

# Time for families?!

## Family time policy as a policy field – A European comparison

AGF European Expert Meeting  
Berlin, 17 June 2014





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*The speakers' PowerPoint presentations are available on the website of the AGF:  
[http://www.ag-familie.de/home/termine\\_en.html](http://www.ag-familie.de/home/termine_en.html).*

## Background

The question about extra time in everyday life concerns families all over Europe day in and day out. With that in mind numerous representatives from politics, associations and different European states followed an invitation by the AGF to meet and discuss the issue time for families. The expert meeting focussed on possibilities for a holistic approach to family time policy, as it is used for example in Germany, and looked for ways of inter-European transfer.

### Family time policy

In Germany, "time" has been recognized as crucial criteria for the wellbeing of families at least since the publication of the government's Seventh Family Report "Families between flexibility and dependability" in 2006. The report stated family politics to be made up of three elements: time policies, development of infrastructure and monetary support. The following Eighth Family Report in 2012 particularly focussed on the dimension of time, leading to an increasing focus on the factor "time" in the public discussions on family politics. The Eighth Family Report "Time for Families" recommends the introduction of a so-called family time policy. It suggests the following fields of action:

- Strengthening the time sovereignty of families, that is, opportunities for themselves to influence their usage of time;
- A fairer redistribution of time during different life stages, between genders and generations;
- A better synchronisation of the schedules of all relevant institutions, that influence the daily routines of families.

A basic idea of family time policy is that families' everyday lives are particularly exposed to conflicting schedules of institutions such as jobs, schools or kindergarten, civil services and other service providers. Because of this families need specific and reliable support.



Experts from politics, associations and different European states followed an invitation by the AGF to meet and discuss the issue time for families.

## Main conclusions of the expert meeting

Family time policy explicitly only in Germany	A term for family time policy only exists in Germany.
Despite no explicit term, measures for family time in other countries as well	There are a lot of family policies or job policies implemented in the European states, which have direct and positive influences on family time.
Different approaches and premises	The states focus on different aspects: some put more emphasis on social welfare, others on the job market. In addition, different welfare systems also play a role in the organisation of family policy and its measures.
Different welfare systems in Benelux	Belgium and Luxemburg are rather conservative welfare states, whereas the Netherlands has a liberal welfare system. Hence the measures of their family policies are different.
The workplace as possible pioneer	As a vital pace-setter for family life the workplace can take on a role model function in providing suitable schedules and by doing so bring a positive change of mind to other parts of society too.
Partnership	Even in Scandinavia, where the principle of equality is the basis for political action, there is still no equal distribution of family care and work between men and women.
All states look for solutions to the time challenges caring poses	Long-term family carers often face greater challenges and time strain than working carers responsible for childcare.
Maternity leave in Scandinavia	There is no strict differentiation between maternity leave and parental leave in Scandinavia. A prohibition of employment for generally two weeks (according to EU-guideline) exists, but there is no further maternity leave by law.
Transferability of time policy measures	Single measures can't simply be adopted in an exemplary way, because they always are the result of national developments and conditions, and without reflecting on those the transfer could even cause negative effects.
A child- and family-conscious culture is the basis	Especially in the Nordic countries a family-conscious culture in society supports daily family life.



## Time for families



"Family should be the pace-setter."

Siegfried Stresing,  
Managing Director of  
Deutscher Familienverband  
(DFV) (German Family  
Association)

In his introduction Siegfried Stresing gave an outline of how thoroughly clocked all our daily lives and especially those of families are. There is no wonder then, that when it comes to being a parent often terms like "time management" and "logistics" are mentioned. According to Stresing though, the most important pace-setters for a family should actually be the family members themselves. Because of that the connection between time and family is something special: it is the basis for well-being and welfare of families – of parents and children alike. This is a common feature of all families, no matter in which country they live and how different the very circumstances may be. Many Europe-wide surveys and studies confirm, that despite all the different economic situations families are often dissatisfied with the amount of time they can spend together as a family.

