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RECONCILIATION OF FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

Proposal of measures and policies

Maria Gasouka

Nicosia 2008

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

- 1. EUROPEAN STRATEGIES FOR EQUALITY AND THE DEMAND FOR RECONCILIATION/HARMONISATION OF FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE**
- 2. THE FAMILY**
- 3. THE BUSINESSES**
- 4. INDICATIVE POSITIVE MEASURES AND PRACTICES OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES FOR THE COMBINATION OF FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE**
- 5. SUGGESTED MEASURES**

AFTERWORD

NOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX

"The existence of an equal family, the care of reproductive functions and all the other functions required by a family as well as the state protection of the family are preconditions for women's liberation. The opposite would result in keeping women in roles of submission."

Ana Cabre

FOREWORD

The study at hand aims at presenting the theoretical framework of a social, political and cultural at the same time issue that has recently been in the center of gender strategies of the European Union and several national governments: that of reconciliation/harmonisation of family and professional life of working people and women above all. At the same time it wishes, through the experience now existing at European but also Cypriot level (as resulted from the realisation of C.I. EQUAL (priority theme 2, measure 2.1), to contribute to the formulation and implementation of relevant policies in Cyprus, a country in which tradition, the modern life style and the collective social conscience if not identified they are in close proximity. Thus it results in formulating a set of proposals – measures that will be utilized both at an institutional framework level and at the level of socio-economic institutions of the public and private sector, taking into serious consideration parameters such as:

- A. The ability of both sexes to dedicate time to family and work means the a ability of a large number of women to enter (or re-enter) the labour market, higher income, increased fertility and increased rate of economically active population (EKKE, 2002).*
- B. In a growing number of countries the collective reduction and rearrangement of working time are considered to be particularly important for the achievement of equality and the reconciliation of family and professional life (J. Pillinger, 2002), which is one of the objectives of the European Union.*

At the same time, however, it realises that despite the relevant efforts in progress, the redistribution of gender social roles inside the family is still extremely slow because of the powerful out-of-date traditions and stereotypical attitudes that demonstrate a unique diachronic resistance. As the results of this are already visible at the levels of economy, social cohesion and democracy, the issue of harmonisation of family and professional life with a simultaneous redistribution of family obligations and time in favour of women as well has in recent years been a main objective of the strategies of

gender equality and equal opportunities of the European Union and the national governments.

Concluding, it should be noted that until recently almost all the studies and researches approached the problems of the reconciliation solely from the women's point of view, and not unjustly, as they used to and still suffer to a great extent the consequences of ranked social roles, stereotypes and prejudices related to the sexes. The study points out the exceptionally encouraging fact that lately there has been an important shift towards focusing on the relationships formed between men and women's genders, a fact that – despite the severe criticism by feminist forces for "neutralizing" the issue and obscuring its domineering dimension (a criticism that is hardly negligible, in my opinion) – points out new qualities like that of relating family and work conditions with development, social cohesion and democracy, but also the redefinition of the paternal role (O'Brien & Shelmit, 2003). It concludes with the acknowledgement that in Cyprus men are compelled to believe that "the privileges they enjoy in society are of lesser value than they think, or that the price for these privileges is very high. The transition towards gender equality requires the fundamental shift from a gender conscience based on dichotomy and privileges to another one based on diversity and reciprocity" (KETHI, 2007).

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INTRODUCTION

The reconciliation of family and professional life is a new policy that comes to meet a certain social need, which emerged quite some time ago. By the term reconciliation/harmonisation of family and professional life we mean that it is imperative for both men and women in the contemporary social, economic and cultural circumstances to assume multiple roles as employees, home- and family caretakers and these roles can no longer continue to conflict with each other. The reconciliation of family and professional life can also be expressed as the *balance of professional and family obligations*. The new term refers to the balanced, equivalent participation of both men and women in family responsibilities in such a way that they are allowed to meet their professional obligations, but also to optimise their creativity and skills at the work place (Dex, Smith & Winter, 2001). The couple's shared responsibility in the family and household tasks and equal opportunities for the two sexes at the work place, which will contribute to their professional evolution, are preconditions for the implementation of this new policy, which has come to complement and forward the gender mainstreaming policy. The gender-based occupational segregation that is prevalent to this day is no longer functional. For women that are traditionally burdened with the household care, the participation in paid labour is not only a wish but also a psychological and economic need. Women's labour is necessary for both improving the living conditions of the family and also the progress of economy and achievement of social cohesion. It is for this reason that there is a formulation of political objectives for raising women's participation in labour. As a consequence, women's entrance to professional life and often (despite the obstacles they face because of their sex) in positions of increased responsibility, the demographic changes, the change of roles of men and women in the family and at work, the emergence of different models of employment are factors that urge the creation of legislation and the adoption of positive measures for the protection of family, as well as its combination with the professional life of both parents, but mostly women (Den & Den, 2001). Positive measures are the "*measures providing for specific advantages in order to make it easier for the underrepresented sex to pursue a vocational*

activity or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in professional careers, with a view to ensuring full equality in practice between men and women in working life" as provided by paragraph 4, article 141 of the Treaty establishing the European Community (2002) **1**.

