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Social Policies Related to Parenthood and Capabilities of Slovenian Parents

Abstract

We apply Sen's capability approach to evaluate the capabilities of Slovenian parents to reconcile paid work and family in the context of the transition to a market economy. We examine how different levels of capabilities together affect the work-life balance (WLB) of employed parents. We combine both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. The results of our quantitative and qualitative research show that increased precariousness of employment and intensification of work create gaps between the legal and normative possibilities for successful reconciliation strategies and actual use of such arrangements in Slovenia. The existing social policies and the acceptance of gender equality in the sphere of paid work enhance capabilities for reconciliation of paid work and parenthood, whereas the intensification of working lives, the dominance of paid work over other parts of life, and the acceptance of gender inequalities in parental and household responsibilities limit parents' capabilities to achieve WLB.

Introduction

Reconciliation of paid work and family life is a challenge for most European employees and especially for employed parents. In this article, we show how even in Slovenia, which has been seen as a success story among the countries in transition, there are clear limits on the capabilities of parents to reconcile work and family life. For more than half of a century, Slovenia has had both direct and indirect social policy measures in place to support parents' employment. Since the mid-1970s, support for the reconciliation of work and family life has been improving and, unlike other post-communist countries, state support for parents' labor market participation continued after the transition in 1990s. The reasons for this can be found in a combination of factors: the economy was in a comparatively good condition¹; the transitional model was based on gradual changes and social dialogue; and there was a strong support for gender equality from different social actors—notably the women's movement, academics, and governmental bodies such as Office for Equal Opportunities.

Since the beginning of this century, however, the economic situation and the conditions of work have worsened as a result of privatization, restructuring and competitive pressures from international markets (Kanjuo Mrčela and Ignjatović 2006; Svetlik, 2006). The economic pressures and drastic structural organizational changes have meant that social rights related to parenthood, taken for granted in socialist times, began to be questioned. Analysis of the Slovenian case reveals a paradox: there are well-developed public policies related to parenthood and labor legislation similar in scope to the Scandinavian welfare model but also wide gaps between these rights and policies and the agency of mothers and fathers to claim them. We therefore ask not only how do women and men in full-time employment function under these pressures transition to the market economy, but also why there is such a wide gap in agency.

We present the synthesis of results of research work undertaken in Slovenia in 2004, 2005, and 2006 (Kanjuo Mrčela and Černigoj Sadar 2004, 2006, 2007) on problems of reconciling paid work and private life of parents and potential parents. We used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. We conducted two telephone surveys and analyzed seven organizations in Slovenia, different in size, type of activity, in private and public sectors, where we organized fourteen focus groups with employed parents and young employees without children and interviewed seven managers.

We focus on the experiences of (potential) parents and the perceptions of employers regarding the implementation of social policy

measures using the capability perspective (Sen 1985, 1992, 1995, 1999). This approach enables us to understand the relationship between “realized functionings” (see the Introduction) and “the capability sets”² of parents in Slovenia. The capability perspective, which provides “a return to an integrated approach to economic and social development” in “policy analysis as well as for understanding of general economic, political and social connections” (Sen 1999: 294–7), is useful for understanding the recent processes of change and development in Slovenian economy and society. Although strongly interrelated, flexibility on the labor markets and within firms/organizations and the balancing of work and family life have tended to be analyzed separately. The capability approach bridges these areas, suggesting that reconciliation of paid work and parenthood is embedded in multi-layered processes that involve individual, institutional, and societal resources. This approach has already been applied in some related studies (Agarwal, Humphries, and Robeyns 2005; Hobson and Fahlén 2009) to examine the interplay between specific institutional settings and individual choices. The capabilities approach allows us to better understand the main tensions created in Slovenia by identifying:

1. a gap between existence of rights of parents and their sense of entitlement for reconciliation of work and family;
2. a gap between acceptance of gender equality in paid work and gender inequality in parenting;
3. a gap between public social policies and organizational practices that reflects the impact of competitive market pressures on organizational cultures, creating differences between declared norms and practices.

Our main research assumption is that the capabilities of employed parents are limited in Slovenia by the interplay of obstacles embedded in prevailing presumptions about gender roles and the dominance of paid work over other parts of life.

Our study supplements the existing literature on the changing context of work–family balance in transitional economies and the findings of research in Europe (Anxo, Fagan, and Smith 2007; Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Lewis 1997; Crompton, Lewis, and Lyonette 2007; Den Dulk 2001, 2005; Fagan and Burchell 2002; Plantenga et al. 2005). Our analysis also aims to identify gender differences regarding the intensification of paid work. The article thus builds upon the results of previous analyses of the changing roles/experiences of men and women in public and private spheres of life (Blayton 2006; Blossfeld and Drobnič 2001; Burchell and Fagan 2004; Crompton 2002; Crompton et al. 2006; Hobson, Lewis, and

Siim 2002; Hochschild 2003; Lewis 2002; Lewis and Smithson 2006; Lewis, Gambles, and Rapoport 2007; van der Lippe and van Dijk 2001) and analyses of the context-specific combination of attitudes toward the gendered division of paid work and parental roles in Slovenia.

The article is structured as follows. First, we analyze the results of our empirical work³ in relation to social policies related to parenthood in Slovenia and the changing economic situation in Slovenia. In the concluding section, we evaluate the data using the capability approach. We also show where our analysis complements the existing findings about the quality of work and life in Slovenian companies. The information on methods and samples of our empirical research is presented in the Appendix.

Paid Work and Parenthood in Slovenia

What is the first association on the “employed parent”?

Stress! (men employed in a hospital)

Guilty conscience! (women employed in IT industry)

Negative Experiences in Job Search and at Work

Reconciliation policies are defined as policies that directly support the combination of professional, family, and private life activities (Plantenga et al. 2005) be it on the national and/or organizational level. Slovenia could be regarded as one of the European countries in which the public social policies have a long tradition and are very generous in terms of social benefits and services related to parenthood. Yet, our surveys showed that the gap between the institutionally defined framework and reality exists already in employment procedures. Employers ask questions about parenthood plans during the job interviews even though such questions are forbidden by law. Almost a quarter (23 percent) of parents in our 2004 survey was asked about such intentions in job interviews. Such questions were more often posed to women (more than a quarter of interviewed women) than to men (a tenth). Some parents reported that their partners or friends had employers ask them to sign a blank voluntary resignation notice, to be used should the employee be having a child. For instance, one woman told us “*Every two years my best friend had to sign that she will not get pregnant in order to prolong her contract.*” (women employed in textile industry)

Maternity leave—12 weeks at 100 percent wage compensation—was introduced in Slovenia immediately after the Second World War. As early as in 1975, parental leave could be taken by either

fathers or mothers (for 141 days at full remuneration; prolonged to 260 days in 1986). Slovenian statutory regulations concerning parental leaves and provision of public child care services have not deteriorated in the last decade and some measures have even been improved. The Parental Care and Family Benefit Act from 2001 defines four types of parental leaves financed by the state social security system⁴: maternity leave (105 days at 100 percent), paternity leave (a non-transferable right of ninety days at 100 percent for fifteen days and paid social security contribution based on statutory minimum wage for the remaining seventy-five days),⁵ parental⁶ (260 days at 100 percent), and adoption leave (150 days for a child aged from 1 to 4, 120 days for a child aged from 4 to 10 at 100 percent).