Siegfried Stresing summarized the important role the dimension time has in German family politics. This became obvious at the latest since the government's Seventh Family Report. The Eighth Family Report that followed in 2012 focussed only on the topic of time for families and it revealed a lot of problems with time and gave action recommendations. All in all the importance of time also shows in the fact that in Germany there is even a term called "Zeitpolitik" ("time policy").

Stresing stressed that in this expert talk, too, the workplace is often and rightly used as reference point. Because it often is the key pace-setter affecting daily life. Families are under the impression that they have to align their family life with the requirements of the working world, instead of working conditions being organized to suit family life.

The AGF already has discussed this topic intensively and will keep on doing so. The family associations are focussing on the perspective of the families: it should be the family that sets the pace! Accordingly, the family associations have issued their common position in reaction to the Eighth Family Report, as being in favour of the right to return to full-time after leave in preference of families and they are currently working on the question of working-time accounts and precarious working conditions from the point of families.

For Stresing there are starting points on the way to realize the wishes of families for more time on many different levels – in the communal area, the workplace or the personal setting. In the course of the expert meeting it will therefore be very interesting to see how the other European states manage to provide their families with more time to spend together; if they treat time as distinct topic and what family time policy could look like.

# Time as a dimension for family policies: Insights into the EU member states

## Case study: Germany

In his input Dr. Thomas Metker described the role played by the dimension of time in German family politics and the course, which developments have taken towards new approaches of a distinct family time policy. According to him time has already been a very important issue since the last legislative period and it is currently playing a central role, too. The central idea here is, that modern family politics have to be informed by the families' everyday reality.

### Wish and reality

Several opinion polls have shown that the general public and in particular parents with children under 18 years think that changes concerning aspects of time, like flexible working arrangements and schedules of childcare providers would improve the quality of life for families. As well as that many mothers would like to work more, whereas fathers often spend less time with their children than they actually wish for. This then is mirrored in many parents' wish for a fair splitting of paid work and family work. Sixty percent of parents with children aged between one and three years old wish that both partners would work the same amount and equally care for their household and family. But only fourteen percent reach such intended equal distribution of paid work. Wish and reality wildly diverge. Therefore modern family politics have to put more focus on fairness in reconciling family and work – for men and women.

### Family time policy is done on site

Time policy is one part of German family politics, which includes three components: money, time and infrastructure. That means that the German government's modern family politics is made up of effective monetary support, reliable quality time and adequate infrastructure. On a strategic level family time policy can be found especially in the Eighth Family Report, in the Federal Ministry for the Family's pilot scheme "time policy" and in the German government's demographic strategy. Also concrete measures like the introduction of the "Parental Allowance Plus", the "Family Care Leave", the initiative "Family-conscious Working Hours" and the current work on "Communal Family Time Policies" as part of the mayor-initiative "New times for the family" create and initiate more flexibility in time for mothers and fathers.

One important aspect of the time dimension is that time for families is influenced in a special way by the local circumstances. Taking this vital insight into account, Dr. Metker explains further, in 2012 the BMFSFJ has started the pilot scheme "Communal Family Time Policies" in five sites with a "Local Alliance for Families", which is another initiative of the Federal Ministry for the Family.



"Parents wish for a fair splitting of paid work and family work. But wish and reality diverge wildly. Here time is of the essence."

Dr. Thomas Metker,  
Head of Division, Federal  
Ministry for the Family,  
Senior Citizens, Women and  
Youth (BMFSFJ)





## Specific approaches of the pilot sites

The Local Alliances for Families picked up on the facts that firstly time policy is done locally and secondly it needs a great range of stakeholders involved. The pilot sites were chosen to account for the varying circumstances of, for instance, rural and urban space, big city and small town, country and municipality, or such as socio-economic criteria. The focus of these projects, which were funded until 2013, lied on an analysis of factors that cause stress through time shortages and the development of possible solution processes.

For these purposes local families were interviewed and other formats of engagement for families were tried out. The impression was confirmed that time stress was especially caused in sudden cases of emergency like falling sick, or when working hours and opening hours of care facilities or schools, service bureaus, doctors, commerce, schedules of public transport and so on are insufficiently synchronized. The reasons for time stress are very similar in all of the sites.