The recently modernised institutional framework of the Republic of Cyprus provides important provisions that contribute to the possibility of reconciliation of family and professional life of the working people, especially women. However, the need for this reconciliation should be realised by the society, which like other Mediterranean countries (and not only those) still has strong patriarchal reflexes especially in the employing world. To this direction the National Mechanism for Women's Rights take action, as well as institutions of equality like the Equality Observatory of Cyprus, the innovative Women's Cooperative Bank, but also women's departments of the political parties and federations of labour. An important objective of this effort is the information/sensitisation/encouragement of Cypriot businesses to assume their social role and to contribute to the achievement of this goal, by forming an internal business environment free of prejudices and stereotypes related to the sexes, friendly to women and family in general. An important tool to this direction are today the experiences, good practices and products that resulted from the actions developed in the frame of C.I. EQUAL, mainly by Development Partnerships "Elani" and "Pandora".

More specifically:

Briefly approaching the labour market from the point of view of gender, it is realised that along with the changes in economic and social circumstances, in the past three decades women enter the labour market at a constantly increasing rate (Montana & Charnov, 2000). Despite that, throughout the E.U. there have been sex discriminations in the areas of both paid and unpaid labour. Women in the Community are still the majority of those employed with "flexible" forms of work, of the unemployed and the long-term unemployed. They are still paid less for work of the same quality, time and qualifications, they face the "glass ceiling" in their professional evolution and they are underrepresented in the centres of economic, political and social decision making. Occupational segregation in male and female professions is still

visible, as well as women's professional immobility and limited presence in informal forms of employment, etc. It is also known that women comprise the largest part of the unemployed and the long-term unemployed in the majority of the European countries. Furthermore, there is an uneven distribution of men and women in professions, fields and forms of employment. Men usually occupy positions of authority, with the highest salary in relation to women (uneven access), who are the first to suffer the consequences of any economic crises. In general the gender dimension of the European labour market is specified as such:

1. In almost all member states the rate of unemployed women remains systematically higher than that of men, whereas women are the ones to suffer long-term unemployment more.
2. The difference in the rate of employment between men and women is about 20%.
3. Women's rate of employment is reduced when they have children, while the opposite stands for men.

The occupational segregation of men and women in the labour market remains a critical problem for the European Union **2**. Even countries where women have achieved high rates of employment demonstrate segregated professional structures. Women's salary is lower than that of men for the same or same value work, a fact of wide dimensions in Cyprus, where the difference rate is about 25%. The difference in salary is higher in the private sector than in the public one, whereas structural factors such as age, profession and field of activity do not seem to contribute to the reduction in salary difference. Finally, the limitation of traditionally "female" professions by the introduction of new technologies renders women's professional training/re-specialisation immediately necessary, so that they are able to respond to the demands of the new work positions.

Gender-based occupational segregation stems from the socialisation process of the sexes, the limitations women face regarding paid labour – gender-based division of household labour or a social state based on the family model of the male bread winner and the dependent wife (Gasouka, 2007). Thus, there is a vertical segregation that minimises women's

