

Impact Story Flexible working time

<p>Impact Story</p> <p>Flexible working time</p>
<p>Intervention Definition</p> <p>From the gender equality point of view, flexible working time is introduced to enhance the reconciliation between working and private lives of employees and to enable them to care for their children and their elderly relatives beside their work related responsibilities (Eurofound 2012, 13; Wilke 2014, 26; Hill et al. 2001, 50). Full-time employment is considered one of the essential mechanisms for the gendered allocation of work and housework. Therefore, offering possibilities for part-time work, individual working time arrangements or flexitime are often seen as essential steps to allow fathers and mothers to be involved more equally in childcare activities and to enable women to work more stably. This will not only be beneficial for promoting gender equality in the labour market but will also promote the redistribution of reproductive work to men and will therefore increase the time available for female labour market participation (Hielscher 2000, 51; Steinrücke and Jürgens 2003, 138). There are numerous variants of flexible working hour models (e.g. flexitime, time banking, and sabbaticals); the flexibility is normally regulated by defining the minimum/maximum of daily and weekly hours, core working hours, as well as overtime credits and overtime compensation possibilities (Klein-Schneider 1999, 39). Furthermore, such measures are very often accompanied by flexible working possibilities like home office etc. Flexible working time arrangements that contribute to gender equality must be worker-led and not employer-led. Worker-led flexibility consists of working practices in which workers have a certain degree of autonomy to decide when they want to work or if they want to work from home etc. (Fagan et al. 2012, 28).</p>
<p>Intervention Definition Short</p> <p>Flexible working time arrangements should enhance the compatibility of work and family and consequently establish a more work-life balance oriented working culture. These new working conditions will attract more women and will enable women to climb the career ladder faster as it reduces the motherhood impact on working time and on career progression. However, flexible working time arrangements should also motivate fathers to get actively involved in childcare activities.</p>
<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Increase the number of women in R&I positions (2) Improve working conditions / work-life balance (4) Implement gender-fair organisational structures
<p>Output</p> <p>The measures' short term output are on the one hand different regulations and agreements on working time arrangements and on the other hand the number of employees using these agreements and regulations to reconcile work and private life (Stolz-Willig 2004, 71). This output can be measured by the change of share of part-time employees by sex, taking into account the hourly rate of part-time work, however. Because flexible working hours that contribute to gender equality should allow part-time work, which ensures a decent living. The case study on the Compliance Centers for Excellent Technology (COMET) provides evidence that the share of part time positions are increasing in the participating research performing organisations. Some of these organisations are also offering very flexible working time arrangements.</p>

Output Short

Outputs are on the one hand the regulations and agreements governing flexible working time arrangements and on the other the usage of such arrangements by employees.

Output indicators

2.1.1 Employment by full-time and part-time status and sex

Outcome

Flexible working time allows parents to adjust their working hours to their children's schedule and share care work more equally (Shockley and Allen 2010, 139; Steinrücke and Jürgens 2003, 137; Linne 2002, 28; Hill et al. 2001, 55; Hielscher 2000, 48; Jürgens 2002, 18). They can better deal with unexpected childcare situations like illness and, generally, flexible working time helps reduce stress in everyday life and work-family conflicts (Linne 2002, 28; Golden 2015, 3; Russell et al. 2009, 86; Jürgens 2002, 18; Hill et al. 2001, 55). A better work-life balance due to flexible working time arrangements also contributes to higher levels of job satisfaction and higher retention rates as employees who are more satisfied with their working conditions are less likely to leave the research-performing organisation (Holzinger and Hafellner 2016). This also has positive effects on health and leads to less sickness absence (Lott 2017, 8–9; Eurofound 2012, 55; Eurofound 2017, 39). Moreover, individual needs in other stages of life can be better coordinated, like social engagement, training, stays abroad or care for the elderly, which is still, similarly to childcare, predominantly undertaken by women (Ulrich and Wiese 2011, 57; Jürgens 2002, 20; Peplinski 2007, 248; Lange and Heitkötter 2007, 191-192; Linne 2002, 44; Schieman and Glavin 2008, 610; Clark 2000, 755; Hildebrandt 2004, 342; Eurofound 2013, 47). Furthermore, shorter parental leave periods of women may be an outcome of the measure as mothers can return to work earlier if fathers reduce working hours to contribute to childcare.

Outcome Short

The outcome of flexible working time arrangements are mostly on the level of an improved compatibility of family and career, on the level of job satisfaction and retention rates of employees.