Therefore on site seven fields of action for communal family time policy emerged, like “flexible provision of services/supplies”, “a good childcare, educational and long-term care infrastructure as it is needed”, “family-conscious world of employment, training and education” as well as “citizen-, and service-oriented administration”. Here the pilot sites have already implemented solutions, for example emergency care offers, more flexible opening hours of day-care centres, services close to households, the introduction of an active culture of welcoming newcomers or young families, or the strengthening of children’s independent mobility. Such measures have shown to



The question about extra time in everyday life concerns families all over Europe day in and day out.

improve the quality of life for families, and also that communities as well as companies profit from such a type of active location policy. Furthermore the experiences and results of the pilot sites have been collected into a compendium serving as a guideline “Communal Time Policy for Families” to help its implementation. A cost-benefit analysis, which should be completed until 2016, is meant to quantify the benefit in exact numbers and to offer arguments for a communal family time policy.

## Follow-up discussion: Turning communal family time policy into a mass movement

How could the model project of communal family time policy be turned into a German – or even Europe-wide mass movement? One answer to this central question in the debate was: through best-practice, intensive exchange and communication. “Enthusiastic on-site followers” need the guideline to the model scheme and the planned cost-benefit analysis for help. Because at the moment it too often depends on the commitment of single individuals, whether family time policy comes into view locally. Therefore the support of the municipal leader is crucial. For family time policy to succeed it is also important to look at single aspects like the quality of the offered child-care services or the interface problem of different responsibilities of authorities.

In order to introduce family time policy as a more familiar topic even across German borders and to strengthen the exchange of experiences it was suggested to have the topic discussed among existing twin cities. In the course of the debate it became known that in Spain there are so-called “time banks”. These are a kind of civic initiatives, in which a service or time – not money – is being offered for another service. And even though this concept has been around for a number of years now, at the moment because of the effects of the economic crisis it enjoys even greater popularity.

Anna Kokko, representing Väestöliitto (the Family Federation of Finland) shared some experiences from the north of Europe and the Family-friendly workplace project. Väestöliitto has intensely worked with companies and organizations for promoting family-friendly working culture and contributing good practices at different workplaces. Kokko highlighted the involvement and commitment of the employers who concretely can generate family-friendly attitudes and alter instructions, rules and practices. Besides the laws, collective agreements and other institutional bases, employers have significant responsibility in supporting the needs of the personnel in different stages of life. Successful cases in the working life can effectively encourage other employers to revise their rules and practices. Also every individual has to be able to make priorities and sometimes even say “no” when there is an immense defect in combining family and work responsibilities and a risk of not having balance in everyday life. Work-Life balance is something that is made every day, in different situations and in different agreements in both private life and working life.





## Case study: Benelux states



"It's time to care about time!"

Dr. Fred Deven,  
co-Coordinator International  
Network on Leave Policies &  
Research and independent  
expert

Dr. Fred Deven opened up his input with a review on the history of the Benelux states. He started by explaining that the Benelux states – Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – have been a political construct since the end of the Second World War. With the European Union such an agreement of cooperation seems to be almost obsolete on the economic level but the political cooperation of the three states is still of great importance. Even though the Benelux states always have been and still are tightly connected in cooperation, concerning their family politics they have developed in different ways.

### Preconditions for family politics in each of the Benelux states

Accordingly, different historically grown welfare systems have evolved: Belgium and Luxembourg belong to the rather conservative welfare states, whereas the Netherlands has a liberal welfare system. Following from such different systemic basis of the three states different family policy measures have been implemented, which have in turn lead to their own different developments.

Hence, the data presented by Dr. Deven clearly showed differences in the employment rate of mothers with child(ren) under three years or between three and five years respectively, as well as in the employment set-up of couples with child(ren) under two years. In the last years, for example, in the Netherlands the employment rate for women has risen much higher than in Belgium and Luxembourg. The so-called "gender inequality index" (an index developed by the UN to measure inequalities of achievements for men and women) lies extremely low in the Netherlands at "1", whereas Belgium shows an index value of "12" and Luxembourg even one of "26". Another difference is manifest in the employment set-ups of couples with child(ren) under two years. Belgium and Luxembourg show similar numbers: in both states the most frequent form – 37 percent in Belgium and 38 percent in Luxembourg – are two parents working full-time. In the Netherlands on the other hand only in 0,6 percent of couples with child(ren) less than two years both partners work full-time. There, the favoured model (59 percent) is to combine one full-time job with one part-time job.