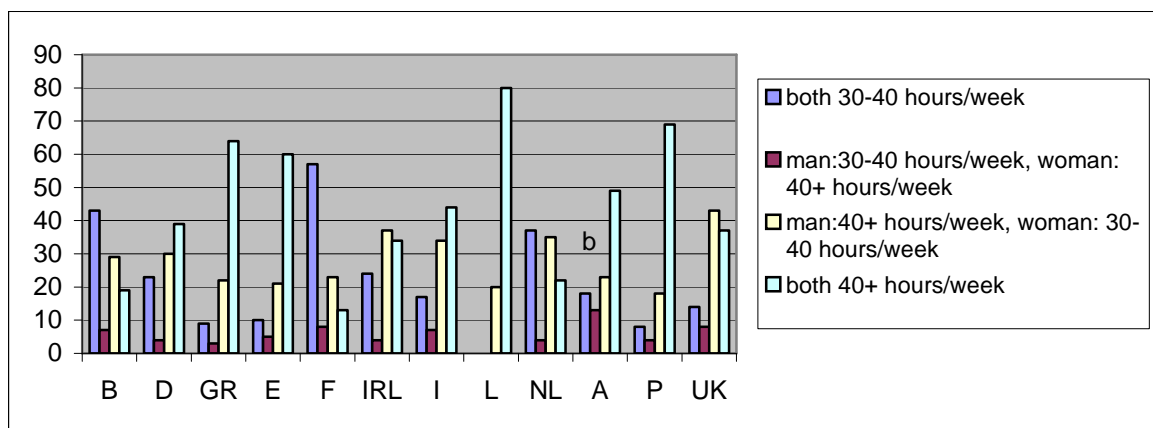
possibilities of assuming managerial positions, a horizontal segregation in the fields of employment depending on a person's sex and inequalities in salary that still exist, despite the fact that the European Union has a long tradition in the regulation of equal salaries (European Foundation for the Improvement in Living and Working Conditions, 2000). At the same time, while women actively enter the productive process and participate as much as their husbands in earning a living, there is not a similar participation of men in the household responsibilities. By rule, men are free of hard, time-consuming responsibilities such as caring, keeping and upbringing children and elderly parents, as well as involvement in household tasks. They focus on their professional career and success, with the result of assuming responsible, higher positions earlier than women (Griswold, 1993). On the other hand, in their effort to adequately respond to the so-called "family duties" (translated into implicit unpaid household labour), women seek forms of employment that have no prospect of social recognition, professional evolution, a career with ambitious goals (Kaklamanaki, 1984), or they even exit the productive process. The female population is often forced to this necessity solution of reduced working hours, because it gives them the opportunity to combine paid labour with unpaid domestic work, which is rendered "obligatory" for women by the constraints of the patriarchal society (Avramikou, 2001).

In the late 1990s the measures regarding the rearrangement of working time (part-time employment, long parental leaves, flexible hours, etc.) were given a lot of emphasis aiming at the flexibility of the labour market. This emphasis however, especially when it is addressed mainly to women despite the official rhetoric, has negative effects to equal opportunities in the labour market. As it appeared, it leads back to the traditional roles of the sexes and has negative implications to women's professional evolution. In the end these forms do not support women's efforts in entering the labour market and competing with men on equal terms. At the same time, men experience interpersonal and internal conflicts within the family because of an already visible contradiction between the older "paternal role" according to which they have been raised and to the new roles and attitudes they are called for to adopt by contemporary needs (Gasouka & Tsoukala, 2007). Nowadays it is widely accepted that the redistribution of social roles inside the family, the

transformation of biological motherhood into a social one with both parents' participation in children's upbringing is a historical – social necessity (Lupton & Barclay, 1997).

Consequently, the issue of equal opportunities to labour is raised immediately. At the same time, women's increased participation in employment, but also the important changes in family models that led to an increased number of nuclear and single-parent families, created a stronger need for a reconciliation of family and professional life (Mouriki, 2005). The combination of conflicting demands between paid labour and family needs and tasks is acknowledged as a great challenge for employees of every field and especially women, whose responsibilities are traditionally raised in the sphere of the home. Either way, this family model, where both parents work and has been the European rule in the last decade with its socio-cultural turns, creates stress and tension to its members because of the conflicting demands of family and work (O'Brien & Shelmit, 2003).

Table 1: Weekly involvement (work hours) in households where two parents with dependent children have a full-time employment, 2000.



Source: LFS 2000, IRL: 1997; L and UK: 1999; DK, FIN and S: no data.

Two needs emerge: on one hand parents, especially women, need to have enough time both for their children and other family members that may require care from time to time, and themselves. We should not forget that there is also an issue of redistributing family time in favour of the women too, which is often completely neglected. On the other hand, it is important that preschool and school children enjoy high quality care, which has proved to be

of particular significance for the development of their cognitive and psychological abilities. Unfortunately, the inability to combine these roles is experienced in a culpatory way by parents, especially women that regard themselves the principal caretakers of the family.

According to the proposals of the European committee and the social partners, the first need can be met by innovative work conditions, which are more flexible and if used correctly and with social responsibility they can help parents in responding to family tasks without inhibiting their professional evolution. However, as mentioned before there have been serious concerns and objections to this issue by feminist institutions and trade unions that regard most of these innovations as a means of reproducing the traditional gender-based occupational segregation.

