

Reconciling work and family life in Europe

Volume 1

**Europäisches Zentrum
für Arbeitnehmerfragen (EZA)**

**Review of research concerning the reconciliation
of work and family life**

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“Research on Gender Mainstreaming: Equality of women and men – Reconciling work and family life (GeMaR 2005)

Reconciliation of work and family life is an important issue, chiefly because of its implications on economic growth and competitiveness, of demographic growth, social well-being as well as for implementing the equity and equality principles.

In spite of the relevance of the issue of reconciliation of work and family life an overview of scientific results and good practices for organizations representing workers across Europe is missing. To remedy this situation the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA) therefore initiated the research project: “Research on Gender Mainstreaming: Equality of women and men – Reconciling work and family life (GeMaR 2005)”.

Structured into four volumes this report describes the research results. It attempts to:

- put forward the measurable factors which are important in influencing the fair reconciliation of family and work and give an overview of scientific results (volume 1),
- offer worker organizations concrete examples of best practice implemented in a selection of EU states and candidate countries (volume 2),
- describe the operation of the factors identified in fourteen European countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom (volume 3),

Additionally, this report provides you with practical tools and material for the preparation of seminars or conferences on the topic of the reconciliation of family life and work (volume 4).

Based on a review of theoretical and empirical literature, six factors which are amenable to policy interventions are identified as playing a key role in influencing the work-life balance:

- the socio-economic context,
- parents and work,
- care for children,
- assistance for persons in need of care,
- the balance between income guarantee and work incentives, and
- working time arrangements.

Within the scope of the research project we found out that especially the “balance between income guarantee and work incentives” as well as the “assistance for persons in need of care” would need further focus from all social partners with regard to the reconciliation of work and family life. Best practice examples should be encouraged.

On behalf of the factor “care for children” two different objectives have to be carefully distinguished with regard to their long term society impact:

- childcare as an instrument for more labour supply,
- childcare as an instrument for fostering child development.

Within Europe, some governments focus more on labour supply and some more on fostering child development. This creates different infrastructures and comprises different short and long term societal costs.

With this report we would like to invite you to contribute to a high-quality rethinking of two essential spheres of life: family and paid work.