### Family policy measures in the Benelux states

In general the Benelux states offer a great variety of supporting measures for children and their families with each state having a different focus. Dr. Fred Deven emphasised that the existing measures are family policy measures but not explicitly family time policies. In the Netherlands a whole variety of programs and measures is on offer, which makes it very complex. One outstanding achievement for families is the reinforcement of part-time work. In this respect the Netherlands is Europe's forerunner, says Dr. Deven, particularly because also a high number of female executives works part-time. In order to boost the employment market the Dutch government has introduced the individual right for shorter working hours. Apart from reviving the employ-



ment market this – as a side effect – had a clearly positive influence on reconciling family and professional work for mothers and fathers.

Another political measure in the Netherlands is the life course saving scheme, which are long-term working hours accounts. Since 2006 employees can save up to 12 per cent of their gross salary to compensate for future work breaks. Such breaks can be used for times of caring, parental leave, educational leave or other otherwise unpaid leave. Lifetime accounts aim for a better work-life balance and to increase the employment market participation, so Dr. Deven.

Next, for the family policy measures in Luxembourg it is characteristic that the focus here is still less on family time but more on monetary support. Compared to the EU-average in Luxembourg the expenses for family support are higher than in other member states. The combination of different types of financial support is meant to provide an adequate standard of living. These are child allowances, tax reliefs, study grants and birth allowances. According to Dr. Deven the positive effects on family time are indirect: a need-oriented income aid leads to an improvement of the family income and so more time is left for the family.

On top of that, in the year 2006 the so-called childcare vouchers (Chèques-Service Accueil) were introduced, which are meant to decrease the cost for childcare for children younger than 13 years. The aim is on the one side to make parental occupation possible and on the other to afford all children the same chances. Single parents benefit particularly, because of priority rules and (indirectly) because of the vouchers' dependability on income.

The Belgian measures, so Dr. Deven then, strongly specialise in a family-friendly and equal opportunities policy. Part of that is the so-called "career break", an employment break, which was introduced in the 1980s. Here mothers and fathers are meant to get the opportunity – in every moment of their life's course – to reduce the amount of working hours or to temporarily stop their employment completely for familial reasons. Modest composition payment reduces the loss of income. This is to reconcile work and family life.

Further Dr. Deven emphasised that Belgium is leading in preschool education. Belgian family policy focuses on early childhood education, upbringing and care. Parents can bring their child(ren) from three years on into a pre-school facility for free. These offer very good opening hours in combination with after school centres. Many Belgian parents use this opportunity for their children even from an age of 2,5 years on, yet only for a few hours, according to Dr. Deven.



## Visions of a family time policy

Dr. Fred Deven finished his input with a call for a concrete family time policy in the Benelux states and pointedly outlined how such a policy could look like. For this purpose he left the perspective of a scholar and adopted the perspective of a fictitious politician. “It’s time to care about time”: maternity leave of 20 weeks should be given as a precaution measure to guarantee health and welfare. Parental leave should count as a care measure and be given for 4 months to fathers, for 4 months to mothers, as well as for 4 months to the family as a whole. When a child up to 12 years old gets sick parents should be entitled to 60 days of leave. And yet for him the change still has to go far beyond those basic measures and especially focus more on family time.

In Dr. Deven’s vision there is a high level commission for time and wellbeing. The commission’s task is to inform about developments and the implementation of an approach that takes the life course into account and it has to cooperate with experts from different areas such as children’s rights, education and environment. The aim should be that in the future time has to be equally distributed so that parents can spend more time with the family. Dr. Deven even went so far as to set specific milestones: the first step towards realisation of his vision be that until 2017 fathers take 33 percent of the available days for parental leave and even 50 percent until 2022. Also until 2017 20 percent of the care personnel in childcare facilities should be men, and by 2022 the number should increase to 40 percent.

