



**Working group meeting on Work-Life Balance
March 6 + 7, 2008, City Hall Pécs (Hungary)**

Moderation: Dr. Zoltán Bretter, member of the General Assembly of the Municipality of Pécs, Councillor for Cultural Capital of Europe 2010, Professor of Political Science at the Pécs University Faculty of Humanities

Keynote speech by Dr. Bretter

General situation on the Hungarian labour market: 45% of women are employed. Only 3.8% of part time jobs exist compared to 46% in the Netherlands. The Hungarian labour market does not accept part time jobs. The gender gap in payment however is much lower than in Europe (15%).

The allowance system for mothers who wish to stay at home when the child is aged 0 to 2, is rather generous in Hungary, it amounts to 70% of the previous salary. However, women which children are between the ages of 0 to 2 may not work and receive the allowance, this is only possible with a child between 2 and 3.

Childcare facilities in Hungary: cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants have the legal duty to provide day nurseries. State funding covers the fees, parents only have to pay for the meals and outdoor activities. Family nurseries are funded up to 50% by the State. Private nurseries receive 30% of public funding.

Problems arise in rural areas where there is not legal obligation to provide childcare. Further problems concern the reintegration the labour market of mothers after maternity leave.

Possible solutions could include education training during leave or to make childcare and allowances not mutually exclusive (i.e. possibility to work part time and receive allowances). The problem is that part time jobs are not available at present in the labour market

Presentation of a survey "The workplace with the eyes of a woman", in 2004, by an internet female magazine and an international headhunter agency, Hewitt, responded by several thousands of women via the Internet :

- take a leave when child is ill – flexible schedule, also to fix problems with kindergarten etc
- get back to previous workplace after birth (guaranteed in Hungary)
- overtime is usual in Hungary, women should not be forced to do overtime if workplace accept work-life balance scheme
- work time should allow time for training

- workplace should provide information regarding family issues (possibilities of legal possibilities for maternity leave etc)

Important: Equal rights for men and women to get allowances if the woman decides to go back to work and the man stays at home.

In Hungary, the government has set up an Equal Opportunity Plan (Law 2004, EOP) which is obligatory for employers with more than 50 persons until 2004 in public sector.

Are allowances dangerous because a child decreases the chances of a woman to get a job by 20% and increases the chance for men by 8%?

Pécs situation:

75% of local administration employees are women, with rigid working schedule.
69% have children of the 500 employees, 1 part time position!
33 out of 54 of the leading positions are held by women.
No handicapped person employed although local legislation exists for accessibility.

Problems and possible solutions:

EOP could provide for part time jobs, flexible hours, child care
Should city introduce positive discrimination measure for handicapped or minorities?

Discussion:

Strasbourg: forced part time in France exists

Dr. Bretter: 20% part time of labour market. Seems that discussion is about part time concerning work-life balance. In Hungary, companies + State do not want part time.

Strasbourg: Parents have choice to go on leave during 3 years or do part time and get back to full time afterwards. Problems for persons without children who have to do part time for economic reasons.

Dr. Bretter: 10% of parents choose to bring their children to nursery. (2005) 300.000 children to 0-3 years-old. Many families prefer to keep child at home.

Rijeka: Qualification required for private childcare?

Br. Bretter: No qualification needed. Private recommendation more useful?

Strasbourg: Babysitters have to pass a qualification

Salzgitter: in Germany 160 hours, organized by the Youth department of the cities.

Satu Mare: Mothers stay the first 2 years at home. Afterwards kindergarten, private babysitters or a pensioner.

Rijeka: Women work until 65 years, grandparents cannot be babysitters, therefore need more childcare facilities.

Stuttgart: qualification for nurseries?

Rijeka: need to have a 4 year of university education: Pay is better in nursery than in elementary school (by 10%). But no nurseries exist in smaller towns and villages.

Strasbourg: in France, do not need to be qualified for university.

Dr. Bretter. Situation in rural area? Nursery and schools?

Salzgitter: in the city, 40 places in nurseries, will be increasing. In the rural area, nearly all private, no public offers.