Our research, however, showed a gap between these rights and the use of thereof. More than two-fifths of the parents (2004) reported that they did not use any form of sick leave in the last year and 13 percent of the parents prematurely ended their leave. The most important reasons given were financial for fathers and the negative attitudes of employers for mothers. Thus, one mother noted, “*Whenever I take sick leave for my children they give me such looks ... and I have done all my work ... , but not being there, not letting your children who have high temperature to be cared for by someone else is a big minus at work*” (mother, employed in retail, 33).

Although the law enables parents to work part-time up to three/six years of child’s age⁷, our survey results (2004) show that only 3.8 percent parents reported that they used that right. Part of the reason for that is financial: “*What people want is one thing and what they need is another: probably all mums would like to stay at home, but for financial reasons they do not*” (female manager in health care). The answers given by some of the participants show how entitlements to take sick leave (for themselves or their children) are reduced by internalized pressures of work and clients attitudes: “*Here we have appointments and it is annoying if you get ill, ... you have to inform clients, they don’t like it, often they react negatively, ...*” (female hairdresser, 23). For another mother, “*If it is an urgent matter, we do have computers at home. Yet even if you are on the sick leave, the work process does not come to a stop!*” (mother, employed in IT industry, 31).

The law guarantees employment security to workers on parental leaves. Over the last years, however, there have been some indications that parents shorten child care leaves and use their annual vacation leaves, for which the number of days per year depends on years of employment. As many as six percent of parents in 2004 survey reported that the employer terminated their job contract after

they had a child. Younger parents (up to thirty years of age) reported dismissals because of parenthood more often than older respondents, and mothers more often than fathers. Our results showed the cumulative negative effects of gender and parenthood on employment status: 14 percent of mothers aged up to thirty years claimed that their employment was terminated involuntarily after having a child.

Discrimination against women because of their assumed parental responsibilities and use of reconciliation policies was confirmed by results of both surveys, which showed that women more often than men have negative experiences in employment and at work connected to parenthood (i.e. in job search and career building). Mothers of up to thirty years of age, divorced women, and single mothers proved to be especially vulnerable. As the following example shows, even highly educated mothers face this kind of outright discrimination:

My wife and I had two children one after another so, she was on parental leave for two years. When she came back they demoted her saying that with two children she can not perform a responsible function; . . . after a while during the restructuring they fired her. We searched for a new job for her together. She is highly educated, but many employers said “Two young children? No, thank you!” She almost lost hope, but fortunately last week she found a new job. She assured the new employer that we have grandmothers who could care for children, as she really wanted that job. (male, employed in IT industry)

Mothers also more frequently reported having problems in the work place after the birth of a child, such as hindered promotion, demotion, worse social relations in the work place. A young hairdresser reported about gendered attitudes concerning promotions:

here he is (respondent’s husband, also a hairdresser in the same organisation), with career development opportunities because he is a man. Now I see why women can’t build their careers as men do. When I started, I moved rapidly up but afterwards went backwards . . . I work ‘on full’ but I know when I am going to have a second child I shall interrupt again . . . If you are not present at work place one year, you drop a rung lower, your salary is a bit lower . . . because you have lost your customers . . . (young mother, hairdresser)

A highly educated mother of two experienced demotion because of parenthood: “*When they heard that I was pregnant with a second*

child, they withdrew a proposed promotion. It was three years ago!" (mother, employed in retail).

Even in the organizations where managers personally express an understanding for parents' needs where formally there are some family-friendly programs, there is still an expectation that those using their parental rights will not be able to fulfill the organizational demands and work pressures. When employees "consume" all the legal options regarding different kinds of leave and work flexibility, they should not expect the work career promotion. The assumption is that promotion is linked to long working hours: "*we have people who are ambitious and want to get promotion . . . and others who are not . . . Promotion is related to longer working hours, longer absence from home and many other obligations . . .*" (male manager in a textile firm). Not surprisingly, some young people without children also see parenthood as an obstacle to career building: "*If I had a child now and took parental leave, my promotion could be prolonged for another ten years as I would be absent more, and not so dedicated.*" (women, 31, employed in public administration). Respondents who had no children reported fewer problems in the workplace and in this group there were smaller gender differences in negative experiences at work.

The Gendered Division of Paid and Unpaid Work

The results of both surveys confirmed the gendered division of unpaid care work and paid work in Slovenia. While women more often than men care for children and are responsible for picking up children from kindergarten/school, men have longer paid working hours. These results indicate differences in the capabilities of women and men for work–life balance (WLB). As [Hobson and Fahlén \(2009\)](#) maintain: "Time poverty" as a measure of capabilities is gendered: for women, it diminishes possibilities to reconcile employment and start of a family and for men it creates work time pressures and diminishes capabilities for active fathering ([Hobson and Fahlen 2009](#), 21). Our research results are also in line with [Agarwall, Humphries, and Robeyns \(2005\)](#), who claim that women experience more "time stress," because they have to cope with different sets of responsibilities.

In 2008, the employment rate in Slovenia for men was 72.7 percent, which approximates the EU average (72.8 percent), while the employment rate of women (64, 2 percent) was above the EU average as well as above the Lisbon target. The gender gap in employment—9.1 percentage-points in 2005 and 10.1 for full-time employees—is considerably smaller than the EU-25 gap, and it decreased further to 8.5 percent in 2008 (10.5 percent for full-time

equivalent). It remains considerably lower than the EU 27 average. In the last few years, the unemployment gender gap is even lower: it was 1 percent in 2005 and following an increase in 2006 (to 2.3 percent), fell again to 0.8 percent in 2008 (European Commission 2009).

Parenthood for both women and men in Slovenia has a positive employment impact. According to latest data, the impact of parenthood on male employment in Slovenia was 10.4 percent in 2007, compared with the EU average of 9.5 percent (European Commission 2009). For women, the data show that the impact of parenthood was 4.9 percent (2007): with the exception of Portugal, this positive impact is not found in most EU countries. The positive association for both sexes is connected with the organization of institutional child-care in Slovenia, which is available through a dense network of public/publicly subsidized private providers.⁸ In 2008–09, 70 percent of all children of the appropriate age were enrolled in kindergarten (49 percent of children younger than three and 84 percent of children age three and over; SORS, 2009).⁹ The widespread availability and use of child-care supports the high proportion of fully employed men and women. In fact, in Slovenia, the long opening hours reflect the low proportion of those who work part time because of care responsibilities.

