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## SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

► Social Affairs

# How to organize work in order to reconcile gender equality and business performance

*An international perspective*

Centre d'analyse stratégique  
Friday, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2011

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##### *Moderator*

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## Opening remarks

Vincent CHRIQUI, Director General, *Centre d'analyse stratégique*

I am pleased to welcome the keynote speakers as well as the participants to the seminar: "How to organize work in order to reconcile gender equality and business performance", that takes place today at the *Centre d'analyse stratégique*.

Three topics encompass this particularly important issue: childcare supplied to young children; the right to maternity and parental leave, which structure key times of private life; and the organisation of flexible working times and schedules.

The seminar will specially focus on the third one, which is the key for reconciling home life and work. Policy makers must address it since it has an impact both on how everybody sees the gender roles and on how companies function or should function. It is particularly worthwhile to shed light on the topic from the following point of view: in 2011, discussion with trade unions have started on working conditions and reconciliation between family life and work. The staff of Roselyne Bachelot, French Minister for Social Cohesion, is working on a plan that will be announced a few months from now.

On the topic addressed today, the *Centre d'analyse stratégique* conducted a study and released a recent issue of its weekly newsletter, *La Note d'analyse*<sup>1</sup>, which underlines the practices that make it easier to reconcile home and work life. How far government may be concerned as regards an area that largely depends on each company's situation and its own operating methods? As for other social policy areas, our aim is to illustrate that the matter at stake is not having to decide between what would be good, on the one hand, for business and on the other hand, for employees: many remedies can be explored to boost performance and productivity, while listening more to workers. Numerous examples come from the other side of the Atlantic and will be presented during the seminar.

Nathalie TOURNYOL DU CLOS, Head of the *DGCS's*, Gender Equality Department, will moderate the first round table, share with us her knowledge and discuss family and industrial trends that enhance the need for a better coordination between home life and working time. Jérôme BALLARIN, President of the *Observatoire de la parentalité en entreprise*, will moderate the second round table, which will focus on new forms for organizing the workplace and how far they help or hinder gender equality.

I would like to thank all the speakers and the participants who have joined us to discuss this key issue, before giving the floor to our first guest.

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<sup>1</sup> *La Note d'analyse* n°247, November 2011, Centre d'analyse stratégique, <http://www.strategie.gouv.fr/content/de-nouvelles-organisations-du-travail-conciliant-egalite-femmemhomme-et-performance-des-entre>



## Round table1

### *Trends in the use of time within companies and families: a new balance between working and private life*

#### *Participants*

**Veerle MIRANDA**, Economist, OECD

**Laurent LESNARD**, Sociologist at the CNRS; Director, The Sciences Po Center for Socio-Political Data

**Marie-Thérèse LETABLIER**, CNRS Research Director, The Sorbonne Center for Economics

#### *Moderator*

**Nathalie TOURNYOL du CLOS**, Head, Gender Equality Department, Ministry for Social Cohesion

The “Gender Equality” Department runs its programme, according to the international agreements signed by the French Government which include the commitment for every country to maintain a permanent structure dedicated to this topic. It is a very small department with a tiny budget (20 millions euro), but well-represented with representatives of various ministries all across France. We have had a budgetary programme for the past two years, which outlines how French ministerial departments use the budgets available for improving women’s rights.

Although women participate more actively in the labour market, there has been no significant changes in the social organization or in the family life. We do not know whether a balanced sharing of tasks at home and at work will ever take place, as the last step of this evolution. Women succeeded in winning rights and accessing traditional male environments, but men continue to be slightly resistant in participating in women’s traditional environment. The surveys carried out by the French statistical Office, *INSEE*, show that the situation is not evolving very fast: women always spend a high proportion of their time in unpaid work, are still a kind of a variable for adjustment.

Time remains a determinant factor and is still a cause of a *de facto* discrimination, that materialise in the choices of career made by men and women. This will be overcome when we will no longer ask who will look after the children, we will then recognise that a man has as much of a duty to be in charge of the home life and the children.

The Lisbon Strategy made provisions for gender equality, in compliance with business performance. This was introduced in “Europe 2020”, the EU’s growth strategy for the coming decade, approved on March 26, 2010, by the European Council; it must be taken into account by each Member State in its “Job Plan”, as part of the National Reform programme. Among the objectives, the employment rate of women should reach 75%. This goal has not been achieved yet, even if France has among the best results. An other goal of “Europe 2020”: an increased participation of women in the labor market, supported by measures that provide for

a better balance between private and work lives, innovative childcare accessible to all women, as well as an innovative organization at work.

On March 5, 2011, the “European Pact for Gender Equality” was adopted by the European Council. Since 2000, the topic, a better articulation between working and private times, has been widely addressed, including by companies. In France, a bill was passed on May 9, 2011, the Law for professional gender equality, which strengthens the existing tools for monitoring social dialogue on this topic either at the branch level or within the institution itself. An annual report will be subsequently published: it will compare, for each category of employees within the company, job offers, opportunities of training and promotions proposed for women and men. This was reinforced by the article 99 of the Law reforming the retirement scheme, passed on November 9, 2010. These policies conducted in France reflect a progress for dual-career couples with children (more than 60%) through a better articulation between working and private times.

We have made progress in better balancing the professional and private life, particularly for dual earners and specially since this summer. Roselyne Bachelot, the Minister for Social Cohesion, organised a conference on the role of women at home and at work. Brigitte Grésy also published a report, which was used as a reference for the discussions<sup>2</sup>. It allowed us to understand how we could achieve better work-life balance for women.

The conference promoted gender-equality discussions with different labour partners. A questionnaire has been sent out. There are questions about prolonging paternal leave after the birth of a child, etc. The Human-Resources Division within every Ministry has also started looking at this subject more carefully and having discussions with trade unions. These will lead to a protocol for agreement.

## I. The use of time: trends in the OECD countries

### Veerle MIRANDA

This presentation is based on time-use surveys conducted across 26 OECD countries, as well as in China, India and South Africa. Typically, such time-use survey is done for every country only every ten years. In France, we are using data for 1999 as more recent ones are not available yet. All the data refers to the population aged 15-64. Unpaid work refers to routine housework, caring for children and other family members, volunteering, shopping and unpaid travel. Paid work includes full and part-time jobs, education, career breaks, job seeking and so on.

Women devote on average 2.5 hours more than men to unpaid work, in all countries. In France, the gender gap is slightly smaller, but women still spend two hours more on unpaid work than men. In the Nordic countries, the gap narrows again to approximately one hour. However, in countries like Turkey, Mexico and India, women do more than four hours of unpaid work than men do.

<sup>2</sup> Grésy B. and Dole P. (2011), « L'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux responsabilités professionnelles et familiales dans le monde du travail », Paris, June, la Documentation française, <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/114000300/index.shtml>



Some of the explanation for these differences relates to the level of development reached by a country. However, the correlation between unpaid work and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is rather weak. The issues are mainly cultural and demographic. Public policies also determine the gender gap in unpaid work. Women have traditionally been responsible for childcare activities in the household, but over the past decades, they have become more active in the labour market, increasing thus time spent in paid work and decreasing their unpaid work.

There is a strong negative correlation between the employment rate of women in a country and the amount of time women devote to unpaid work. Part of this decrease in time spent on unpaid work has been offset by men. There is a correlation between time spent by men for unpaid work and the female employment rate. However, even in Denmark where most of men spend time on unpaid work, men still do less unpaid work than in Norway which has the lowest number of women doing unpaid work. Part of the reason for women spending more time doing unpaid work is that they spend less time in paid work. In countries with more women active in the labour market, the gender gap is close to zero, or even negative.