The second issue is to define what we mean by "good childcare" and how we can ensure it. In many European countries, including Cyprus, grandmothers have played an important role in children's upbringing. This is getting harder and harder, though, as often the new family resides away from the paternal one. Furthermore, in the next generation the women that will become grandmothers and will not have to work will be the exception, not the rule. Consequently, there has to be a total strategy on behalf of the state that will respond to this need and that will set high standards regarding childcare and serving the working parents. Where the social services are concerned and especially childcare, it is known that the goals of the Barcelona summit are the provision of childcare for 90% of children aged between three and the mandatory school age and for 33% of children aged below three by 2010. It may be --- that in Cyprus there could be a great scope, apart from the social necessity, for the needs to be explored as well as the possibilities of improving reconciliation policies and for measures to be adopted to this end. The table below shows the rates of meeting childcare needs in the European countries:

Table: Childcare services in the E.U.

State	Rate of coverage for children up to 3 years old	Rate of coverage of children between 3 and the mandatory school age
Belgium	30	97
Denmark	64	91
Germany	10	78
Greece	3	46
Spain	5	84
France	29	99
Ireland	38	56
Italy	6	95
Holland	6	95
Austria	4	68
Poland	12	75
Finland	22	66
Sweden	48	80
U.K.	34	60

Source: OECD data

1. EUROPEAN STRATEGIES OF EQUALITY AND THE DEMAND FOR RECONCILIATION/HARMONISATION OF FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

The increased rates of development and competitiveness of the European market, the pursuit of social cohesion, the quality itself of the western type democracy have pointed out the fundamental necessity of women's entrance to the labour market and their stay in it, on terms of equality and equal opportunities as it has been pointed out. Despite this widely accepted finding, however, women's relation to paid labour and self-employment is characterised by a network of prejudices and notions connected to traditionally patriarchal relevant attitudes, resulting in facing serious obstacles in their evolution and career **3**.

The European Union has illuminated women regarding its policy on equal opportunities of access to the society and employment (Jaurnotte,

2003). Within this frame there have been a number of laws aiming at the harmonisation of personal/family and professional life. It regards provisions that both directly and indirectly help employees and especially women to combine paid labour and family responsibilities. It includes legislation that aims at protecting family and motherhood, legislation that promotes gender equality, legislation regarding provision of care to dependent individuals, legislation about flexibility of time and forms of employment as well as various forms of leave, legislation establishing the grant of various benefits and legislation regarding work hours of the social infrastructure of the state. A wide range of institutional provisions is covered, complemented by the provisions of the collective labour contracts of both the private and the public sector (Mouriki, 2006). It should be noted, however, that the issue of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities is not an exclusive responsibility of the European Union and its bodies, or the national governments. It constitutes a responsibility of the European society itself, the society of political ideas, social institutions, movements etc. Employing agencies, for example, should realise the negative economic – business implications resulting from the loss of human talents, skills, ideas and innovation because of gender prejudices. The incitement and alertness of the society is, as the E.U. points out, about the need to change behaviour, attitudes, rules and values that define and affect the roles of the sexes in the society, through education, training, the media, arts, culture and science. The elimination of the existing cultural prejudices and social stereotypes is of great importance for the establishment of equality between men and women. The E.U. also points out that the perpetuation of women's negative or stereotypical images, especially in the Media, in electronic communication and entertainment, in advertising and educational material, does not provide a clear and realistic image of the multiple roles of men and women, or their contribution to a changing world. Without interfering with their freedom of expression, the Media and culture industries, as formulators of the public opinion and means of forming values, should contribute to changing stereotypes, public attitude and to presenting a fairer image of men and women.

More specifically, the following have been established at a community level:

- *The Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers in 1989.*

This Charter makes clear that in order to achieve equality between men and women there should be an intensification of the actions related to equal access to work, payment, terms of employment, education and training.

- *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in 2000.*

The Charter is a net of protection for the family, but also any individual that wishes to combine family and work without facing the danger of dismissal for reasons related to motherhood. At the same time, they are given the privilege of paid maternity leave and parental leave after birth or adoption.

- *Directive 92/85/EEC* on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

- *The Council Recommendation (92/241/EEC)* of 31 March 1992 on childcare.

- *Directive 96/34/EC* of 3 June 1996, on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC.

- *Directive 93/104/EC*, amended by *Directive 2000/34/EC* on the organisation of working time that limits maximum weekly working time to 48 hours (1993 and 2000).

- *Directives 2000/43/EC* of 29 June 2000, implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and *2000/78/EC* of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation in order to combat discrimination based on religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

- *The Resolution of the Council and the Ministers for Employment and Social Policy* of 2000 on the balanced participation of men and women in family and working life.
- *The Council decision of 20 December 2000*, on a programme relating to the community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005) (KETHI, 2001).
- *The Roadmap for Equality between Men and Women 2006-2010* of the European Commission.

In the Roadmap for Equality, which includes planning for the following five years, the reconciliation of family and professional life is itself one of the main six objectives of the European policy, next to equal economic independence and no longer a means for increasing women's participation in labour **4**.