Satu Mare: There is a sufficient number of early childhood education facilities. The qualification which is required are nursery studies, there is no pedagogical staff from 0-2, only afterwards in the kindergarden.

Presentation Rijeka:

Survey: number of wished children 2,7 - 1,8 effective children -> indicates need for work-life balance policies

Goals of the National Population Policy to improve work-life balance – but it is only a national population policy. Many points not yet implemented at the local level -> therefore Rijeka would be interested in learning from this WG meeting.

Situation in Rijeka:

No kindergartens or early childhood facilities in private companies

20 kindergartens + 10 private opened during 10,5 hours day for 3 to 6 years, parents pay 25% on their own, nursery from 6 months, pay also 25% of costs, including shift times

Certificate for private babysitters exists, organised by an ONG in Rijeka

Vilnius: who does workshop for babysitters?

Rijeka: ONG working with doctors, psychologists with programme certificated by the State. There are 2 such schools, 1 in Zagreb, 1 in Rijeka.

Vilnius: work-life balance is a fundamental question linked to culture, family lost value in Lithuania. Many problems because parents are working abroad, children left with grandparents. We should not only think about nurseries but also how parents could live with their children. Must work and think from the highest, national level, not only locally. Rural situation in Lithuania, similar problems, because parents work and children are left without care, lack of communication.

Dr. Bretter: Raised 2 points which present a dilemma: children need parents + parents need work and life. In Eastern Europe more than in the West, there seem to be discussions after fall of communism on what is the philosophy of families? What is the role for women – stay at home and fulfils her life? Or does a woman need to work because work is constituent for a person's social status. Proposals: pay mothers to stay at home, mother as a paid job. More liberal attitude: develop possibilities for women to get back to work.

Vilnius: good idea to get money but she has to have the choice. In Lithuania, mothers cannot choose because salaries are too low.

Dr. Bretter: These questions require national regulations. What local level could do: flexible work schedules in administrations. Basic questions need to be solved by national policies or at the European level.

Stuttgart: Herdprämie – big discussion whether mothers should receive an allowance or whether places in early-childhood facilities be increased.

Dr. Bretter: No shortage, because official policy under communism that State has the duty to raise children. At present, heritage, less nurseries but still sufficient.

Strasbourg: France has set up a policy clearly in favour of women in work. Since the end of WW2, clear pro-active family policies to encourage birth rates. 80% of women work in France.

Strasbourg presentation:

Policy has been set up for 50 years: école maternelle public for all children over 2,5 years-old, 80% of women are working, average birth rate 2 children.

Children from 0-3 yrs-old: 50% kept at home, 10% in child care, 30% private child care, 10% other.

Situation in Strasbourg:

for up to 6yrs old: 148 places for 1000 children (compared to 105 in France)

11 parental support centres opened to children accompanied by their parents + relay points for child-minders (contact points for parents)

Good practice: "Accueil coup de pouce": home childcare offer during atypical times for a limited time period + help in the research of long-term child care service.

Target group: single parents or support to unemployed who look for a job/ start a new job. Same costs as for day care. Organized by the City in cooperation with a non-profit organization and financially supported by the State.

Issues and limits:

Child care structures are not very flexible, rigid opening hours -> particular difficult for low-income families (with atypical hours, on short term contract which need care rather flexible)

Lack of services and financial support for children over 6 years old.

Present debate in France: make right to child care opposable, but who has got the financial responsibility? Child care is duty of State, but many cities decided voluntarily to set up facilities, now unclear who has the financial responsibility.

Dilemma: compensatory benefits for 3 years for women but then problems to re-integrate the labour market.

Pécs: How many parents use extra-hours service and what is the qualification of the babysitters?

Strasbourg: project has just started, not evaluated yet, but many parents have complained to the city about missing care facilities at untypical hours. One indicator: only 10% of children are in collective care, most families choose a private child-minders, probably because of the schedules which does not fit the working hours.