Part-time work is much more common among women than among men. Approximately 25% of women in OECD countries work part-time, compared to 9% of men. In France, the figures are slightly lower for both men and women. In countries where part-time opportunities are less available, such as Southern Europe, the presence of children is an important factor for explaining women exiting the labour market.

Women take up part-time, voluntary work because of childcare responsibilities. This choice is likely to be strongly influenced by alternative options for childcare, such as the father taking care of the children, or affordable formal childcare options. There is a positive link between the share of part-time work of women and the cost of childcare. There is little evidence that men use part time work for childcare reasons. Among men who work part time on a voluntary basis, more do so for educational or health reasons.

Regardless of whether or not fathers are working, they spend less time on childcare than mothers. Even fathers who are not working spend less time on childcare than mothers who are working. Working mothers spend approximately one hour on primary childcare and non-working mothers spend two hours. Primary childcare refers to childcare as the main activity. Secondary childcare involves spending quality time with children, or looking after children who are elsewhere in the house.

Approximately 60% of the time spent by mothers for childcare is devoted to physical care and provision. This means feeding, changing diapers and supervision. 40% of a father's time goes into education and games, which means helping children with their homework, playing games and reading to children. That figure is much lower for mothers. Mothers spend an amount of time (in minutes) that is more than the double, on each of these activities.

Studies have shown that public policies can influence the division of labour between men and women. Publicly-subsidised childcare can relieve a mother of responsibilities and encourage her participation in the labour force. However, some continue to use long parental-leave arrangements, because governments are

reluctant to give that right to fathers. With the development of part-time work options and other flexible working options, we must be careful not to reinforce these gender roles. Flexible options are still mainly used by women.

### Nathalie TOURNYOL du CLOS

Let's now turn to the presentation of Laurent LESNARD, whose approach aims to cross statistics with sociology. I invite you to refer to his recent article<sup>3</sup>. He focuses on various typologies of work weeks depending on their length and nature. The findings of his research shed light on the distribution of tasks and its consequences for family life.

## II. Synchronisation and desynchronisation in the use of family time?

### Laurent LESNARD

One of the highlights of this topic is that 70% of couples are now dual earners. As early as 1975, the rate was already 50%. However, it is only in 2007 that the French Statistical Office released figures on the percentage of dual earners in France.

I call 'desynchronisation' or 'off-scheduling' the consequences when men and women in dual earners couples are not working at the same time. For instance, one partner may work in the morning and the other has a more conventional work schedule, which causes off-scheduling. I am trying to identify the exact nature of the difference and to determine its impact on family life.

Historically, we have seen that controlling working time is increasingly important for companies, due to their needs of flexibility in production and in the customers relationships. For instance, we can underline the development of unusual working hours in the services sector.

For certain types of services, companies need a specific schedule of working dayly times. They use statistics to programme it, some of the workers will have fragmented work schedules; they may work in spurts and then have breaks. This may include working in the evening. In France, growth in jobs is mostly in the services sector, particularly in retail, security, cleaning services and hotels. Controlling work time and the increased job rate in these sectors may actually cause difficulties for couples.

Before, families were more inter-dependent, with women specialising in non-paid work and men having a paid job. With greater gender equality, family ties mostly involve shared time, in the form of quality interactions. When men and women cannot spend time together because of their job constraints, this may weaken family ties.

What are the conclusions of time-use surveys referred to by Veerle MIRANDA? The respondents had to describe their activities in a log book, using their own words. It

<sup>3</sup> « Investigating Scheduling of Work: A Two-Stage Optimal Matching Analysis of Workdays and Workweeks », avec Man Yee Kan, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A*, 174(2), p. 349-368.

was then recoded by our statistical department to make them usable. The data are divided in order to reflect three situations: both people in the couple are working at the same time; no-one is working; one of the two partners is working. Most of the time, both work and there is some degree of synchronicity in work time. We do not just measure off-scheduling, but at what time of the day couples are off-scheduled, since the impact differs, depending on the time during the day.

In France, 8% of couples are desynchronised, with one partner working during the day and one at night. 44% are working at standard schedules. Most dual earners are desynchronised, with atypical working schedules. There are different profiles. When one or both have long days, they are completely off-scheduled. One partner may work part time, but the definitions for part-time work vary. The standard days are quite synchronised, but only up to 70%. For the rest, there is a complete off-scheduling with synchronisation for only 22%. Two surveys were conducted, in 1995 and 1999, that enable to measure an increase in desynchronisation of 22% between these two dates. Desynchronisation refers to a major discrepancy between the two schedules.

71% of respondents said that schedules were decided by the company, without any possibility for change. 16% were able to determine their schedule. For 51% of the couples, both partners have schedules imposed by the company. For only 10% of the couples did the partners say that they had a great deal of leeway to determine their own schedules. Then there was an in-between situation, with one partner having more flexibility than the other.

Let's look at a standard day and an off-scheduled day. Among those who have a lot of flexibility to organise their work schedules, 80% of the days are actually standard days, with a few days of off-scheduling. Couples whose work schedules are imposed have as much standard days and many more off-scheduled days, so they are desynchronised. Overall, desynchronisation is not a choice. There is a question of inequality because people who can choose their work schedules, tend to be in the upper socio-economic brackets and work in intellectual spheres. For manual workers, schedules tend to be imposed. This produces social inequalities.

The time spent together by childless couples is on average three hours and fifteen minutes. The three main activities are meals, leisure time and TV. For families with children, there is 44 minutes of time for the couple. In 1999, there was a very strong increase –25%– in time spent with children, which further demonstrates the importance of spending time with family.

There are gender differences. Mothers spend approximately two hours with their children and fathers spend about thirty minutes. There is a difference in quality as well as in quantity. The number-one activity for women is domestic chores, as opposed to caring for their children. However, men tend to spend time on recreational activities: leisure, education etc. rather than primary care for their children. There is a strong increase in both categories, especially for men. The percentages are impressive, but they are starting from a low level. However, the increased time that women are spending with their children includes more leisure time spent with them. This stresses the importance of leisure activities.

Desynchronicity reduces family and couple time. During the week, families are together in the evening rather than in the morning. If someone is working in the

evening, this will strongly impact on family time. Synchronicity does not affect the amount of time mothers spend with their children, but it does affect fathers. TV accounts for this, for the most part.

Desynchronisation increases. The results of the forthcoming survey will confirm if this is a steady trend. Most of the time, it is not a personal choice. The companies require their workers to be available at certain times of the day. However, the effect may not be desirable to any of the parties, whether it is positive or negative. Very little research has been conducted on this, because it requires many data. In some cases, the problem may increase the probability of separation and divorce. I looked at what happens on a typical day, but the situation is worse when reviewing it from a weekly perspective. We tend to over-estimate standard schedules. There is more desynchronisation when reviewed on a weekly basis.

Are there solutions? The UK passed a law in 2003, whereby companies have to take into consideration the demands of the workers for family life. It is not mandatory; companies do not have to grant these wishes, but if they deny the demands, they have to demonstrate their economic rationales for it. There has been no definitive evaluation done of this law, so I am not sure of its usefulness. But the initiative is interesting: the very fact that there is a law means that the public authorities are aware of the necessity to take into account this issue.