## Follow-up discussion: Partnership is the way to go

The follow-up discussion was informed by great approval of the topic of parental leave. Especially paternity leave was seen as suitable to promote a more equal distribution of familial care between men and women and to open up chances for mothers and fathers. Also, parents should not be punished for their children by not being able to spend time with them because of their employment. The topic of part-time employment, too, was emphasised again. Basically it is helping to reconcile family and work but there are often hurdles in small and medium-sized businesses to implement family-oriented measures. And yet exactly these businesses are most important because they usually employ the highest number of working people in countries.

## Case study: Nordic countries

Dr. Gerda Neyer opened her input with a short comparison of the two main aspects of time politics. According to her, time politics has existed since the 19th century. In the beginning it mostly meant working hour policy. “Care time policy”, that is parental leave and “childcare time” (this also includes the German childcare subsidy), has only started to be taken into account more thoroughly during the last years.

### Equality as basic principle of Nordic family policy

In order to be able to better understand time policy measures for families in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland) Dr. Neyer then explained further that in these countries the main focus lies on the principle of equality – especially on gender equality. So, for instance, already in the 1890s discussions were held during international women’s congresses between the delegates of the Nordic countries and those of Germany about the question of work prohibition in the context of maternity protection and the protection of women. Because these two contradict a gender-equal employment participation in the life-course. Hence, in the Nordic countries the traditional model is in fact the one of “two-earners-families”. The Nordic countries aimed at equality also in childcare, which means that also fathers are seen as child carers. When it comes to children the aspect of equality is mirrored in the basic understanding that for the sake of the child’s wellbeing all children have to be provided with an early and equal support. Accordingly the family politics of the Nordic countries focus on equal measures within the triad of time, income – not benefits – and infrastructure.



“Over the last years parental leave has mostly been extended when the so-called paternity leave was introduced or extended.”

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gerda Neyer,  
Stockholm University

### Family time policy of Nordic countries – The example of parental leave

Next, Dr. Neyer presented to the participants the different parental leave models. To summarize, these can be characterized by not strictly differentiating between maternity protection and parental leave. There is a prohibition of employment generally for two weeks (according to an EU-guideline) but no further maternity protection by law. On top of that, the income compensation lies between 70 and 100 percent. The main point is that parental leave is understood as a right of parents and children, which is therefore also respected by employers as such. The last years have seen tendencies of a prolonged parental leave, going hand in hand with the introduction of paternity leave and more flexible opportunities for use.

### Childcare time questioned

“Childcare time” is another means of family time policy. Compared to other states, this is new in the Scandinavian states (except in Finland) and it is already being questioned again, so Dr. Neyer. The so-called “childcare time” supports parents whose child(ren) – until the end of their third year – are not cared for in a public childcare facility. The



## A comparison of parental leave models in Denmark, Iceland and Sweden

Denmark	<p>A total amount of 50 weeks of parental leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Of that 18 weeks for the mothers (14 weeks after birth and the first two weeks are mandatory)</li><li>• The other 32 weeks can be taken by the mother or the father and can be prolonged to 40-46 weeks.</li></ul> <p>Additionally there is a paternity leave of two weeks in the first two weeks after birth.</p> <p>Depending on the collective labour contract the amount of the parental allowance can run up to 100 percent or 70 percent of the unemployment money.</p>
Iceland	<p>A total amount of 9 months of parental leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Three months for mothers, of that the two first weeks after birth are mandatory.</li><li>• Three months for the fathers</li><li>• Three months to be shared between parents</li></ul> <p>The amount of the parental allowance is 80 percent of the previous income.</p> <p>Currently a reform is being planned for a parental leave of 5+5+2 starting in 2016.</p>
Sweden	<p>A total amount of 480 days of parental leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two weeks of maternity protection after birth (mandatory)</li><li>• 60 days for the mothers</li><li>• 60 days for the fathers</li><li>• 360 days for both parents, which may be shared equally or transferred between each other.</li></ul> <p>The parental leave days can be taken as full-, half-, quarter-, eighth-days until the child is 12 years old, but 80 percent has to be taken before it is four years old.</p> <p>The amount of the parental allowance is 77,6 percent for 390 days and a fixed amount for 90 days. On top of that there is a "speed bonus": If the next child is born within 30 months the parental allowance will be calculated on the basis of the income before the previous child. If the father takes more than 60 days of parental leave, there will be a father bonus.</p> <p>Additionally there is an entitlement to a break in order to care for a sick child for 120 days for each child under 12 years old. Of that 60 days are also usable when the child carer is sick. The entitlement is not only confined to parents and also an income compensation of 77,6 percent is paid.</p>