In fact, the dual-breadwinning model in which both partners are employed full-time has been the dominant one in Slovenia for decades. However, there has always existed a gendered set of assumptions around parental responsibilities and the use of parental rights in Slovenia, which policies attempted to resolve. This can be traced back to tensions between, on the one hand, the communist ideology of gender equality in employment, in which women's labor force allowed parents to increase their material quality of family life and, on the other hand, the Catholic church's view of the "natural" role of women as mothers and housewives and of gender hierarchy in all spheres of life.¹⁰ These tensions have been reflected in the contradictory attitudes of the Slovenian population concerning the gender division of paid and unpaid labor. Although these traditional values have not disappeared, they do not have the same political and social resonance as in other Central Eastern European countries since the 1990s. In fact, these tensions began to diminish at the beginning of this century (Černigoj Sadar and Kersnik 2005; Toš et al. 1993, 2003, 246). As shown in a public opinion survey (Toš et al. 2003), 89.6 percent of representative sample of the Slovenian population agreed that a husband and wife both should contribute to family income. At the same time, some thought that women with pre-school children should stay at home (28.8 percent said this) or

work part time (45.7 percent). Attitudes to women's inclusion in paid work in Slovenia appear to be more advanced than those in Great Britain, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal (Fagnani, Houriet-Segard, and Bedouin 2004). Nevertheless, there are contradictions. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the dominant public discourse supported dual-earner families. In 2003, slightly over half of Slovenian respondents did not agree that there should be a single (male) bread winner family type and, in 2009, 65.9 percent of respondents disagreed (Toš 2009, 463). In 2008, the majority of the respondents (74.2 percent) agreed that employment is the basic condition for women's independence. Strong public and institutional support for participation of women in paid work is reflected in a relatively low gender pay gap (7 percent in 2007). The most recent legal documents (such as Equal Opportunities Act for Women and Men, 2004) also underline the integration of women into the public sphere through their participation in the labor market and in politics, but little attention is paid to gender division of labor in private life. Consequently, Slovenia has a greater gender inequality in division of labor in the private sphere than other EU countries. According to the Eurostat data, women in Slovenia spent 4 h and 57 min daily on household tasks compared with men who spent only 2 h and 39 min (European Commission 2004). In Slovenia, women have longer total working hours (consisting of gainful and domestic work) than men. They also work more hours than women and men in other European countries (European Commission 2004). The total daily working hours of employed women in Slovenia is 8.47 h—more than an hour longer than men (7.44 h) (European Commission 2006).

There exists a high level of public opinion support for the idea that men should have an active care role: 96.2 percent of respondents agreed with the opinion that men should contribute to the care for home and children on equal basis as women (Toš et al. 2009, 374).

Nevertheless, our research showed a gap between opinions and reality: those fathers who would like to play a more active parental role report similar and sometimes even greater difficulties than mothers. They are often perceived as more reliable working force in accordance with the traditional male breadwinner role and their parental (care) involvement is not expected. Thus, one father, employed in the IT industry, noted *“If a man takes sick leave because of a child, all the people are surprised: ‘Why you? What is with your wife?’*,” while another pointed out that *“Other men on my position do not have children at all... and people call you at 7 pm. that is the only time when I could be with my children. They call even at 10 pm”* (man, employed in IT industry).

Negative reactions experienced by fathers in the workplace discourage them from using their rights. As one commented, “*They frowned at me even when I took just those two days after the child-birth, so I did not take any more . . . I do not think I will take leaves in the future either . . . my wife usually does it when the child gets sick*” (father employed in retail, 34).

Fathers who did not use (entire) paternity leave stated that this reflected a combination of their own decisions and environmental pressures (work environment and financial pressures (2005)). There have been attempts to promote active fatherhood, but these emerged at a time of the worsening situation of the labor market, which is discussed in the following section. Our results indicate that the promotion of paternity leave needs to focus on empowerment and raising personal awareness, the development of a supportive organizational climate and better financial support for this form of parental leave.

Participants in our focus groups perceive gender differences among parental roles and some of them (mostly men and those with lower education) support traditionally defined roles: “A mother is a mother!” (father, employed in retail, 34). More women and better educated participants support (and plan for themselves) a more egalitarian division of parental care responsibilities.

Increased Flexibility, Intensification, and Precariousness of Work

The transformation of Slovenia’s economy over the last two decades produced competitive market conditions and constant pressures on Slovenian organizations, which responded with de-standardization of employment and work practices (more fixed-term employment, functional flexibility, and place and time flexibility) to increase business efficiency. Thus, a country that had not had a history of job insecurity, but rather full time and secure jobs for both men and women, has undergone dramatic change.

Along three dimensions of employment and work flexibility time, work/employment conditions, and place, one would expect that the part of Slovenian workforce (older workers with open-ended contracts) would be functionally flexible (e.g., share work, combine different tasks), though this core workforce often has less place/time flexibility. A growing number of employees on fixed-term contracts, self-employed workers, agency workers, subcontractors, and other similar categories of workers have greater possibilities for place/time flexibility, but less job and income security (figure 1).

Part-time work in Slovenia is lower than in other EU countries, (European Commission 2008) yet the share of workers with

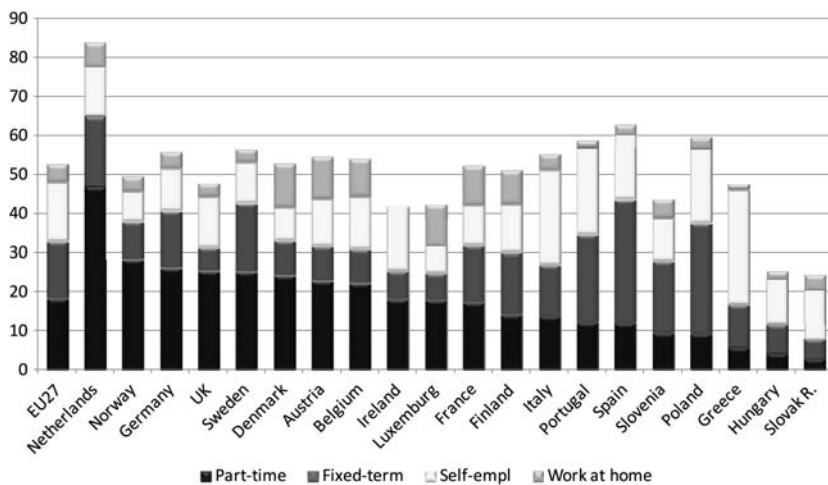


Figure 1. Flexible Forms of Employment in Slovenia and Europe in 2008. (Percentage of persons in employment in four flexible forms of employment in Slovenia and some other EU member states.)
 Source: Ignjatović (2009).