### III. A work-life balance policy: the interactions between institutions and changes in the family as well as in companies

Marie-Thérèse LETABLIER

Not every type of work-life balance leads to a greater gender equality. There is a direct link between changes in family units and changes that are taking place at work. Changes in family units and lifestyle are caused by an increase in dual-employed couples and a larger number of single parents, because of more separations and divorces. The share of housework has changed as a result, but the time spent by men and women has also changed slightly. Traditional roles have somewhat changed, because men participate more actively in household tasks, but the roles have not been completely reversed.

The increase in the number of single parents leads to specific problems in terms of work-life balance and family quality time. For single parents, synchronisation is not an issue in the same way. This is because the parents may not be living together, so the sharing of tasks is not quite the same. The synchronisation is different and poses a range of problems. Synchronisation between school time and leisure time becomes more of an issue here.

Couples are subject to greater pressure, particularly because the desire is great to participate more closely in children's education. The amount of time that mothers and fathers wish to spend with their children has increased over the years. Surveys concerning parental values confirm that there is a true desire to spend more time with the family and the children. The topic of social participation of children that is expressed in the studies carried out by the EU is based on these findings.

Staggered hours do not necessarily lead to a better balance between work and private life. Sometimes, they can even be a more serious cause of the imbalances between work and private life and reduce the time that parents can spend with the family. Laurent LESNARD showed that desynchronisation can cause imbalances as well. These desynchronised schedules are more prevalent when couples cannot choose their work schedules.

Work-life balance cannot be exclusively resolved through public policies, although they do play a very important role, but companies must also take part to the process. We should look at how this has been addressed so far since companies can change their policies. There is not a single way for organising work time, it is possible to be more innovative. A lot of research is underway on this topic. France falls behind compared to other countries, but we are catching up. Work is being carried out by the National Institute for Statistical and Economic Studies (INSEE, the French statistical agency), and also by the Dublin Foundation and the Sociological Research Centre. Therefore, we now have data which will allow us to help companies to define how they can contribute to address the topic.

#### IV. Debate

##### From the floor

Brigitte Grésy's report was only mentioned. However, it is worth addressing the research she has done on paternity leave, in particular with the aim of sharing time better and keeping women from moving even further away from their work. Another point deserves being discussed: for salaried managerial positions, with a set number of working days a year, there is a theoretical obligation to mention the reconciliation between home and professional life during the annual job interview, which is an opportunity for both employees and companies to boost performance.

##### Vanessa WISNIA WEILL

With regard to the first comment, in the introduction we did say that there are three pillars when trying to reduce gender inequality at work, which depend on better coordination between home and professional life: childcare for young children; parental leave; and more flexible working hours and schedules. The third theme is the focus of our seminar, although the first two remain very important.

The second round table, on practices implemented by companies, will address the second point. The room left for dialogue on these issues is a very important factor of change.





## Round table 2

### *Introducing new forms of work organization : more opportunities for gender equality?*

#### *Participants*

**Vanessa WISNIA-WEILL**, Researcher, Social Affairs Department, *Centre d'analyse stratégique*

**Ariane OLLIER MALATERRE**, Associate Professor, Rouen Business School, Associate Member, LISE-CNRS, CNAM, Paris

**Radoslaw OWCZARZAK**, Research Director, Employment and Competitiveness, Eurofound

**Armelle CARMINATI**, Vice-President Accenture, Global Managing Director, Human Capital and Diversity

**Jean-Marc VINAS**, Director, Diversity, Citizenship and Social Innovation, SFR

**Jean AGULHON**, Director, Human Resources France, Renault

**Jean-Baptiste OBÉNICHE**, Managing Director, *Agence Nationale pour l'Amélioration des Conditions de Travail (ANACT)*

#### *Moderator*

**Jérôme BALLARIN**, president, *observatoire de la Parentalité en entreprise*

### *Introduction*

#### **Vanessa WISNIA-WEILL**

Inequality between men and women in sharing the household tasks has an influence on imbalances in employment between men and women. We feel that evolutions in work-life practices are favoured by the changes in family structures (increase in the number of dual-earner couples, spread of single-parent families, involvement of fathers) and in the organisation of work.

As regards families, male behaviours and representations are changing. Up to now, we have been talking about gender equality and its impact on women's roles. This also has an effect on male occupations and activities: the amount of time fathers spend with their children and the case of single parents, where men share custody and have to deal with these issues. These were considered to be female concerns up to now. In the United States, a survey showed that in dual-earner couples, fathers have changed their approach and shown more understanding of work-life balance. 10-15 years ago, only 30% said that they were concerned about this, whereas today, 70% feel that they are affected by work-life balance. As in the past, approximately 40% of women said they were affected by this. There is a change regarding needs and what has to be changed, all the more given the pressure of work on family life.

There are new ways of working, new technologies and greater autonomy, which have led to more diverse forms of work organisation. Therefore, greater flexibility is possible. However, this is still a slightly ambivalent issue. With the increase of unusual working hours, companies' initiatives toward more flexibility have often been at the expense of a better work-family balance for the employees. On the contrary, flexible work arrangements could give rise to new opportunities to establish that balance. We have stated that companies can enhance productivity, but also set up a situation employees would also benefit from.

From an employer point of view, there are time-schedule and flexitime issues. For French people, flexitime seems to be the best way of balancing work and life, but also the least frequently-offered option by employers (if we except the standard practise of part-time work). Yet we must concur in the terms. When women are offered part-time jobs so that they can take care of their children, does it improve the balance between their work and their family life, or does it assign them a traditional role? One should go beyond that, and widen the scope of work-life practices, considering that they also relate to men, so that employers can use it as a tool for both men and women. We have studied innovative practices, mainly in Anglo-Saxon countries, to look at this win-win solution.

First, practices that counter the negative effects of part-time work have been invented (job-sharing, reintegration programs). One of the solutions is job-sharing, which is quite widespread in the US, or even, for instance in public services in the UK and Switzerland. Planning atypical timetable with the employees can also be used (companies such as Carrefour and Renault use it).

Above that, innovative practices based on flexibility at the workplace have appeared (other than part-time work): formal and informal arrangements comprising compressed working week, annualised working time, linked between business results and flexibility, teleworking etc. "Best Buy" is a striking (and extreme) example in this perspective: this American company has started a project, with 4,500 employees involved; evaluation of the work is carried out and based on outcome and results, but people can work whenever and wherever they wish. This program has been assessed positively from the employers' and the employees' point of view. Work-place flexibility practices should also be evaluated. Even though one has the best intention in terms of work-life balance, organising work in a flexible way may have the opposite effect. Arrangements can be defined and implemented individually by managers and employees.

Flexibility practices on the workplace are not very widespread in France. There are some adjustments, but it is only at 35%, whereas in other countries, it can go up to 60%, for example in Denmark, Sweden and the United States. Here there is room for improvement.

We have "good reasons" for falling behind in terms of innovation on the workplace: some Anglo-Saxon countries have no real public policy for childcare. This is the case in the United States at least. Maternity leave is not as developed as in France. Therefore, there has been more innovation and creativity in the organization on the workplace. In France, there is a sound policy for childcare and for parental leaves. We are falling behind regarding innovations that companies can monitor and that would be flexitime suitable with work-life balance. One should not put these options into set categories and stick to that.



The proposed approach for the private sector would consist of encouraging the introduction of flexible working programmes to give employees more control over their schedules. First and foremost, this would mean entering into dialogue with large companies with the aim of signing a “flexitime charter”. The goal is to fight against discriminatory scheduling practices and presenteeism while making it possible for companies to adjust their human resources to match cyclical requirements more closely. At the same time, we need to firmly establish a culture of using these innovative practices in the minds of senior managers. The second proposal is aimed at the civil service: the government could select key services where implementing the whole range of practices referred to above. This would entail studying a programme with the support of the French *DGCS* and subsequently implementing these programmes, assessing them after three years and rolling out the most efficient ones.