Outcome indicators

2.1.1 Extent of experienced work-family-conflict

2.1.1 Perceived challenges in balancing private life and work

2.1.1 Perceived interpersonal conflicts related to family obligations

2.1.1 Satisfaction with current work-life balance

2.1.1 Average duration of parental leave periods by sex

2.1.1 Number of sick days

2.1.1 Fluctuation at the department/sex

2.1.1 Main differences of actual working hours between men and women in full-time and in part-time employment

2.2.2 Positive individual job rating

Impact

In the long run, flexible working time presents a significant benefit for employees, especially regarding the reconciliation of work and family and, therefore, may be a crucial step towards gender equality and the dissolution of the traditional division of labour (Golden 2015, 3; Brinkmann and Fehre 2009, 174; Peplinski 2007, 247; Lange and Heitkötter 2007, 190; Hielscher 2000, 51; Linne 2002, 44). It can also increase the labour market participation of women, as it allows both parents with small children and persons with care responsibilities gainful employment. The Austrian COMET case study showed that managers of these research-performing organisations expected that better compatibility of work and private life, shorter parental leave periods of women and flexible working time arrangements for leadership positions would increase the chances of women to climb the career ladder and to be promoted into executive and managerial positions.

On the organisational level, the measure can contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the employer and of research careers. The described positive impacts are highly dependent on how and for what purpose flexible working time is implemented (see paragraph on organisational context).

The improved working conditions also show indirect effects on productivity because employees are more motivated and more loyal to their employers (Eurofound 2012, 37ff) and can deal with their work tasks when they are most productive (Hill et al. 2001, 55).

Impact short

Flexible working time arrangements will increase the compatibility of family and career and will consequently foster the participation of women in research and innovation positions and their chances to be promoted into decision-making positions. This will contribute to a higher career satisfaction and to an improved attractiveness of research careers. Through higher job satisfaction and a better usage of available talents, the turnover of companies could be increased.

Impact indicators short

- 1.1. Share of female researchers by staff category
 - 1.1.1 Women's participation in paid work
 - 1.1.2 Proportion of women in leadership positions
 - 1.1.2 Glass Ceiling Index
- 2.1.1 Share of entitled men and women using parental leave
- 2.1.1 New work-life balance oriented working culture
- 2.2.2 Positive individual job rating
- 2.2.2 Satisfaction with career differentiated by sex, staff category and usage of flexible working time arrangements
- 5.1.3 Improved attractiveness of researchers careers across the EU
- 5.3.1 Turnover of company/number of employees

Policy Context

Flexible working time is offered by research and development companies and organisations to ease work-life conflicts that have their origin mainly in responsibilities for childcare and care for elderly people. Therefore, the usage of flexible working time arrangements depends on the one hand very much on the prevalent gender stereotypes and gendered norms in each country and on the other on the availability of public child care services like pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. This influences the demand for specific forms of flexible working time arrangements: in

some countries, women work mostly part-time to be able to combine work and childcare activities whereas men are mostly working full-time and are hardly involved in activities related to childcare and housework. Therefore, flexible working time arrangement can ease work-life conflicts but they can also contribute to stabilising dominant gender norms and gendered division of labour.

Organisational Context

On the organisational level, it is important that flexible working time arrangements are not designed for and/or used only by a specific group for employees e.g. women with young children but that these arrangements are available for all employees and are also used by a variety of employees. In addition, it is important that employees who make use of flexible working time arrangements are not treated or valued differently than employees with standard working time arrangements. Furthermore, some conditions have to be fulfilled for flexible working time to be effective as a gender equality measure. There may be a downside to the approach: flexible working hours are subject of a constant conflict of the employer's and employee's interests. A long-term dominance of the employer's interest combined with growing individual responsibility can lead to more multi-tasking, overtime, constant availability, stress and even burnout (Schieman and Glavin 2008, 609-610; Gerst 2003, 65; Janke et al. 2014, 98, 101; Haipeter et al. 2002, 366; Hielscher 2000, 58; Stolz-Willig 2004, 72; Schieman and Young 2010, 1405). This risk of a work-home conflict due to an employer-oriented working schedule has presented itself even higher for female employees, while men benefit more from flexible working hours (Lott 2017, 23; Eurofound 2012, 17). Another very important potential risk is that if only women pursue "flexibility", then they may contribute to a devaluation of the female part of the workforce and construe an image of women as merely "partly" or "sometimes" contributing fully to work and production. Flexible working time therefore contributes to gender equality only if it means time sovereignty for employees, but not if working time is organised purely according to the needs of the employer.

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