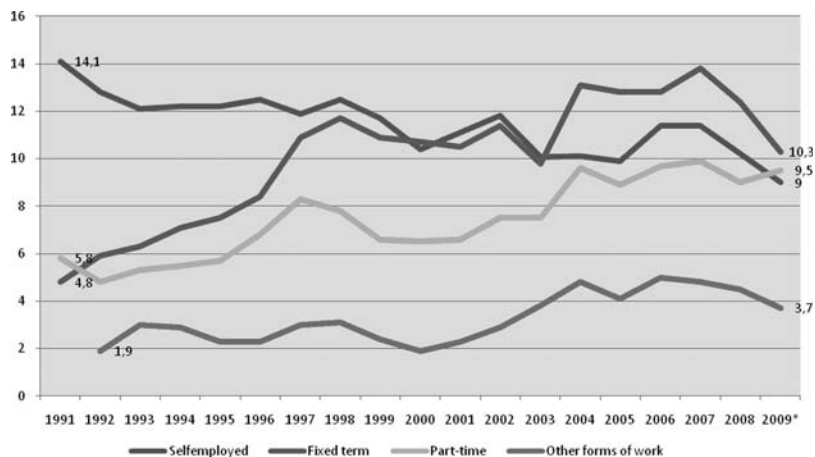


Figure 2. Flexible Forms of Employment in Slovenia in the Period 1991–2009, Second Quarter.
 Source: LFS data 1991–2009, asterisk denotes first quarter 2009 in Ignjatović (2009).

temporary contracts, most common among women and young workers, is above the EU-27 average.

In figure 2, we can see that the share of fixed-term employment almost doubled in Slovenia in the last two decades.

While, on average, the gender gap in the share of workers with temporary contracts is decreasing in EU-27, it is increasing in Slovenia. According to [European Commission data \(2008\)](#), the gender gap in the share of employees with temporary contracts increased from 1.9 percent in 2001 to 3.8 percent in 2006, while in the same period it decreased in the EU-27 from 1.6 percent to 1.0 percent.¹¹ At the same time, the gender difference in part-time work is stable. According to the [SORS \(2009a\)](#) data, the share of women working part-time (11.4 percent) in the last quarter of 2008 in Slovenia was higher than share of men (7.3 percent), but the share of part-timers did increase from the last quarter of 2007 for women or men. In Slovenia, 28.6 percent of employees have access to flexi-time, slightly more for men (28.9 percent) than for women (28.4 percent) ([European Commission 2009](#)).

Young people in Slovenia are more often affected by involuntary job flexibility, which decreases the quality of their work and life as it increases their financial risks. In 2004, more than one-third (37 percent) of young people in employment aged between 15 and 29 were on part-time and fixed-term contracts ([Kanjuo Mrčela and Ignjatović 2006](#)) and 78.5 percent of all job vacancies in Slovenia in 2006 were for fixed-term contracts ([Ignjatović 2006](#)).

Our research in 2005 also confirmed the exposure of young people to precarious employment conditions. There was a significant relationship between the age of respondents and a fixed-term employment contract: the younger the survey respondents, the higher the percentage with a fixed-term contract. Almost half of the respondents (46.6 percent) under 25 had a fixed-term contract, the majority of whom were women. The type of employment contract was also related to parenthood; among those with an employment contract for an unlimited period the majority (60.0 percent) had children, while among those with a fixed-term employment contract, the majority (66 percent) had no children. The majority (74 percent) of parents had an employment contract for an unlimited period, while only 17 percent had a fixed-term contract. These data indicate a disjuncture between employment situation and perceived conditions for parenthood.

Young people reported the following conditions as necessary to decide to have a child: a permanent employment contract, resolved housing, and reasonable financial resources. About a third of the employed respondents were anxious about losing their jobs, which reflects the current situation in Slovenia of continuous economic turmoil and enhanced labor market flexibility. The relatively high level of insecurity and high standards regarding the quality of life

are discouraging young people from entering into parenthood or having more children.

Although flexibility could increase individual choices and enable workers more easily to balance different activities/areas of life (work, family, leisure, political activities) and forms of work (paid work, housework, care, voluntary work, learning), it is important to understand conditions under which “real choices” can be made, particularly among those who have different resources, means, and power to make meaningful decisions (Bradley et al. 2000)—in other words, the “boundaries of agency” (Hobson and Fahlen 2009). In Slovenia, flexibilization fits employers’ needs much more than workers’ demands or desires. By designing employment contracts and working arrangements in flexible modes, employers have increased job precariousness.

Data from Fourth European Working Conditions Survey (European Foundation 2007) confirm the intensification of work in Slovenia, while reflecting some differences between Slovenia and EU-27 with regard to the trends of flexibility and other dimensions of quality of work. While, between 2000 and 2005, the proportion of those working shifts decreased by 3 percent points in the EU-27 (to 17 percent, it increased by 2 percentage-points in Slovenia to 30 percent. The proportion of workers working at night once a week or more rose by 7 percent points to 28 percent in Slovenia, while it remained unchanged in EU-27 at 19 percent. Similarly, the proportion of workers working on Sundays remained the same in EU-27 (29 percent), while it increased by 4 percent points in Slovenia to 33 percent. In the period analyzed, the proportion of women working on Sundays rose by 13 percent points as a result of a change in the opening hours of shops at weekends.

From 2000 to 2005, the number of working hours per week in one’s main paid job has decreased slightly in EU-27, while they actually increased slightly in Slovenia to 43.6 for men and 41.9 for women in full-time employment. Slovenia and the EU-27 are also show different patterns regarding other indicators of intensification of work. While the proportion of workers whose job involves short repetitive tasks is rising in Slovenia, it is dropping in EU-27. An unusual discrepancy can be observed in the proportion of workers who are working at very high speed: in EU-27, the data show a slight increase of 3 percent from 2000 to 2005 (to 62 percent), while in Slovenia it increased from 17 to 75 percent over the same period. The increase was higher for women than men—78 percent of women and 73 percent men. The proportion of workers working to tight deadlines rose by 3 percentage-points in EU-27 (to 62 percent)

while it increase from 50 to 67 percent in Slovenia (67 percent of men and 68 percent of women).

With regard to autonomy of work, the trends in Slovenia and EU-27 show more convergence. The proportion of workers able to choose or change their methods of work as well as their speed or rate of work is growing in Slovenia, while it has been slightly decreasing in EU-27 (the average is now about 63 percent). Similarly, the proportion of workers able to choose or change their order of tasks rose by 7 percentage-points in Slovenia from 2000 to 2005 (to 61 percent), while it remained at the same level in EU-27. With this rise, Slovenia is moving toward the EU-27 average.