While the general thrust of the *Note d’analyse* emphasises win-win scenarios with benefits for both company productivity and work-life balance for employees, we have to realize that such scenarios are not always an option. To regulate can therefore be an effective measure. Safeguards can be needed when opening the floodgates of flexibility in relation to where and when people work. In this regard, the topic of health at work could provide such a safeguard by drawing on proposals previously put forward by ANACT (the French agency for improving working conditions): we propose that comparative status reports be enhanced by measuring the impact of work schedules on the health of male and female employees and by cross-referencing this data against their family situation.

#### Jérôme BALLARIN

There has been a suggestion to write a charter on flexitime to be implemented by companies. It is the role of the Ministry of Social Cohesion to design a charter on parenthood. This charter has been signed by 300 companies so far. It deals with time organisation, time use and telework. Job-sharing is not sufficiently developed in France. The compressed week will enhance the role of fathers, which is interesting. The “2011 Parenthood Analysis” conducted by our Agency shows that employees are keen to achieve work-life balance.

There is a link between employee performance and wellbeing. We must also fight against French work styles. Gender equality should also take into consideration the exact set-up of the company: its sociological, economic and professional position. We can take quite efficient action in this area, make employers aware of these different issues. Whenever I have contact with employers, I try to encourage them to apply all the principles, or at least 2-3 of them. Managers must keep in mind these issues when negotiating with employees on better gender and professional equality. The Ministry for Family Affairs has also asked me to publish a report to identify best practises in companies and enhance gender equality.

## I. The practices implemented by Anglo-Saxons employers: overview and conditions for success

Ariane OLLIER MALATERRE

This presentation will focus on flexibility practices on the workplace which very often mean part-time work. However, women are penalised by part-time work, not only when they choose it but when it comes to their pensions. We have to rethink our policy on flexibility and consider full-time flexibility, part-time flexibility, career advancement and work organisation. The important pillars for these are public policy, human-resources policies and informal arrangements within the teams.

Full time flexibility applies to daily schedules, means arriving and leaving at different times. There was a strong expectation among French workers that they would be able to work at home. Teleworking is very well-developed in the UK and the US and relatively less in France. Teleworking is done on a regular or on a one-off basis. It is 1-3 days per week; it is not full time; it is unusual for a person to be a full-time teleworker. It can be done either at home or in a place closer to the sites of work; some Anglo-Saxon companies do that. Not only managers and knowledge workers are involved; technology makes it possible to decentralise: a call-centre worker can work at home. These positions are best suited for teleworking, because it is very easy to supervise the employee. The manager is less likely to suspect that the employees are not producing the work. Teleworking is increasingly accepted; there are virtual teams globally. It is not necessary to deal with gender equality or family-integration concerns. If you are a manager in Paris, you may have part of your team in Chicago and another part of your team in India.

The compressed week is another very interesting practise. Workers are still working full time and we know that this is very important for career advancement. However, rather than working five days per week, people work more hours over four days. Alternatively, instead of working 10 days over two weeks, people can work for nine days, taking every second Friday off. Even top managers use this system. The disadvantage is that the pace of work is very intense because the workload does not decrease; the same amount of work must be done in less time.

There is conventional part-time flexibility; for example, there are women in France who take Wednesdays off. There is also annualised part-time flexibility, bearing in mind the school vacations. People work full time while their children are at school and when the children are off, they do not work, or work a lot less. Instead of having 100% work time, people may decrease to 0-20% and return to 100%.

There is another very interesting practise which we would like to develop in France: job-sharing. Two people are hired to fill the position and they share the position, the performance evaluation and the career advancement. In Grenoble, several VPs are job sharing. They were recruited in that way and they were promoted at the same time. One person may work in the morning and the other person may work in the afternoon. They can alternate days, or one person may work for six months and the other person can work for the other six months.

It is far less rigid than part-time work and still allows for career advancement, because these are real positions. They are not part-time positions, which may lead

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to people being sidelined, without progress. In Canada, there is an example where three people are filling two jobs. Two people can decide to operate under one brand within a company.

The social and demographic changes mean that we must accept career advancement patterns that are different from the typical career profile of a continuous career path. We talk about the life cycle in education and major changes in one's professional life, because of redundancy and other reasons. We have to accept the idea that a professional path can be much more uneven and include unemployment. Managers may take a year off to travel and come back full of enthusiasm for their career. People who are over 50 may have a lot of potential, particularly women whose children have grown and who want to work full time. We need to move beyond the image of a career path of ascending steps and create a matrix in which people move laterally and return to the same place.

Evaluation of work must be outcome-based rather than time-based, with a focus on results. The manager has to have specific objectives, which must lend themselves to measurement. There are also certain rules for meetings, which seem rather obvious, but are easier for everyone to follow. They must not be too early in the morning or too late in the evening. This is a way of showing respect for others. If a corporate event is being planned for early in the morning, a lot of participants will be forced to travel the night before. People who plan for the company do not necessarily consider all of these problems. Maybe managers have wives who take on all the family tasks or have no family life. They do not mean to be obnoxious or disrespectful; they are just not aware of the impact on others.

Bear in mind important days for workers. We always worried about intruding in people's private lives, but people could write down dates that are important for them on a calendar in a central location. People can state the reasons why these days are important and specify weekends where they want to be certain that they do not have to work. There may be an evening when people want to leave the office at a reasonable hour. These could be posted at the beginning of the month. Everybody else knows it and they will cover for the person in an emergency. This does not have to be managed from above and it is not necessary to state the reason for these needs. However, this brings a lot more fluidity into the team. It also makes it possible to bring up family issues and personal aspirations. We need to consider what is realistic and what is not. Some managers and partners plan for contingencies very well and others are less good at it. People already know that they can meet their deadlines for completion. This is a discussion that needs to take place.

Flexible work policy is linked to globalisation, with teams that are externally located and with technology which enables constant access and responsiveness. Flexibility is a fact of life. However, allowing workers to be flexible does mean that habits are being questioned. The manager no longer has visual control over his team. There is a loss of control, which is undeniable. Flexibility can encourage non-work conciliation but only if it is properly integrated. People have to be convinced and supported. Support should focus on four areas: emotional, instrumental, evaluation and information, on the managerial as well as on the workers' side.

I worked quite a bit with companies and within teams. I spoke to persons who had benefitted from such practises. These helped to overcome a very severe personal

crisis. In this case, the employees were very loyal to their company and tended to speak as if they were wedded to the company. However, within the team, another person needed to have some flexibility and did not get it because this person's manager simply said it was impossible. That person was not only disappointed, but angry with her team and manager. The employees felt that it was better not to have a policy at all, than to introduce a policy that was not implemented.

Everybody has to know what can be done, so managers need to take time to be well informed. There is emotional support, treating the person like a human being. Instrumental support means allowing for flexibility on a daily basis. Managers can grant requests for teleworking. Managers need proper functioning; they cannot simply leave a person to his own devices.

Managers carry out a pilot phase for 2-3 months and take stock on a regular basis. They consider whether it works for the workers and for themselves. Support can also take the form of an evaluation, because the worker has to be evaluated according to outcomes and results. Workers must be supported in their career development and must not be prevented from career advancement due to their flexible arrangements.