Salzgitter: our municipality facilitates research for babysitters by parents working untypical hours

Dr. Bretter: one of the present challenges: what are solutions for over 6 years after school?

Rijeka: after school, in elementary school, we have got a whole-day school system.

Vilnius: Problem with children whose parents are abroad. Day care centre by municipality set up, planning to set up centres for whole families which are at risk.

Dr. Bretter: for example, when you go shopping, no child care available. Municipalities could insist when giving permission to set up a new shopping centre, request to set up playground or child care facility within the centre. Is that a possibility?

Vilnius: For concert evening, actors take care of children in Vilnius

Dr. Bretter: Philharmony orchestra in Pécs teaches parents + children music. Set up a small playground, where children can be left during the concert. In the evening, near the concert hall, for small children from 2 years old onwards. These are interesting, small-scale projects to support parents.

Wroclaw: we have parallel theatre shows (puppet theatre) at the same time for children and parents, 2 shows, in the afternoon, under the same roof.

Dr. Bretter: this is what cities can do, some work-life balance issues are of the responsibility of the State, but some projects can be set up by the city.

Rijeka: what about tele-working?

Dr. Bretter. mainly in IT sector...not very much developed?

Strasbourg: effects not that good, because being at home with children and working can be more stressful than working in the company.

Dr. Bretter: Social contacts are equally important. So maybe tele-working is not so rewarding. Would be interesting to have more data from the different cities whether telework is widespread.

Presentation by Wroclaw:

We should not only think about child care but also think about how to allow parents to spend more time with their children. We should rather talk about work-family balance than work-life balance because work is part of life. Not the quantity but the quality of time spent with the family counts.

What could local administration do to support work-life balance?

Situation in Wroclaw:

- Euro-Orphanhood: or 2 million parents in Romania abroad, children stay with grandparents, also a problem in Poland
- challenge: how to make cities more attractive for parents so that they stay, it is not possible to improve the salaries.
- lack of civil society, few NGOs (except church)

Good practice: Support to large families (with 3 and more children) in Wroclaw-> health service and advice free of charge, support for using public transport (only on Sundays, only for whole family), sports + leisure (family pass), but upgrade needed

Need support for large families, for the integration of the older generations, enduring families (in view of high rate of divorces)

Dr. Bretter: new point of view, because psychological background very important.

Final words: Dr. Bretter will send a summary and a proposal of conclusions to all participants. Suggestions and comments are highly welcome in order to present a common conclusion at the 2nd Annual Conference on May 6 and 7, 2008 in Stuttgart.

****End of discussion and start of the visit of a Roma high school****

Study visit at the Roma High Scholl of Pécs – the director of the school guided us around and gave some informaiton:

Some key points:

- it is the first Roma high school (Gymnasium) in Eastern Europe
- Pupils from 14 to 18, the school is open to non-Roma children (only 10-15), 250 pupils
- the normal Hungarian curriculum is used, additionally, all pupils have to learn two Roma languages, culture, and German, English or French. Extra-curriculum activities on Roma culture or traditions are also proposed
- 70% of the graduates go to university and thus integrate the middle class

- it is a boarding school, pupils come from all over Hungary, there is no school fees, a participation is required only for meals, travel support is granted as the pupils return home on every Friday. The travel grant is not given if a pupil fails a class
- the school was set up by a private foundation (without financial means), the national government joined the foundation to finance the purchase of the school buildings and support its every-day functioning
- Segregation? No because the school is open to all children and the Roma have the choice to integrate this school. IN the long-term, hopefully, the Roma culture will gain more value in the eyes of non-Roma Hungarians and more of them will then integrate this school.
- The education of Roma children is a very important issue in view of the demographic evolution: at present, 6% of the Hungarian population is of Roma origin but already 10% of the children in primary school are Roma. The birth rates of Hungarian persons drop while the Roma population has high birth rates. Many Roma children are still sent to special schools (for children with mental problems) because of language deficiencies. These children will hardly be able to integrate the labour market and this will thus constitute an imbalanced situation (an aging Hungarian population and a young Roma population relying on social assistance).