Apart from the above, already since the 1980s a series of measures aimed at the protection of motherhood and family in general, with emphasis on regulating working time (1981), parental leaves (1989), childcare and the protection of pregnant women (1992) etc. Directive 93/104/EC set the minimum limits for informal employment that regard safety, health, daily and weekly rest etc., whereas already since 1989 the Social Charter acknowledged that parental leave is a major social right of employees and it acquires legal power with a community directive of 1996. According to the E.U., parental leave is distinguished from motherhood leave and is defined as having minimum duration of three months. The manner and details of administration are defined by national laws and collective agreements, while in 2002 both parents are granted the right to parental leaves. The Social Charter places emphasis on the importance of childcare, aiming at the reconciliation of work and family for working parents, while in 1992 the issue of security and health of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding is introduced.

Since 2000 the Reconciliation of Family and Professional life is pointed out as a major factor in the policies and strategies of equality and is the coalescence of all the previous policies of employment towards equality

(European Foundation for the Improvement in Living and Working Conditions, 2006). More specifically: in June 2000 the European Commission issued a communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Commission and the Committee of the Regions, entitled "Towards A Community Strategy for Gender Equality (2001-2005)". This text mentions that the Community objective of that period was that the work for the equality between men and women assume the form of a cohesive strategy, which would include all the community policies in its efforts. This would happen either by adapting these policies (pro-active intervention) and/or by implementing specific actions aiming at improving women's situation in society (reactive interventions). We mainly see that the framework strategy for gender equality brought methodological changes to the way policy was implemented till then on this issue. It introduced the concept of cohesion of actions and set their dissemination as a target. The tools for monitoring and assessment are of great importance to the realisation of gender mainstreaming in all policies and levels. Gender mainstreaming is now the methodological, essential objective of equality policies and is considered to be a great step in the way towards eliminating inequalities in all fields **5**.

According to the aforementioned announcement the integrated strategy signalled an important change in relation to the previous community action on equal opportunities for men and women, which till then was based mainly on activities per department and on projects funded by different special budget lines. The framework strategy on equality aimed at the coordination of all the different initiatives and projects in a unified process that would be based on clear criteria of assessment, monitoring tools, a definition of reference points and processes of gender proofing. The new approach would raise the level of the wide range of existing community activities for the promotion of equality and would ensure their overall cohesion. Also this improved framework strategy was expected to guarantee a better monitoring and dissemination of the action results (Gasouka & Tsoukala, 2007).

In this planning for the following five years, the Commission defined the main objectives, which are distributed in five inter-related fields of action. Based on the framework strategy all the community actions related to gender

would be clearly connected to one or more of the following fields: economic life, equal participation and representation, social rights, civil life and gender roles and stereotypes (Gasouka & Tsoukala, 2007).

A main priority to the above framework was the promotion of women's equality in economic life through a reduction in occupational segregation and the reconciliation of professional and family life. The Council of Europe at Lisbon has set qualitative objectives for equal participation of men and women in economic life, such as the one regarding an increase in the rate of women's employment from 51% in 2000 to 60% by 2010. finally, in the recent --- Charter for Equality, which includes planning for the following five years, the reconciliation of family and professional life is itself one of the main six objectives of the European policy (Journote, 2003, Gasouka, 2007, Pilavaki, 2007, Gasouka & Tsoukala, 2007).

Despite, however, the encouraging data that result from gender European policies and strategies of the last decade, it is common ground that there is still a long road ahead to achieving the reconciliation and equal opportunities in general. The lack of a structured political reconciliation is to a large extent due to the impressive lack of demand for policies that are family-friendly, both from the point of view of the trade unions and that of employees. This is not true only in "male-dominated" fields, as someone might expect, but in all fields. As there are no empirical data that interpret this phenomenon, we can only make guesses as to the reasons. The following inhibiting factors are mentioned quite indicatively:

- (a) survival of informal support networks
- (b) employers' reluctance to provide their employees greater flexibility for their work hours
- (c) women's under-representation in trade unions
- (d) exceptionally low rate of women in higher and highest ranks of syndicate hierarchy
- (e) lack of information regarding the existing family friendly policies implemented in other European countries
- (f) fear of income loss
- (g) massive resort to overtime employment

From the side of employers' too there are significant obstacles in the implementation and dissemination of initiatives for the reconciliation of family and work:

1. the high cost these policies entail
2. the dominant mentality and attitude of managerial staff
3. the dominance, in the majority of businesses, of Taylor's system of organisation of production and labour, which leaves no space for innovation and flexibility
4. the lack of policies of staff retention.