Managers have to be trained, so they understand what is at stake, what can be done, how to monitor it and why it is important. Flexibility is not just a social issue; it relates to performance. It has lasting effects on company performance. Some managers have to be told this. Some are very open to social aspects and others less so. They all understand competitiveness, lasting performance and creativity in a team. They may be told that a team will be more productive because they are being respected as people and because they have control and flexibility. As a result, they are much more likely to comply with the programme.

It is not easy to manage people who are teleworking or job sharing. A support cell can be set up within the company to support teleworkers. A manager has to respond to a request for teleworking and workers can call the support cell to get advice and support. Managers can conclude a contract with the worker which outlines everyone's responsibilities. There must be clear processes and procedures. There is also the possibility of referring to the human resources department if any problem.

Finally, managers have to be evaluated, this being part of their annual performance evaluation, because some are very open-minded and others are far less so. If there are full-fledged criteria for evaluation, a manager will know that he is going to be evaluated on respecting flexible working policies, among other things. This makes it possible to prevent the promotion of 'toxic managers.'

When I talk to employees and managers, I am often told that the company does not apply teleworking, because this would be considered as encouraging workers to be lazy. In fact, every study has clearly shown that it's exactly the opposite. People work more, because there are no boundaries when working at home; they can work all the time. They can work anywhere with a Smartphone, etc. The risk is not that productivity will go down. On the contrary, employees who are not sufficiently aware of this, experience difficulties and end up stressed and exhausted. It is very important for them to be supported.

Some of us like to have a separation between work and home and other people like to integrate both. They take personal calls at work and, during the weekend, they work at home. Other people shift back and forth between the two modes. It is important for employees to know what they want and what works for them. A manager may like to integrate and send emails throughout the weekend. If an employee likes to keep work and home separate, he may feel guilty if he is expected to combine the two. People need to talk about how they like to set boundaries and have clear rules.

This information needs to be communicated to the human resources department and to upper management. Top management must lead the way, both in rhetoric as in actions. This has always to be done on a voluntary basis. There are happy workalcoholics everywhere. Rules do not need to be enforced for everyone and standards should not cause people to feel criticised. They must be implemented in consultation with partners. In France, unlike in the English-speaking countries, companies have many stakeholders already active in these areas. Human resources have to be aware of what is already undertaken and work according to this experience. People need to be involved, not being told afterwards about what is happening.

Flexibility enables companies to fit in better with their environment. It also boosts productivity and enhances relationships between employers and employees. It reinforces solidarity and sharing of responsibilities. Employers realise that behind the employees, there are other stakeholders: the family, the children and other factors. If life of the employee is improved, it has a direct effect on the life of 5-6 other people, who are invisible but extremely important. However, employers frequently do not think about them. This is why public policies can play an important role in improving these relations. Public policies establish clear-cut rules and a certain amount of balance between small and large companies, between different branches and different regions.

Under the *Right to Request*, which was introduced in 2002 in the UK, an employee may ask to change his work schedule or to work at home. This helps not only those with children, but also those who are looking after elderly parents or relatives. The manager can accept or refuse the request, but if he refuses, he has to justify it. This introduces an obligation for managers to think about how work is organised and about the cultural differences. 91% of employees in the UK say that they have accessed to flexibility. 50% say they use at least one form of flexitime. Following the entry into effect of the *Right to Request*, only 9% of employers have refused the request. Australia has also introduced the *Right to Request*. The country is in negotiations with the workers unions. If this form of labour relations does not work, the employee finds himself or herself totally isolated from these innovations. The *Right to Request* could be a very good solution and we can catch up with the others in that respect.

In the US, there was a major project, which was financed by the government, and conducted in a large Midwest Department store. The researchers –driven by Ellen Kossek<sup>4</sup> and Leslie Hammer– trained store section managers, explained their

<sup>4</sup> Ellen E. Kossek, *Managers' Support of Work-Life Flexibility*, University Distinguished Professor, Michigan State University, School of Human Resources and Labor Relations, who had to cancel her participation to the workshop as a speaker.



options to them and why these issues were important. To ensure the success of the training, they were asked to note everything that they could change and the support measures that they had set up.

Before the training, the workers who said their bosses were not supportive had much deeper health problems. The workers were asked to measure their blood pressure, their sleep patterns and their pulse. One-third of employees believed that their bosses were not supportive, whereas the department heads felt that they were being supportive. There was a real difference in perception. Later on, they noticed improved health and productivity. There was a much more convergent perception from the employees and their heads of department regarding this level of support.

As an example, a woman who started to work very early needed to leave for one hour, so she could feed breakfast to her children. In exchange, she covered for other people in emergencies or if a colleague was sick. She was willing to do this extra effort for her employers. This meant that she could still work full time and did not have to resort to part-time work. This intervention shows the legitimacy of raising family issues at work. In exchange for such arrangements, people are very loyal and able to be flexible in the interest of the company in emergencies situations. It builds a mutually-beneficial situation.

## II. Links between the quality of work and business performance

### Radoslaw OWCZARZAK

At Eurofound, I conduct sectoral research on competitiveness, on the outlook for employment in these sectors, and the links between the level of employment and the business performance. I have also worked on “green” industries. Today, this presentation results from a two-and-a-half-years study which addresses links between quality of working conditions and business performance. This topic was formally launched last week in Warsaw, at the EU Presidency Conference, as an EU supported research theme.

My findings are complementary to those of the previous speaker, but give some additional cross-European perspective. This could be useful for you and suggest to carry out further domestic research. Europe is still quite diverse, with differences in levels of development, cultures of social dialogue and styles in management of human resources. These types of differences are still valid.

The European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) carries out studies on living and working conditions. Every three to five years, we publish our three Europe-wide surveys on living conditions, working conditions and companies. The latter explores business policies, especially as regards flexibility and social dialogue. We maintain a network of correspondents in all member states, with observatories. They register developments in living and working conditions, and restructuring, on a daily basis. We try to act as a knowledge hub on these topics at the EU level.

The three reports launched last week cover other aspects for example work-life balance. We expanded the mandate under which we had been working since Eurofound was set up in 1975. We did not want just to advise on how to improve

working conditions; we also tried to provide convincing evidence for employers and other partners, such as governments, for example that there is a “business case” and thus, win-win outcomes to gain from the improvements of working conditions for employees and employers. This was intended to motivate them to implement these types of policies.

Analysing the academic policy research, we found that almost all the research projects carried out over the past 20 years were country-based. Very often they were limited to just one sector. We expanded further and tried to look for a broader evidence base. The European Company Survey covered 30 European countries and over 26,000 establishments. This gave us a broad base of data to use.

We wonder whether quality of working conditions and business performance are opposite targets or whether they work together. It’s not such an easy question and answering it took a lot of time and effort to make it operational. The research was very challenging, because of differences between countries, sectors and company sizes.

These efforts to improve competitiveness in a sustainable way for European workers are linked to the “Lisbon Strategy” for growth and jobs. They are also linked to the “Europe 2020 Strategy”, and its smart and sustainable growth objectives.

Eurofound has developed its research model on quality of work and employment since 2002. We have identified four dimensions: career and employment security, health and wellbeing, skills development and work-life balance. The research projects analyses the links between all these areas and the outcomes for both employees and companies.

21 case studies were run in four sectors, for six European countries. We noticed differences between countries and sectors. Some tend to be more advanced in the application of high performance HR practices. For example, the financial-services sector and the food and electro-mechanical industries are in advance. Meanwhile, wholesale and retail seem to be less sophisticated in their approach, on average. Larger companies, especially multi-nationals, are more formalised and structured in their approach of HR management.