It is thus not surprising to find differences in employees' evaluation of their working conditions in Slovenia versus the EU 27. In Slovenia, the proportion of people satisfied with their working conditions in Slovenia (72 percent in 2005) is about 10 percentage-points lower than among the EU-27. Similarly, the proportion of workers who are not satisfied with their WLB (26 percent in 2005) is by 5 percentage-points higher than in EU-27. We find the same gap when considering the proportion of workers who think their health and safety is at risk because of their work: This is much higher and is increasing in Slovenia (from 42 percent in 2000 to 46 percent in 2005), while it is decreasing in EU-27 (from 31 percent in 2000 to 29 percent in 2005).

Under the former regime, people had expected secure. However, these expectations have dramatically changed over the last decades. In 2000, only 30 percent of Slovene workers believed they would be able to the same job when they are sixty, compared with 57 percent of workers in EU-27. Although the proportion rose to 34 percent in 2005, it is still considerably below the EU-27 (58 percent). In our surveys, we sought to understand how these perceptions of lack of security, increased flexibility, and precariousness in jobs as well as long hours of work affect the agency inequalities in achieving a WLB.

No Resistance to the High Intensity of Work and Its Spill-over to Family Life

Changes in the Slovenian transitional economy have led to the dominance of paid work over other spheres of life, in contradiction to the legacies and expectations of quality of life that existed in the former system. Yet, most see the restoration of capitalism in Slovenia in Arlie Hochschild's terms as a successful cultural project¹² that does not provoke much resistance. That view was supported by our research findings despite the lack of WLB.

Our survey in 2005 revealed a high intensity of work and low quality of work organization. On average, our survey respondents worked 47 h per week (including work done at work, at home, business trips, etc.). Almost a third of the young people in our sample estimated that employers are too demanding. Only 13 percent of respondents have complete autonomy in their working time arrangements, while the start and end of work times of almost half (48 percent) of the respondents is decided on by the employer.

Both managers and workers in focus groups reported the rise of intensity of work: *“Everything is quicker, earlier and this trend is continuing and it does not seem to stop.”* (male manager in a textile firm). Others noted that *“There has always been a lot of work in restaurants, but now there are no breaks at all!”* (father, employed as waiter) and *“Patients are more demanding . . . intensity and demands at work have increased . . . there is a lot of paper work . . . in the last five years there are a lot of mental illnesses of employees . . . that shows that people are overburdened.”* (female manager in health care). The 2004 survey shows that parents are adapting to the long working culture and that in balancing paid work and parental obligations often give the priority to paid work. Almost one half of parents do not pick up their children by themselves mainly because of working obligations and almost a half (47 percent) of parents would like the kindergarten hours to be opened after four.

Participants in focus groups reported choosing to work long hours to achieve material and immaterial benefits and adjusting their other responsibilities and activities in order to be successful at work. Both young people without children and young parents reported a permanent and critical lack of time for personal needs, but they believe it comes with the territory. In their lives, paid work is the priority:

Work must be done . . . mostly you put work at the first place, other things are further back (father, employed in retail, 34);

We all work here as slaves, telephones ring all the time, even on Saturday if a client calls and says that the system collapsed. You can just say to the wife – sorry, no shopping, let’s postpone it for three hours, . . . we have already postponed holiday departure . . . they called me last year when I was in hospital when my daughter was born, . . . half an hour after she was born I was already in action (male employee in IT industry, 34)

Work must be done, it is your problem how much time you need for it (woman without children employed in the IT industry, 28).

In some organizations, due to the nature of work (e.g., long working hours and shift work in catering, health services or retail), such problems of reconciliation are quite severe for working parents and young people without children: “*When I work in the afternoons, I leave from home around 11.00, ... and I come back at 8:30 in the evening and we see each other very little, only at weekends*” (women employed in retail, 27).

Even those who find alternative strategies to the long working hours at the workplace do that at the expense of their personal time. Answers of two highly educated mothers who because of bad conscience toward their children choose to work more at home show how resistance to long working hours at work could result in even more exhausting working strategies:

...before I worked regularly until 7.00 or 8.00 p.m.... I lost contact with my older daughter and the younger one was already in bed when I came home. As my mother took care of her, she started to call me granny, as I was never there ... then I decided to do something for me and my family ... it is true that now I have the computer every day at home, and I always work during weekends ... (mother, 39, employed in the IT industry).

I would not like my children to be in kindergarten longer than 5 pm ... so I am adjusting to existing opening hours of kindergartens and I want to adjust! I rather take home a full briefcase of papers to work on in the evening. (mother, 33, employed in retail company)

In some companies, the possibilities of flexible working practices such as working at home or arranging working time according to one's own needs also often lead to even longer working hours and extra reconciliation problems:

When you are at home, you actually work more and longer. I wake up at 7.00 and sit down in my pyjamas before the computer, at 10.00 I put on a pullover and forget ... I only have to change when I go to kindergarten ... (mother employed in the IT industry, 31).

...and it happens that you are in the same pyjamas at 7.00 in the evening (father, employed in the IT industry, 34)

...then you put the kids to sleep around 8pm and check your inbox and work until 11.30 pm to ensure you have a clean inbox in the morning (mother employed in the IT industry, 33).

I work three days per week from home. The advantage is that I do not have to spend two hours on the road and I have

the feeling that I spend more time with my son. On the other hand there are no working hours, which means that if at 5 pm the telephone rings, I have to start to work. It could be 6 or 7 pm! (mother employed in the IT industry, 31).

For many participants in focus groups, overtime work is a regular practice. For the less educated and lower paid, it compensates for the otherwise low wages, while many highly educated young employees work many extra unpaid hours for different reasons such as dedication, improving career opportunities, high working standards, and peer pressure.

Highly educated employees in computer industry reported about the blurred divide between work and private life and about self-imposed pressures:

I do not really distinguish between work and private life... I work... now a little bit more for company... (male employee in IT industry, 28)

I have high expectations from myself. And environment here is like that – work has to be done and it has to be done well... we all have that conscience... we are all working more than needed... what we do, we do well (female employee in IT industry, 39)

Some participants without children reported about pleasure of being at work that effects their decisions about parenting:

I feel here like at home, we are like a big family, I am here maybe more than others and I enjoy it!... My mother keeps saying that it is a good thing I do not have children as we would all suffer. (female hairdresser, 28)

I am having a good time now... and I do not picture myself with a child at this moment. (female hairdresser, 34).