Source: International Network on Leave Policies and Research 2013 and Nordic Network Research Project „Nordic Family Policies and Demographic Consequences“ funded by The Research Council of Norway.



concrete arrangements differ in the different countries. For instance in Norway and in Finland there is an entitlement for childcare time independently to employment, while in Sweden the other (non-caring) parent has to be employed or studying. The reasons why the concept of childcare leave is questioned is because it is said to have a negative effect on the employment participation of women, to create differences in employment participation between women with lower qualification or migration background and women with high qualification and to keep children of underprivileged families away from childcare facilities. This would be contradictory to the basic principle of Nordic family policy, explained Dr. Neyer.

### Fathers' participation, a challenge in Nordic countries, too

She surprised the participants with her statement that also in the current family policy debates in the Nordic states the participation of fathers is a challenge. For example, it is true that in Sweden most fathers indeed do take parental leave, but they only take less than a quarter of the total time available. Also there is no knowledge about how the father's parental leave is actually used. This is currently being studied in a research project at the University of Stockholm, in order to be able to develop more suitable models for a stronger participation of fathers in childcare.

### Follow-up discussion:

#### The basis is a child- and family-conscious culture

The follow-up discussion considered the question of how employers deal with such far-reaching rights as in the example of the child-sick-rules in Sweden. Dr. Neyer pointed out that on the one side the Nordic countries are very family friendly. Hence children play a significantly high role in society, which leads to the sickness of a child being treated in the same way as a sickness of an employee. On the other side, the employees heavily rely on the qualification of their employees and therefore frequent rotation of personnel occurs anyway.

A second thread in the discussion aimed at the aspect of flexibilisation. In Germany the problem lies in the lack of a right to return from part-time back into full-time. Such a problem rather does not occur in the Nordic countries. Usually, as in Sweden, most mothers stay at home for the first 12 months of the newborn and re-enters afterwards. Some already re-enter their job gradually during the child's first year, for example through hourly or a few day-return, which is made possible by the parental leave law. The discussion on further opportunities for flexibilisation of the usage of parental leave, then, concerns the fathers more than the mothers. Another question asked by the participants of the expert meeting was, specifically how long the time of care in childcare facilities actually is. Dr. Neyer admitted that also in the Nordic countries it is not always unproblematic to get childcare places, especially when a childcare place is needed ad hoc because of starting a job or moving. In Denmark there is an entitlement starting from the end of the sixth, and in other states from the twelfth month onwards.





## Pacemaker work: Measures for reconciling work and family life – a comparison of European states



“The highest dissatisfaction with work-life balance occurs in those European states that also have the highest number of weekly working hours.”

Daphne Ahrendt, Eurofound

Using data from the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), Daphne Ahrendt highlighted the close relationship between quality of life and work-life balance the role of time in this context. Firstly she presented data on the average number of weekly working hours in Europe and on the average number of weekly hours Europeans spend caring for children and elderly or disabled people. The data showed that the average number of weekly working hours in Europe amounts to 39 hours. But there are great differences between countries. For instance, the Netherlands has the lowest number of average weekly working hours with 35 hours per week, Greece, with 45 hours, has the highest. The number of hours working parents spend weekly caring for children also varies among EU countries. The average lies at 23 hours, but in the UK and in Ireland caring for children takes 47 or 44 hours per week respectively, which in fact adds up to a second full-time job. On top of that time invested for childcare is still gender specific. On average, in the EU working women spend 28 hours caring for children, while men do so only on an average of 18 hours. Interestingly, when it comes to caring for elderly or disabled relatives, the differences between countries and genders are smaller.