We raised questions on changes that the company introduced in the working conditions and what impact this had on the involvement of employees. We also questioned the impact on cost levels, how it increased productivity and finally, which is the outcome for the company. We explored the level of extra commitment from employees through improvements in their working conditions.

For example, we studied a branch of the multi-national company *OSRAM*, which produces electrical bulbs. It had very serious problems of a high employee turnover in its Czech branch. Every year, 16% of employees left the company. Employees got training; the company invested in its people, but a large share of them left. The management decided to apply other methods to improve working conditions, especially for facilitating work-life balance. They succeeded in decreasing relatively quickly this turnover rate to below 2% of the staff.

It is not possible to draw definitive conclusions from case studies, because they are not a representative sample. However, we found some successful best practises which are worth discussing and analyzing further. Note that many of these solutions are not expensive. With the crisis, it is easy to say that only the richest companies can afford to implement these types of measures. However, especially in the area of work-life balance, these measures are reasonable, especially with the good outcomes that can be achieved. This is a good investment.

Another example is the German *Sprada Bank* that has 663 employees and over 100 working-time models, so it has an extremely flexible approach. It also pays a bonus of EUR150 per month over three years after a child was born. This stimulates workers to come back to work and take up full-time jobs. They also experimented having a kindergarten near their premises, but as employees were commuting from further away, they preferred this type of scheme.

Another programme is monitored in a German electro-mechanical company *SICK*. It has an effective system of long-term time accounts, with extra inputs to the pension scheme if employees accumulate hours. Or else, they have a right to take medium-term leave of a minimum of three months if they had accumulated enough hours and days. Some people use it to travel; others take breaks or undertake further study to improve their skills. There are limits in night-shift work. *SICK* has also an interesting policy for acknowledging the experience of its workers. It partners experienced workers with younger ones, and asks them to work as a coach. This arrangement works well.

*OSRAM* carried out a survey of flexibility or time preferences among its workers. After having listened to their needs, it analysed them in a methodological way. As a result, the number of shifts was reduced from four to three. Rotations between morning, evening and night shifts were offered, which is particularly attractive for female employees. There is also an option to opt for one type of shift, which may suit older workers. It also added one extra week of vacation, beyond statutory requirements.

Swedish wholesale company *Colly*, implements a shorter working week, reduced from 40 to 37.5 hours. It does it extremely carefully and methodologically, taking a very systematic and science-based approach. It carries out annual surveys of worker satisfaction, with very precise measurements and a comprehensive number of indicators, taking job satisfaction into account. There are special provisions for employees with careers' responsibilities. They are allowed to work early, from 7.30 to 3.30, or they have the right to reduce their working hours by 25%.

In the Austrian food company *Falander*, the teams have the right to decide on aspects of time flexibility. Workers discuss and agree among themselves on how to cover for each other. They do not need to approach their management; they are responsible internally for organising their own work. This has a very positive outcome and levels of job satisfaction are going up.

Following some internal problems, the Spanish bank *Kuxta* carried out a survey not only among its employees but also among its customers. It pointed out that it is not necessary to keep all bank agencies open until 8 pm, as most banks in Spain do. The bank analysed the behaviour patterns of its customers and realised that it was sufficient to close at 4.50 pm.



At *El Corte Ingles*, a large and very successful retail network in Spain, time schedules are agreed months ahead. This enables people to plan their family duties and claim time off for special occasions. Employees are also guaranteed 12 weekends off in a year, which is not obvious for many single retailers. This was well-received by workers. The joint commission set up to analyse the results and performance of these new time-flexibility schemes is another relatively inexpensive vehicle for improving job satisfaction. Having launched an initiative, companies need then to evaluate it after a certain period of time.

One of our findings is that companies are not aware of the links between improved working conditions and employee's satisfaction and ultimately, of the positive impact on the bottom line, the financial performance of the company that is at stake. Surprisingly, I am not only talking about small and medium-sized companies, but also about large brands. There is little hard evidence of the impact of these measures. Sometimes, under the pressure of trade unions or social dialogue, companies introduce some improvements, but nobody measures the outcomes, so there is no wider perspective. Besides, it is hard for a researcher to precisely measure the impact of work-time balance practises on performance, because they are very often paired with other initiatives. These may be in the training area, or in organising work, such as implementing autonomous teams in the workplace. Therefore, it is hard to differentiate these impacts.

In another report, based on our European Company Survey, we have found evidence that these practises regarding work-life balance and other aspects in quality of work are correlated with positive impacts on employee and company performance. For example, flexible working times have a major positive impact on work climate and a very slight impact as regard absenteeism and job turnover. Surprisingly, it had a negative impact on the economic situation of the company, but a positive one on labour productivity. It can be partly explained by the fact that our research for the survey was conducted on the first quarter of 2009, where the conditions were very difficult for European companies.

Further explanation about limited impact of the flexible working times could be that many companies, especially when poor socio-economic conditions, used flexible working hours to shorten the working days to adjust to the crisis. They had not enough work for these people, and this is why the figure is negative. We explored further the effect of flexible working hours on employees. There was a clear indication that implementation of flexible working times reduces absenteeism and also improves the motivation of employees.

### III. Flexibility in organizing the workplace: promise and limits, as regards a work-life balance policy

#### *Testimonies*

#### **Armelle CARMINATI**

Accenture, with 240,000 employees, consists of three main business activities, all in the area of corporate services: professional-services consultancy, IT and externalisation. This context is somewhat unusual, because we work under the "tyrannical" control of our clients. About 60% of our employees are potentially

nomadic, this is one of the conditions introduced in their contract. Our entire workforce is well-equipped, at the leading edge of technology; that is what we sell to our clients.

We have to reflect that and to be completely legitimate, with no technological barriers. It is possible for all employees to exchange information remotely throughout the world and we have been doing that for a long time. On mature markets like France, the population is somewhat atypical, because 80% are managers. The question of wellbeing, stress and over-commitment at the workplace is becoming a concern in France.

There is a practise first initiated in Japan, which I imported into other countries, including France. A barometer to measure flexibility is sent out to all employees every three months. It raises three questions, which are always the same, so that we can measure them. Did your manager bring up the issue of your flexibility at any point recently? Has anything been done in the last three months that you did not volunteer for? Has there been any change in your work patterns recently, due to unexpected events? Are you satisfied with flexibility? It is a very simple barometer and it is very widespread. We have an 80% response rate each time. It gives us very good, reliable statistics for each sector within our company. It means that, on an anonymous basis, apart from managers, we can get a good sense of the climate, the mood and the way employees experience flexibility. We do not necessarily propose any changes in contracts or procedures, or try to present innovative solutions from a HR perspective.

This survey is more systemic than policy and procedure based. When the issue of the measure is well perceived by its target audience, people are then persuaded to be flexible and it is possible to rely on statistics. With statistics, we can see the areas where a lot of bad feeling has been accumulated. For those who respond to the survey, we clarify that their manager could have been the first person to bring it up with. It gives legitimacy to the issue and brings it out into the open. It also has an effect on managers, who do not want to compare unfavourable with their colleagues. Ignorance is the main issue affecting managers and is a point on which to act. It is more specific than taking a company-wide approach to flexibility.

It is a very easy practise that can be exported across borders. After Japan, I introduced it in Germany, Italy and Brazil, as well as in the Netherlands at the pilot stage so far. We want to work on flexibility, but it is regulated by managers on a project basis. The services that we provide are usually for a client and delivered at its work site where we work with the project team. Starting last year, we decided that before even starting a project, we would set out flexibility conditions in the contract signed with the client.