In spite of negative trends in employment and at work places employees are not very critical and do not aspire for change. The young employees' evaluations regarding their employers' demands on them were quite contradictory. Most respondents (2005) experienced the act of WLB as burdensome to various extents, but navigating between these two spheres of life was not found to be a burden by just 38 percent of the respondents. One finds contradictory responses: A majority of the respondents (58 percent) evaluated their employers as being understanding regarding the needs of parents with young children. Respondents with no children were more critical of their employers than those who were parents. Nevertheless, the data also showed that our young

respondents, especially parents, had relatively low expectations of what their employers would accept in relation to WLB, so they were not very critical despite their negative experiences, high intensity of work and difficulties in the reconciliation of work, and private life. Young people wanted employers to show more understanding:

If they could only see you, understand and put themselves in your shoes, not only take care of their own interests. (father employed in retail, 34)

Young people treat potential parenthood as a private matter that they should deal with by themselves:

It is not my employers' duty to care if I decided to become a mum. (mother employed in retail, 33)

In the reconciliation of work and private life, young people and especially young parents count on their own parents to help them. They also expect that the state should take some responsibility and help young parents. Focus groups participants thought that much of the pressure is due to the change in the system and that it is inevitable that something must be sacrificed:

I would like it if we could all work until 4 pm, have good salaries and be more with our children. But, it is obvious that it does not work that way! Society is changing, system is changing and public services should change. (male, employed in IT industry)

If you want to achieve something, you have to be dedicated to your career. A child is not a duty from the point of view of the employer. Work is! ... As we are in capitalism, employers decide not to employ women with children... as they see women with children as too much of a risk ... it is against their basic logic – to make profits ... altruism and capitalism do not go together well! (father, employed as a waiter)

Managers' Attitudes Towards Parenthood and Organizational Culture

Organizations and organizational culture (shared norms and values) are among the most important factors influencing individual capabilities for reconciliation of paid work and parenthood. Organizational cultures both reflect and shape managerial attitudes and practices (Den Dulk and Peper 2007): they can enhance or inhibit the capabilities of individuals to exercise rights and utilize options for better reconciliation of paid work and private life.

Managerial support is critical when it comes to utilizing work–life programs and determining whether these programs are effective (Den Dulk and Peper 2007; Den Dulk et al. 2011), since it is up to managers to communicate, implement, and manage work–life policies in organizations.

Research on utilization rates and actual practices show that there often is a gap between policy and practice. A study of human resource management practices showed that the management of Slovenian organizations expects workers will offer their knowledge and other human resources for the benefit of the organization, despite the conditions characterized by autocratic and non-participative methods of management and by the worsening of working conditions and social security (Svetlik 2006). The previous analysis of attitudes of Slovenian managers towards work–family reconciliation practices/programs (Černigoj Sadar and Kersnik 2004) showed that managers consider the extent and financial coverage of statutory parental leave and other related public measures regarding reconciling work and family as satisfactory and that no additional measures/policies at the organizational level are needed.

Results of the international research project CRANET (see figure 3) show that Slovenian organizations use “unfriendly” forms of work and employment more than organizations in other countries (both Western European and transitional). They also use “friendly” flexible forms of work and employment to a much lesser extent than organizations in other European countries.¹³ During the last years, there have been some encouraging signals for WLB, such as awareness-raising campaigns and involvement of social partners

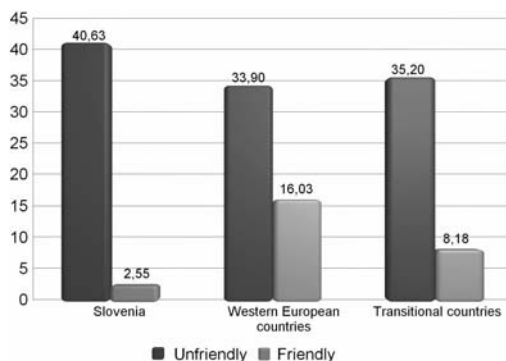


Figure 3. Shares of Organizations with 6 percent or More Workers in “Unfriendly” and “Friendly” Flexible Forms of Work and Employment.

Source: Kanjuo Mrčela and Ignjatović (2006).

aimed at improving the capabilities for reconciliation of paid work and personal life for parents.¹⁴

The results of our analysis in seven Slovenian organizations showed that parenthood is not the focus of the employers' or managers' agenda and in some cases it is not on their agenda at all. Managers reported different attitudes to needs of (young) parents ranging from a blunt disregard of their needs—"I never employ people with the feeling that I must help somebody. I think that he must earn his salary and that is my basic principle. . . . the logic of capital does not allow us to help, . . . that should be dealt with by the state, legislation . . ." (manager and owner of a catering company)—to a consideration of parents' needs due to the belief that such an orientation helps to boost employees' commitment: ". . . this is always a give-and-take game—we are trying to comply with employees' needs—if they want to go home early or to be at home the whole day, but on the condition that they are responsive when we need them to be—when we have a lot of work, we must work 10 hours per day, Saturdays, . . ." (manager in textile industry).

The attitudes of managers depended on their age and parenthood experience: managers who are themselves younger and have small children are more open to the problems and needs of parents. In a multinational high-tech organization, a women HR manager indicated that she tries to create a positive climate toward parents and confronts the negative reactions of older managers on news about expecting parenthood:

I wrote a letter to that director and to all managers and ask them not to pass silly messages around the firm In case that somebody has a problem they should turn to me and we shall find another job post or whatever If a mother takes a maternity leave, she shouldn't face anxiety about it. Perhaps I am, as a mother, very sensitive to these issues . . . (woman HR manager in IT industry).

Attitudes of managers also depend on the size of company, type, and sector of activity.

In service sectors where the demands of work are combined with workforce shortage even those managers who are very responsive to parents needs report about problems preventing them to use parent friendly practices:

The system of work in our organisation is unfriendly towards parents . . . Intensity and the demands of work have increased during the last years. Flexible work hours do not exist, we have a three shift working schedule. Due to work force shortage and

high frequency of maternity/parental leave and sickness leave we have a lot of over work hours... (woman manager in a hospital).

Managers explain the lack of responsiveness to employees' needs in terms of problems caused by globalization and high market competition: "...at this moment if we fall asleep a bit we shall disappear... and part time workers are a burden for the firm" (male manager in a textile firm).

The Gap Between Normative Declarations and Actual Practices

Very often, even if managers' attitudes and declared organizational policies are positive, the actual practices considering employment, presence at work, rules of rewarding, and promotions reveal a different picture. This reflects the general sentiment that caring for parents does not rank high on the list of organizational values and priorities. This is evident in managers' clearly expressed preferences for certain groups of job candidates (those who are less likely to have parental obligations, e.g., very young people or men) and their practices: (i) of employing young people on fixed-term contracts and (ii) the existence of the work organizational culture that harshly sanctions lateness and highly values and rewards one's presence in the workplace (sometimes regardless of one's productivity or actual results).