Apart from some measures of supporting the family beyond the employees' statutory rights, the result of the above is that very few businesses are consistent in adopting policies that promote a balance between professional and non-professional life.

The overall conclusion is therefore that the effort to successfully combine family and professional life meets a number of *obstacles* that create a negative ambience, such as:

- (a) certain law provisions, for example the fact that parental leave is unpaid.
- (b) the structure of the business sector, with the overwhelming predominance of small and medium businesses.
- (c) the predominance of anachronistic methods of organising labour.
- (d) the survival of traditional models and attitudes regarding role distribution between the sexes, mainly inside the family.
- (e) the lack (or absence) of incorporating the dimension of reconciliation of family/work, both in the agenda of collective negotiations, the business culture and the society in general.
- (f) low wages.

2. FAMILY

The definition of roles that are traditionally attributed to the social categories of gender is the innate result of an economic system and socio-psychological processes that are reinforced in a dialectic manner. The

stratification of western society in classes is accompanied by a gender-based social asymmetry. Everywhere the relation between male/female is a relation of hierarchy: hierarchy based on law or custom, where laws and rules come in. This specific hierarchised system, as any other, is surrounded by myths and notions in order to secure its legitimation and acceptance, attributing the fact of gender asymmetry to natural or supernatural factors. At the same time, it develops a set of attitudes and representations, that is a social conscience and a gender-based values scale that entails diverse behaviours and expectations by gender and composes what we have lately got accustomed to calling in the social sciences – thanks to feminist thinking and research – social role of gender (Gasouka, 1998). The traditional gender representations are profoundly integrated in the temper of people who constitute society. This fact does not refer only to men, but also the majority of women that have "internalised" these representations since early childhood – a phenomenon beyond class. A first social transfer of gender models is realised within the family, since a child's conception till birth and during the care of the infant, to the way it is brought up and then educated. The formation of gender images and values by which it is shaped begins very early. The parents transfer their gender attitudes through their actions and by setting limitations, shaping the child's behaviour with an entire role-play game, with adult-children exchanges and by reinforcing this attitude using encouragement or punishment. The parents' behaviour is of course a product of their own upbringing, enhanced and corrected by their current social status, by their personal preferences and the value system they have adopted.

It is exactly within the frame of the systems of the representations of western nuclear families, where gender social roles are generally formed and family time between men and women, minors and adults, is distributed. In these processes of regulating family life the women are burdened with multiple roles and responsibilities in relation to men, whereas on the other hand (precisely as a result of these roles) they enter the labour market in harder conditions than their companions. They are often forced to abandon their "vital professional space" and relevant personal needs and expectations (evolution, higher salaries etc.) submitting them to family obligations and the care of the dependent members of the family (children, the elderly etc.). Life,

however, and everyday needs require a redefinition of the social roles of the sexes inside the family and provide fatherhood with new content and dynamics. This new dynamic in the relationship between father – child, an expanded, practical participation of men in family obligations and their involvement especially with children should constitute the modern social family reality **6**. To this direction, this paternal role needs social acceptance and support, a role that transcends gender stereotypes and prejudices, as it contributes both to the communication and contact between spouses and children's better upbringing **7**.

However, apart from family relations and social roles as they are fulfilled within the family, the contribution to the transcendence of the gender inequalities of the State and its bodies is of decisive importance. A family exists in a certain socio-economic and cultural environment by which it is directly influenced (and influences it by its turn). Consequently, the way that the State supports and reinforces new family relationships, ensuring at the same time women's mild and equivalent entrance to the labour market, is related both to the legislative framework and the existence of the necessary supporting social structures. The protection of motherhood as well as the expansion and upgrade of the paternal role are very important in the specific provision of the State (Den & Den, 2001). At a European level there is an effort to promote various kinds of maternity, paternity and parental leaves, with a simultaneous prevention of unfavourable consequences, whose enactment may entail obstacles for women's access to employment, working conditions and their ability to assume managerial positions. Men are also encouraged to participate in their children's upbringing already since birth or their integration into the family. According to the legislation of the Court of the European Communities, the protection of the mother by the community law aims at the protection "on one hand of the biological condition of the woman during the pregnancy and after that, and on the other hand the special relationship of the woman and her child during the period following pregnancy and equality", but also the "achievement of actual and not formal gender equality". The central community text is Directive 92/85 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of

pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (Dex, Smith & Winter, 2001).

In order to design and implement policies regarding the reconciliation of family and professional life, it is important to define the level and the population we refer to. The data we have regarding the participation of men and women in the labour market of the European countries, as well as the citizens' degree of satisfaction from the balance between family and professional life come from Eurostat, OECD, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and the National statistics service (Gasouka & Tsoukala, 2007).