In the Netherlands, distances between home and the work sites are great, and people travel a long way to go to work. They live 80-100 km far from the office. One of the negotiated options was not to hold any meeting before 10am and after 3pm. There are other rules more relevant to private life. We compile monthly logs that affect the perception of quality of work on both sides. We want this example to spread and we want it to extend beyond the companies for which we work.

In China, the single-child rule creates a dependency obligation regarding elderly parents. This is shared equally between men and women, because people do not

have siblings. Employees start to be concerned with dependency obligations towards their parents quite early (31 years old in average). This duty is also developing in France. Very early on, we had to ensure that the issue of family care was gender neutral, because demographically, the country was built differently. We can start to look at gender-neutral policies in a country where demographic sampling is perfect in terms of the apportionment of domestic tasks and family responsibilities.

We created a rule regarding the gender-neutral impact of family obligations in terms of annual performance. The performance evaluation is very comprehensive, which is very important, because we offer this as an employer and we keep our promises. However, we wanted to tackle the issue of absences for family responsibilities, outside of birth and maternity, such as sick relatives. It was tested this year for all of the employees. When these types of absences exceed four weeks in a year, but are less than six months, they are made neutral for those employees. Therefore, their performance levels are not subject to quotas. In our company, there is a meritocratic system of evaluation: people are judged by group. 5% will be considered top performers. 50% will be in the second tier and then there is 25% etc. The debate is democratic; everybody agrees on the group that is being evaluated, the 80 or 100 people who are being evaluated in the countries. This is consolidated at a world level. We hesitated on generalising our new rule on family obligation. However, when we trust people, we receive a return. We identified only 0.5%, as exceptional cases. This is why we decided to neutralise the effect of family issues in their evaluations.

We signed an agreement on home working last January, with a few objectives and ground rules. We were targeting at least 15% of *in situ* employees to move to teleworking (1-4 days per week). We thought there might be attrition in the contracts of about 15%, because people would fail to see the merits for them. However, 50% agreed after 1.5 months of a pilot project. We obtained segmented feedback as to whether this was applicable. The attrition was less than 5%. Last year, sales figures increased, which meant the workforce had to increase. The company constantly requires new workers, but we cannot increase our actual office space. We saw a way to measure carbon footprint. We were also able to reduce our real-estate facility and service expenses. The corporate-headquarters space decreased by 15-20%, while the number of managers grew.

In France, we are also very active on raising awareness on paternity leaves. Some people become managers very young and are already fathers. They may be 36-37 years old. There are quite a few paternity leaves amongst the managers. Quite a few of them did not take it initially, but then they took it in a subtle way, with no reason given for the absence. Now they have been told individually that they should announce that they are on paternity leave and share their experiences and the impact of this leave.

### Jean-Marc VINAS

Although SFR is a large company with 9500 employees, an average age of 37 years and a perfect gender balance, it is often unknown by the public.

Its business sector, in line with the evolutions of the French society, and his staffing profile make SFR a real experimental laboratory, enabling the company to regularly take new initiatives on the topics addressed today.

The agreement signed on professional equality is at the core of this policy, if necessary completed with additional schemes for reducing the gaps in salaries. Indeed, SFR is well ahead regarding its flexibility policy, but to achieve true equality requires to also take wages into account.

Regarding part-time work, the employees of the SFR call centers who had worked part-time so far, can choose to work full-time; since most of them are low-wage workers, the measure will enable them to improve the financial situation of the household.

Actually, there is an ongoing negotiation to reach a new professional agreement that will particularly focus on parenthood. The SFR management suggests two measures to the unions: on the one hand, a hotline to help for finding the right solution for childcare; on the other hand, the introduction of a specific flexibility policy when the childcare facility closes.

In 2011, SFR has started to test telework, according to the specific features of call centers, among which the access to data. We should go further to find out new forms of organization and take into account how families cope with teleworking. So far, it is worth noting that two-third of the employees who signed-up for this test are men, older than 35 years.

### Jean AGULHON

The surveys carried out by Renault show that actually men are more concerned than women by work-life balance. We are increasingly aware that this should be an option for men, but unfortunately, we have not achieved it yet. Men only discuss these issues through surveys because those are anonymous, but when it's about to take action, they find it very difficult whether they are managers, executives or employees.

We introduced rules some years ago, concerning the timetables of the meetings. None of them succeeded, even if we experienced them with various teams and groups. If those initiatives are not regularly revisited and updated, they will disappear over time. Since France has a special relationship to work, Anglo-Saxon solutions cannot be applied there. Sociological studies show a specific relationship between work and self-esteem in one's job which is particular to France. We have to tackle with this problem more than we did so far, to understand why the solutions put forward at the conference cannot be implemented, or do not last for long.

Approximately 800 people have joined our remote working teams in France. Like at SFR, half are men and half are women. The experience started with the support staff, who is the most interested in this sort of arrangement. But high-level managers from the engineering divisions are also considering teleworking, which is not always easy to manage because of the nature of their job: engineers work in a team. Despite that, they are committed to succeed in managing telework and to overcome the obstacles. This form of work organisation is moving forward which is

a very positive evolution. We can see that there is a link between this flexibility and the motivation and commitment.

There must be direct feedback from the manager and his employees, and from the employee himself, to assess whether the employee is able of doing remote work, given his family and housing conditions. This diagnosis must be conducted very carefully since people fantasise about telework. With young children at home, it is not always easy to concentrate on the job. One should be careful about this: it is not always the right solution. One must make sure to do the right initial diagnosis and it must be examined very closely.

Renault practices flexitime, but it must be voluntary. It only concerns 3.3% of our staff, mainly women. It is still considered as a way of helping parents with young children and not a true career choice. We have also worked on setting up different services such as company day-nurseries that we already had approximately 40 years ago. We gave them up, but we are now reinvesting in the same services. Increasingly, our facilities co-fund these childcare supports.

### Jean-Baptiste OBÉNICHE

ANACT, the National Agency for Improvement of Working Conditions, refers to the actual carrying out of a job. One must define one's job and the differences created by changes in working conditions. What impact on the results, will the work be carried out better and with less absenteeism? We explore areas where employers and stakeholders can intervene. We are not so much looking at employee expectations. We are based in Paris but various projects and analyses of experiments about new time schedules are underway in other regions.

The issue addressed by the workshop is not only about gender equality; the question raised is first and foremost about time spent for working life. Time to commute to work has to be factored in as well. Establishing work-life balance produces more dynamic working conditions. There is no barrier between work and personal life in work-life balance, where momentum is being maintained at work and at home. The distinction between work and private life has less and less meaning. It is still meaningful for some types of jobs, but less meaningful in many cases because of flexible-working tools.

Services such as childcare provided on the workplace make it easier for employees. They make working conditions friendlier and distinguish SMEs from larger companies, unless SMEs may organize a pooling of resources in special areas. For example, in a shopping centre, there may be no childcare and no room to negotiate for a site. This is an issue that needs to be handled at local level. With regard to promoting external facilities, SMEs are disadvantaged.

SMEs with less than 50 employees are in a better position to negotiate certain flexible arrangements implemented on a daily basis. Satisfaction surveys show that the employees are then less stressed. In small companies, stereotypes may be strengthened. For example, teleworking is seen as more beneficial to men, when being proposed, because it does not have the gender stigma of part-time work. Hopefully, messages will be spread to both genders based on the actual work, even though the work might have a gender basis. Arrangements are based on seniority and on the parenting role. We have to improve this, in order to avoid gender



stereotypes in negotiations. Small companies may not have the tools to correct these stereotypes; they can only examine and discuss the effects.