### Reconciling family and work through flexible working time arrangements

Apart from the numbers of hours spent for different purposes the EQLS also investigated work place conditions and so, for instance, asked about employees' control over their working time. Here it became obvious that women had less control than men. And again there are big differences between countries. For example more than 60 percent of all employees from the Nordic states, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, said they had control over when to start and finish their work, while in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia only 30 percent did. Still, flexible working time arrangements are generally seen as “the way” to reconciling work and private life.

When the data are subjected to further analyses it becomes apparent that the employees who are least satisfied with their work-life balance are those living in countries with the highest number of working hours. The survey conclusively shows that 22 percent of employees in Europe are dissatisfied with their balance between work life and private life. This said, the proportions are highest in Greece, Latvia and Spain (over 30 percent) and lowest in Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden (under 10 percent).



## Elderly or long-term care a bigger burden than childcare

In a next step Ahrendt discussed the level of conflict people experience between their job and family life. The EQLS asks interviewees if they are too tired to do household jobs after work, if their family responsibilities suffer from too much work, and if they find it difficult to concentrate at work because of too many family responsibilities. From these three questions Eurofound constructed a summary index of strain-based conflict. This index shows that on the one hand especially families from the newer EU member states are confronted with a higher strain than those from the mostly western EU countries. On the other hand it can be seen that employees who besides work care for family members on a daily basis are clearly much more strained than those who are involved in childcare every day.

This aspect needs to be acknowledged especially considering the demographic change. And so Ahrendt continued by focussing on employees who are also carers. The main findings here are on the one hand that the before-mentioned strains are felt stronger by working carers than by employees who are non-carers. On the other hand, the psychic and physical well-being of working carers is higher than that of non-working carers. It is even almost as high as the well-being of that of non-carers. Therefore the aim should be to reconcile care and work and support this combination. At the moment there are still too few measures taken explicitly to confront this challenge all over Europe.

## Reconciliation instruments – Need and implementation

Ahrendt finished her input by presenting insights from a new study on the demographic change and policies for the reconciliation of work and family life. Its results are to be published by the end of 2014. The study aims at identifying developments in holistic approaches for better reconciliation practice. Also the study looks at agreements between social partners and governments and explores barriers and supportive factors in the implementation process. Here the study points to the fact that every country has its own approach and an individual mixture of measures. Nevertheless three country groups with a similar strategy can be recognized: While the Nordic states tend to offer institutionalized and state-financed care, the central European states use care insurances and the southern European states see care as an inner-family and especially female task. Accordingly that is where there are the most non-working carers.



In the course of this study Eurofound created a pyramid of needs for carers, similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The pyramid focuses on concrete supporting measures, which are compared to current measures in the EU28-states. It hereby became clear that flexible work-time arrangements and the right to take up part-time work, which are understood to be elementary needs, only exist in 18 out of 28 states. However, in 21 states there is the right for short-term leave, but in the hierarchy of needs this one plays a rather less important role. This comparison then illustrates quite nicely that the current prevalent instruments and measures for supporting carers fail to address their everyday reality and needs.

#### **Follow-up discussion:**

#### **Measures in family policies always have to be seen in their context**

In the following discussion the experts underlined the necessity to support those caring for their relatives. It also appeared to be the main insight, that single measures should never be adopted in an exemplary way, because they always develop in the context of national circumstances and conditions, and without reflecting on those the transfer could even cause negative effects.



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The AGF campaigns for the rights and interests of families in politics and society. It supports the cooperation of the family-policy active organisations and those responsible in family on a national and international level.

**Contact and Information:**

**Association of German Family  
Organisations (AGF) e.V.**

**Einemstraße 14  
10785 Berlin**

**Fon: 030/2902825-70  
Fax: 030/2902825-89**

**E-Mail: [info@ag-familie.de](mailto:info@ag-familie.de)**

**Web: [www.ag-familie.de](http://www.ag-familie.de)**

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