Distribution table of the rate of employees who believe that their working hours are reconciled very well with their family and social obligations per country.

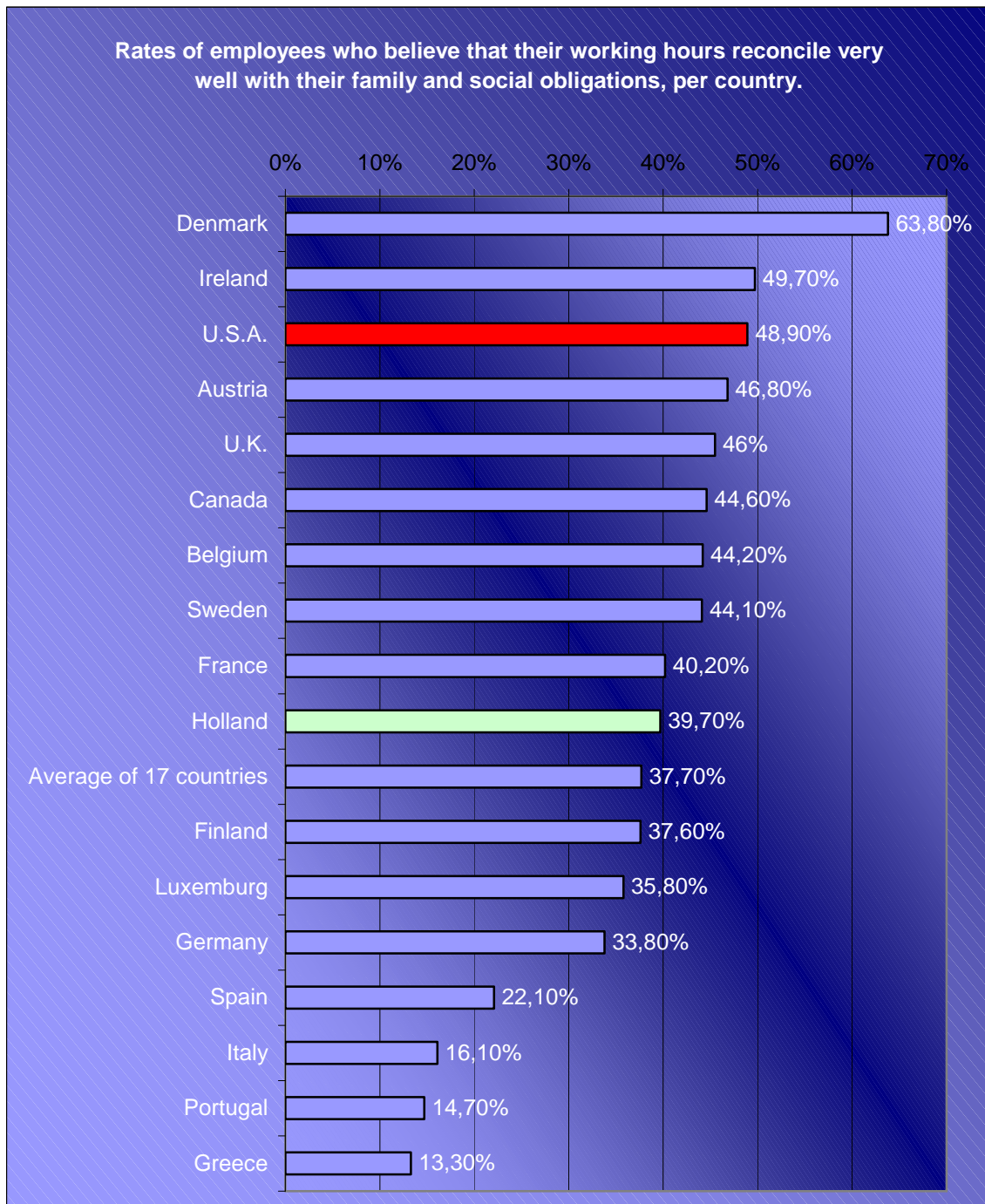


Table: Rate of employees who believe their working hours are "very well" combined with their family and social obligations.