When I choose workers, it is important that the person is young, intelligent and it is not important whether they have children or not... a younger person is more flexible, comes when I want him, a person with a family can not do that! (owner and manager in catering)

A woman employed in a retail company pointed out how the organizational culture in the company stressed the importance of being present at work place: "*Those who have 200 overtime hours are regarded as the best. Their work is evaluated in accordance with their presence, not results. I have everything done, but I do not have overtime hours and that does not count! These who are hanging around all the time and do not have work done are the best!*" (mother, employed in a retail company). Analysis of our interviews with managers also confirmed that reconciliation of paid work and family is perceived as individual/personal problem, not organizational one. The very low birth-rate in Slovenia has had the effect that parents with small children are in the minority and they are not perceived as a relevant pressure group. Interviewed managers did

not report about any attempts of workers to resist intensification of work that they all mentioned.

In terms of organizational culture, we could conclude that in the seven organizations researched organization the work–family reconciliation friendly culture does not exist. There are no “shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives” (Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness 1999, 394).

Conclusion: Capabilities of Parents for WLB: Potentialities and Barriers

Our research offers an insight into emerging employment and working practices and the capabilities of individuals for reconciliation of paid work and family life in Slovenia, which has experienced dramatic economic and social changes in recent decades. These changes have led to a greater flexibility of the labor force, change in power relations between employees and employers, and high job and economic insecurity, especially among young women and men. Applying a capabilities framework enables us to highlight the widening gap between norms for reconciling employment with family and work intensification and pressures to devote more time to work in Slovenian work organizations.

Analysis showed high congruence between young people’s and parents’ low expectations of employers and low readiness to develop a more supportive organizational environment for easier reconciliation of paid work and family/private life. Working parents in Slovenian companies see other parts of their lives as subordinated to paid work. Our research has also indicated that use of social policy measures related to parenthood (e.g., use of parental leaves) as well as perceptions and attitudes of the interviewees reveal strongly gendered assumptions about roles of mothers and fathers.

Our qualitative results confirmed what is implicit in the data on Slovenian work environments. The capabilities of employed parents for reconciliation of paid work and parenthood in Slovenia are limited because of the interplay between organizational work cultures and widespread and embedded assumptions about the dominance of paid work over other parts of life and a belief that women—even in full time employment—should bear the responsibilities for unpaid work in the household and care of family members.

As in other countries, the implementation of social policy measures in Slovenia is not gender neutral; it depends on the prevalent concepts and attitudes toward work and family. While in the paid economy egalitarian gender ideology in Slovenia enables, supports,

and demands full-time employment of both men and women, in households/families, where pressures from the public sphere are attenuated women take the greater part of work burden. Thus, women reduce increased conflict of paid and unpaid work for men and experience the time squeeze in everyday life, while those men who try to take their part of care work risk losing their positions in paid work.

Our analysis shows that Slovenian social policies support and enable the employment of parents, but parents' ability to exercise these rights is undermined by the demands of the economic transition, which give ever more importance to paid work compared with other spheres of life for both men and women. Moreover, we find similar tensions in individual capabilities and agency for WLB in the gender egalitarian discourse on men and women in paid work and the lack of an egalitarian discourse on parenting and the division of unpaid work alongside non-egalitarian practices.

The results of Slovenian research indicate that these tensions that experienced by parents are barriers for their "realized functionings" what they can achieve and the substantive freedoms that they have to make choices. Slovenian parents are forced to prioritize paid work over other parts of their lives and work long hours. They do not feel entitled to claim or use all of their WLB rights or to resist intensification of work that undermines their quality of life. They accept gender differences in parental engagement and treat parenthood as a private problem. These conclusions suggest that capabilities of individuals for reconciliation would be increased when and if individual and organizational strategies for coping with economic pressures involve approaches that acknowledge the interlocking features of different spheres of life and forms of work (part-time, paid and unpaid, care work) and the redistribution of household and care work among men and women. These would include resistance of individuals and organizational cultures (shaped by and reflected in managers' attitudes) to existing solutions to problems posed by global competitive pressures. These changes would increase freedom of parents that is understood as enhanced "ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world" (Sen 1999).

Our research supplements the existing research on quality of working life in Slovenia, which indicates that the main developmental tool of Slovenian organizations has been increased work intensity. This has been primarily achieved through employees' unfriendly forms of work and employment flexibility (Kanjou Mrčela and Ignjatović 2006; Svetlik and Ilič 2006). Our results reveal how this general trend is experienced by a specific group of employees and how the demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and

parenthood influence capabilities for reconciliation of paid work and family life. This analysis is in accordance with conclusions based on empirical evidence of other CEE countries in which transformation to a market economy caused a gap between capabilities and agency of fathers and mothers for achieving WLB (Hobson and Fahlen 2009a), which can be seen in the low birth-rates in all these countries. Regardless of the relatively better economic situation of Slovenia compared with other former socialist countries, that agency gap seems even larger in Slovenia since the social policies that exist for WLB appear in line or ahead of many European countries in terms of targets for reconciliation of work and family life (parental leaves, child care, and female labor force participation).

To overcome the gap between policies for WLB and the work overload that Slovenian parents experience go “well beyond economic change” (Sen, 1999, 296). Recent critical analyses of contemporary organizations have addressed desirable changes in contemporary working arrangements (e.g., Beck 2000; Bradley et al. 2000; Hochschild 2003; Sennett 2006) in search for remedies for tensions created by demands for greater competitiveness emerging at the organizational/firm level and individual well-being. Some of the changes suggested are geared toward empowering employees and taking into account the multifaceted demands that are pressuring men and women in today’s work organizations. For Slovenian parents, this would mean becoming agents of development in shaping the direction of society that would allow them achieve WLB and a better quality of life. This notion of development mirrors Sen’s approach to development as “a process of expanding substantive freedoms that people have” (Sen 1999, 297) to choose a life that they value.

NOTES

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1. After a few critical years following the declaration of Slovenian independence in 1991, the economy began to recover.

2. Sen (1999, 75) distinguishes between “the realised functionings – what a person is actually able to do,” “the things a person does,” and the capability set—“the things a person is substantively free to do,” “alternatives she has.”

3. We refer to the two surveys as Survey 2004 and Survey 2005. All citations are from focus groups and interviews with managers from seven organizations.

4. Social security contributions in Slovenia are paid by employers and employees as a percentage of wages. Although the father on paternity leave receives 100 percent remuneration of his wage for fifteen days; for seventy-five days he does not receive any wage, but the government covers his social security contributions. However, the basis for calculation of social security contributions is not father’s wage, but the statutory minimum wage.