When the working week was reduced in France to 35 hours, this led to advances in some sectors regarding the organisation of work schedules. Performed work was evaluated on an annual basis. Since technology was not as developed as it is today, it raised problems.

We support companies that introduce changes and help the whole company not just its management. Our aim is not to implement a solution that has been imported from elsewhere. We work with the employees who know what constraints they have. Then we elaborate solutions. For example, those who telework should not be controlled more than those who do not. Supervision of teleworking means managing the work, not just the results.

Let's take the example of people who clean offices and who are often women and single parents. In the United States, cleaning is done during the day and in France, it is done in the evening. 400,000 people are involved in the sector, where tough negotiations have been undertaken.

If a company is sold, the buyer has to take over all the workers. This means it is very difficult to achieve the goal of daytime work. It depends on the client who may buy and consume these services in a different way. Clients have their own specifications. Conditions must be agreed between clients and service providers and sub-contractors and those who have commissioned them.

We are in a learning phase where we have identified areas where we should be vigilant. Knowing more about the population of workers is essential to go beyond stereotypes. A company can be transparent on how it operates and how it treats the different groups of employees.

#### IV. Debate

##### From the floor

Companies are working on very competitive markets. They may carry out their own reforms properly, but they are working with other companies that have brutal specifications. This puts pressure on service providers. Wellbeing is achieved in some companies at the expense of others. Those who act properly must take care to deal with sub-contractors who adhere to the same rules.

##### Jean-Baptiste OBENICHE

We have to ensure that there is not an elite population to whom the agreements apply, while the others do not benefit at all from the regulation. Very frequently, temporary workers (or subcontractors) are excluded from the improvements in working conditions obtained in companies for which they work.

##### From the floor

In the UK, individual job agreements are possible because of a lack of collective negotiations. Workings hours are longer there than elsewhere and there is also a

difference in culture. It would be quite interesting to see how the UK projects work elsewhere.

### Ariane OLLIER MALATERRE

As a researcher, for the United States, I suggest that they should strengthen public policies implemented to better take into account social issues and the invisible stakeholders; only public policies can lead to a balance between sub-contractors and large companies. But French culture does not need to introduce Anglo-Saxon regulations. Both approach are complementary and should take the best from both systems. The public-based one is essential, particularly for SMEs, where no agreements or laws exist. Apart from the public-private divide, there is also the managerial and employee divide. We cannot give up traditional approaches, because the balance suggested may be fairly negative for collective policies. If there are no collective rules, we will experience obstacles.

### Armelle CARMINATI

Many of our managers had certain pre-conceived ideas about who would take up home work. Non-executives in small houses with children would not take it up. It would be much easier for executives with bigger, more comfortable homes. In fact, it's this opposite. Since non-executives cannot look after the children at home, these are sent to "crèches" and as a result, many of those people prefer to work at home. On the contrary, intermediary managers, who can avail of homecare and other supports, found that they were unable to work at home, because they did not have room.

### From the floor

Are the determining factors of work in larger and smaller companies well-known? Would it be useful to establish a link between those factors and the corporate culture? Human-resources policies are very inter-connected, as regards ageing, professional equality, diversity and disability. But we still need establishing levers for action between these various topics.

### Jean-Baptiste OBÉNICHE

Work refers to technical features, machines to organisational methods – the working conditions, and to social policies. It is important to understand what determines the activity in diverse cases. The contract, rather than the employer, determines it.

We suggest that companies work on a project called TEMPO, which gives them the opportunity to explore demographics and identify the invisible factors. After that, they can establish contracts for various types of workers. Differences only occur because of the particular forms of organisation within a company. These must be updated, to identify the determining level, so negotiations can be balanced. Rather than treating the symptoms, we must explore the links between employees and employers.

## Concluding remarks

**Pierre-François MOURIER**, Deputy Director-General, *Centre d'analyse stratégique*

The discussions of this workshop correspond to the approach favoured by the *Centre d'analyse stratégique*, (CAS), which aims to bring together academics and corporate representatives. We pay attention to examples and case studies, as well as to feedback gathered from our foreign correspondents. In this seminar, the speakers have examined how companies address the work-life balance issue and have identified a vast array of methods that can be used. We have tried to define a mutually-beneficial solution, but it is not always possible. Managers have to be involved.

The empirical and theoretical work of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, presented by Radoslaw OWCZARZAK, shows how this issue can be relevant to companies of all sizes in every sector and how flexible working hours can meet the twin goals of boosting productivity and improving work-life balance. Ariane OLLIER MALATERRE's work has demonstrated that there is an extensive repertoire of possible actions for companies – and particularly Anglo-Saxon companies – that help to achieve these twin goals. At this stage, there are three points we need to note. Firstly, a win-win scenario is not always possible. Establishing such a scenario requires significant work to gain buy-in from managers and HR departments as well as custom research to develop arrangements that are genuinely tailored to the company at stake. There are, then, preconditions for the concrete development of policies that improve work-life balance, starting with training for managers. Secondly, the repertoire of actions available to companies has expanded significantly in countries where the public response to the need to balance home and work life was relatively weak. Finally, the advantage of these types of measures at a time when both public and private sector resources are in short supply lies in the fact that they are relatively inexpensive to implement. They require organisation, dialogue between management and employees, and work within companies, but not necessarily money.

However, new business needs and the redistribution of tasks between men and women mean that new forms for the organization of the workload have to be found within companies. The range of potential practices depends on business sector, employees' expectations and socio-professional category, and company size. A lot of experiments have been carried out in France on this topic. Jean AGULHON emphasised both the benefits and the dangers of teleworking, particularly when there are young children at home. He also put forward some options for flexible working hours. Jean-Marc VINAS stressed the need for work schedules to take into account family situations. Furthermore, all our speakers have emphasised the particular relationship that French people have with their work – a relationship that is both deeply affective and irrational; it often lies behind the importance attached by both managers and workers to “working more”, even where spending more time at work brings no particular added value. It would be interesting to look into this peculiarly French phenomenon.

Other types of arrangement have been presented today, particularly by our speakers representing large companies. More specifically, they have emphasised



the importance of establishing trust between teams within a given company and between the company and its partners (customers, suppliers, subcontractors, etc.). It appears, however, that work-life balance is not so easy to achieve for all companies. It is especially problematic in companies that depend on invitations to tender and have to work to their customers' specific requirements, making it complex to engage in dialogue between management and labour. We have also seen how people in every company have increasing expectations in relation to these new ways of organising work. This is a genuinely new phenomenon. Another cultural obstacle lies in the fact that job sharing is promising but virtually non-existent in France. It represents a truly exceptional area of opportunity. Ultimately, it seems to me that the best approach is one of trial by experiment to establish whether or not a solution can be replicated and serve as an example.

To conclude, I feel that flexible working that is compatible with the need for work-life balance becomes meaningful under three conditions, which correspond to the three proposals put forward in *The Note d'analyse*:

- companies need to be convinced from the inside rather than constrained from the outside. This is why we were cautious in this *Note* about the introduction of a French "right to request";
- government needs to be exemplary and set the example. It has the ability to do so, whether by introducing job sharing or taking care not to hold meetings too early or late in the day;
- "flexibility" is an anxiety-provoking and negative word. We therefore need to show employees that win-win arrangements are possible.

We need to work together to action these three levers.

Thank you for attending and taking part in this seminar.

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