of good/best-practice

First Results – the German case

Some general information I (Schneekloth, 2005):

- Number of persons being in need of long term care according to the German Long Term Care Insurance Law:
 - **2,25 Millionen** (another ca. 3 Millionen need help in IADL)
- From these 2,25 million persons:
 - **1,54 Mill. (68%)** are cared for at home

Some general information II (Schneekloth, 2005)

- **73%** of informal carers are female
- **40%** of informal carers (between 15 to 64 years of age) are in gainful employment:
 - full time: 19%
 - part time (less than 30 h/week): 15%
 - part time (less than 15 h/week) : 6%

Some general information III (Schneekloth, 2004)

- For **21%** of all carers (regardless of age) taking on caregiving had consequences for employment:
 - 11% reduced working time
 - 10% quit working
 - 26% continued to work,
 - 51% were not employed when started caregiving
 - (2% no answer)

Important results: Working carers

- Work as respite from caregiving
- Complaints about insufficient support
- Information deficit
- Hiding of caregiving role at the work place

Important results: Companies I

- up to now 9 case studies in companies with good/best practice
- Mainly bigger companies (more than 250 employees) of different branches (e.g, metal industry, health care services)
- Percentage of women among employees: between 15% and 90%
- Interviews with: Human resource managers, representatives of the work council
- Review of collective agreements and other agreements between employers and employees

Results: Companies II

- **Do companies recognize the problem of combining of work and care?**
 - Mainly yes, but some companies regard the reconciliation of work and care as a topic of growing importance in the future.
- **What is the estimated prevalence rate of working carers?**
 - With regard to „officially known“ working carers rather low.

Results: Companies III

- **Which kind of measures do exist in companies?**
 - all offer flexible working time arrangements
 - all offer a change from full time to part time and back to full time
 - all offer longer leave of absence
 - 5 offer telework
 - 2 have company agreements regarding the reconciliation of work and care
 - 3 finance an information and referral service

Results: Companies IV

- **How high is the usage rate especially with regard to eldercare?**
 - This rate is quite low.

- **In what kind of companies do we find measures more often? In companies ...**
 - with more than 250 employees
 - which have a long tradition of family friendliness
 - which have a high percentage of older (female) workers
 - which expect a shortage of qualified personnel

Results: Companies V

- **What are the reasons for implementing measures?**
 - to attract and keep qualified personnel
 - to save costs (e.g., related to absenteeism, lower productivity)
 - to follow agreements made in collective bargaining
 - to improve the public image of the company
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Results: Companies V

- **If no measures exist – what are the reasons?**
 - no demand from employees;
 - legal regulations and collective bargaining agreements are sufficient;
 - no benefit expected;
 - no awareness of the impact that eldercare has on the workplace;
 - concerns about the costs of offering elder care policies and measures;
 - **in case of eldercare informal arrangements are made between employer and the employee;**

Summary:

- Employers and employees can *benefit* from successful reconciliation of work and eldercare;
- However, most employers *hesitate* to introduce special measures due to different reasons;
 - In companies the most common measures to reconcile work and eldercare are *worktime* (flexibility and reduction) and *other flexible forms* (e.g., part-time work);
 - Measures can be found more in *big* than in small or medium sized companies;

Latest developments:

- In Germany the reconciliation of work and eldercare is high up on the political agenda!
 - In discussion: A new nursing care act.
 - Employees are entitled to take a nursing care leave up to **two years**;
 - During this time employees can reduce their working time from **100% to 50%** but **get 75%** of their wages;
 - After two years employees have to work full time again (**100%**) but they still get paid **only 75%** of their wages until their „account“ is balanced.

Thank you very much for your attention!

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