5. The majority of fathers use the paid part of paternity leave.

6. During the last years only 1–2% of fathers took this leave—mostly in case of mother’s illness or absence.

7. On agreement with the employer, the parent caring for the child has the right to work part time (at least 20 h a week) until the child is three. A parent caring for two preschool children has the right to work part time until the youngest is six. During this period, the parent’s wage depends on actual hours worked, for the rest, up to full time the state pays social security contributions on a proportional share of the minimum wage. A parent working part time gets part of his or her wage for the hours worked. For the rest of hours up to the full time hours he or she is not paid, but the government pays his/her social security contributions calculated based on the statutory defined minimum wage. Special provisions and benefits are in place for parents caring for a handicapped child or parents who leave the labor market to care for four or more children (www.mdsz.gov.si/en/areas_work/family).

8. Preschool child-care institutions are funded by municipalities, by parents’ fees and the sale of services and products. Depending on the income per family member and family property, parents contribute from 10 to 80 percent of the program costs for the first child, while if their second child is in the kindergarten as well parents have not had to pay any contribution since 2008.

9. Slovenia has already achieved the second goal the 2002 Barcelona objective of 33 percent inclusion of children younger than three years in kindergartens.

10. After World War II, the ideology of the ruling Communist Party aimed at eliminating social inequality by transferring some of traditional family functions to the public/state institutions, opening the way to the inclusion of women in paid work and challenging the traditional male breadwinner ideology, propagated by the Catholic Church (Jogan 1995, 229). The female labor market participation was also stimulated by the rapid post-war growth of industry and fast expansion of the service sector in the 1970s.

11. Over the last few years, the total unemployment rate in Slovenia has been below the EU average during the last years, reaching 4.4% in 2008.

12. Hochschild (2003) claims that the American working parents choose to accept the dominance of paid work over care work and family.

13. European CRANET network does research on the HRM in European organizations with more than two hundred employees. In the analysis of different forms of flexible work in Slovenia, Kanjuo Mrčela and Ignjatović (2006) defined some forms of flexible work as employee-friendly (those that, at least formally, give the employees greater autonomy about when and where they work): part-time work, job sharing, flexi-time, home-based work and telework) and some as employee-unfriendly (those that increase intensity of work and heighten the insecurity of employment): weekend work, shift work, overtime, temporary work, fixed-term work.

14. In addition to prohibiting discrimination in job recruitment and at work, the Act on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men (2002) and Employment Relations Act (2002) underline the employer's responsibility to help solve problems of paid work and family life reconciliation. In the Social agreement for the period 2007–09 the twelfth chapter, dedicated to the reconciliation of occupational and family obligations, the responsibilities are clearly divided between government, employers, and trade unions.

Appendix: Methods

In 2004 and 2005 we performed two telephone surveys. In addition, we conducted fourteen focus groups with employees and interviews with seven managers in seven different Slovenian organizations in 2005 and 2006 that gave us more focused insight into the situation of young (potential) parents in Slovenian organizations. When designing instruments (surveys' questionnaires, guidelines for interviews, and focus groups), we decided to develop instruments used in the international comparative study "Transitions: Gender, parenthood and changing European work place" that addressed several layers of the social context (Brannen et al. 2003; Černigoj Sadar et al. 2005; Lewis et al. 2005).

The first telephone survey was conducted in November 2004. The initial sampling pool was 7,500 telephone numbers of private individuals across Slovenia. The sampling was random to ensure a representative sample of telephone numbers. Eight hundred and eighty of

the called numbers fit the survey criteria, namely the existence of at least one child of up to seven years of age in the household and we conducted 608 telephone interviews with parents (response rate 69 percent). The average length of an interview was 11 min. In the telephone survey, we used a questionnaire that had thirty-one questions concerning the use of child-related leaves, the use of different child-care arrangements, problems in the reconciliation of parental/private and work obligations, and the demographic data of interviewed persons and their partners.

Out of those we interviewed, 470 (77 percent) were women and 138 (23 percent) men. Most respondents were in the 31–35 age group (59 percent), had a secondary education (42 percent), and higher or university degree (38 percent), and were employed (77 percent) and married (72 percent). Almost a half of respondents (49 percent) had two children, 33 percent had 1 child and 14 percent had more than two children.

The second telephone survey was conducted in November 2005. The initial sampling pool was 6,600 telephone numbers of private individuals across Slovenia. The sampling was random to ensure a representative sample of telephone numbers. A total of 1,592 of the called numbers suited the survey criteria, namely the age of the respondent being between 22 and 35. We conducted 882 telephone interviews, so the response rate was 55.4 percent. The average length of an interview was 10 min.

Out of the 882 people we interviewed, 554 were women (63 percent) and 328 men (37 percent). Most respondents (37 percent) were in the 31–35 age groups. Another two-thirds were in age groups between 22 and 25 (31 percent) and between 26 and 30 (32 percent). Almost half of the respondents had a secondary education (49 percent), 32 percent had a higher or university degree, while those with a vocational (12 percent) or primary school (5 percent) education were in the minority. More men than women had a secondary, vocational, or postgraduate education while more women had a higher or university degree. Almost a third of our respondents (30 percent) were married, 26 percent were single, 22 percent had partners with whom they do not live, and 21 percent lived unmarried with their partners. The majority of respondents (59 percent) had children.

Both surveys samples are weighted toward women and highly educated respondents. That is a consequence of the chosen method of data collection (telephone survey) and the content of the surveys: women and mothers are more often at home than men and fathers, they are also more ready to answer the questions on family as men are; besides there are very few single fathers with young children in

the population. Because of a sample we found out more about problems related to work family balancing then we would in a more balanced sample.

Focus groups were used because of their potential to give possibilities to participants to voice their own perspectives, raise, or emphasize issues that are of importance to them and thus enrich our knowledge about the analyzed problems. A semi-structured focus groups guide was developed based on two survey questionnaires and were structured in five sections: demography and employment data, reconciliation experiences, problems in employment, work and promotions connected to potential or actual parenthood, organizational culture, and reconciliation-related practices at the present employer, needs and wishes of participants regarding reconciliation.

We had seventy participants in fourteen focus groups in seven organizations (two per organization). Out of them, forty-three were women and twenty-seven men; forty participants were without children and thirty were parents. Seven organizations were in different activities: catering, retail, IT industry, health care, textile industry, hairdressers business, and public administration. Organizations differed in size by the number of employees: two were big, two small, and three middle size. Two were public and five private companies (one was a part of a multinational corporation).

We also interviewed seven managers: three general managers (all three were men), two human resources managers (one man and one woman), and two middle managers (one woman and one man). Semi-structured interviews covered the following: demographic data, data on employees in the organization (number, sex, and education), existing programs/policies regarding reconciliation (working time, leaves, and work organization); special programs for parents of small children, organizational culture, and working practices, organizational changes and plans.

Focus groups and interviews with managers were performed at the organizations' premises, audio-taped, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.

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