Rate of employees who believe their working hours are "very well" combined with their family and social obligations								
	Total of employees	State of employment		Sex		Age		
		Self-employed	Employees	Men	Women	< 25 years old	25-44 years old	45-64 years old
Denmark	63.8	61.0	63.9	62.7	65.0	56.4	59.0	74.4
Ireland	49.7	33.3	53.7	44.2	58.3	53.2	47.2	51.7
U.S.A.	48.9	50.9	48.4	44.7	53.4	43.7	44.0	55.4
Austria	46.8	38.7	47.9	44.8	49.4	46.9	46.5	47.7
Un. Kingdom	45.5	42.6	46.2	37.8	54.9	47.5	44.1	45.7
Canada	44.6	47.0	44.0	41.8	47.8	37.4	41.3	51.1
Belgium	44.2	31.9	46.7	43.3	45.6	44.5	42.6	47.8
Sweden	44.1	48.5	43.8	43.3	45.1	35.2	41.4	49.6
France	40.2	32.7	41.4	38.8	41.9	43.5	36.9	44.9
Holland	39.7	48.0	39.1	36.2	44.6	39.5	37.4	44.2
Finland	37.6	26.2	39.8	35.6	40.0	34.5	36.6	39.7
Luxemburg	35.8	41.4	35.2	34.8	37.5	43.1	32.2	43.2
Germany	33.8	30.4	33.8	29.8	39.3	36.0	30.8	37.1
Spain	22.1	20.7	22.5	19.6	26.8	26.6	20.1	24.0
Italy	16.1	14.6	16.5	15.3	17.4	23.9	13.5	16.8
Portugal	14.7	18.1	13.5	15.1	14.3	12.0	14.6	15.9
Greece	13.3	6.9	18.3	11.9	15.6	14.1	14.2	12.2
Average of 17 countries	37.7	34.9	38.5	35.3	41.0	37.5	35.4	41.3

Source: OECD Labour Market Statistics – Indicators; 2001 data except for Germany and the U.K. that are 2000 data.

Regarding childcare and other dependent members of the family, the existing research, as well as overall experience from Cyprus, demonstrates that women have the principal household care. The Roadmap for Equality mentions that in average European women dedicate at least 4 hours daily on household tasks, whereas men a little over than 2 hours. It is logical to assume that in Cyprus, where the traditional stereotypes for the roles of men and women at work and the home are still powerful, this gap is bigger. More specifically, a publication of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions entitled "Fertility and Family Issues in an Enlarged Europe" (2004) presents comparative rates about the European countries regarding the following: a) how many European citizens believe that they are content with the number of children they have – it appears that there is a majority of people who say they are content with the number of children they have. b) On the other hand, there is quite a large number (about one third of those asked) who state that they would like more children if the economic and social conditions of their lives would permit so. Finally there is a smaller rate of 10% to 15% who support that they have more children than they wished. From the above data we can conclude the following: a) that the discrepancies between actual and ideal family size tend to expand to both directions and b) that external factors limit an important part of the population from further childbearing.

The unit of the research of the European foundation for the Improvement of living and Working Conditions entitled "Fertility and Family Issues in an Enlarged Europe" presents the following data: the belief that childcare should be given by both parents characterises a percentage of 81,8% of the citizens in Europe of the 15 member states, and 80% in Europe of 25. Among these countries Greece has one of the middle positions. However, in the qualitative characteristics of the study we see that the specific activities that fathers are thought they should take on are sports, help with the homework, responsibility for punishment, answering important questions of the children etc. On the contrary, the rates of citizens that maintain that care such as dressing, changing and tucking children in bed are both parents' responsibility, are very lower. This information is an indication that mothers are burdened with more everyday care, the one that cannot be put off

because it serves basic children's needs, but also the one that is characterised as the less creative and pleasant. It is precisely that kind of activity that may deter women from seeking and keeping a work position with possibilities of evolution. From that research we get information that may be useful in understanding men and women's needs, aiming at the reconciliation of family and professional life. The father's participation is vital in children's upbringing (O'Brien & Shelmit, 2003). A good practice implemented by some European states is the paternity leave. In Scandinavian countries the paternity leave ranges from 10 to 20 days. The term "paternity leave" included in Directive 2002/73 refers to *"the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life, prohibits any relevant forms of discrimination and grants working men an individual and untransferable right to or adoption paternity leave, while maintaining their rights relating to employment"*. It can be granted together with the maternity leave regardless of the duration of the maternity and paternity leaves and has been successfully established as paid leave in several European countries (National Commission for Human Rights, 2006).

Another piece of information that may be of use from the same issue has to do with the politics that are deemed by the citizens themselves to be the most important and helpful for parents and future parents. Greek men and women, for example, consider childcare services rather low in their priorities, on the contrary, policies regarding combating unemployment, tax reductions and child benefits are in the top three positions. Three assumptions can be made:

- a) high levels of unemployment, long working hours and low wages that impose a rather low standard of living on Greek people render the safeguard of decent employment more imperative and a precondition for an increase in birth rates.
- b) The contribution of the elder generation, low rates of female employment and the possibility of cheap, uninsured female employment, mostly economic immigrants for child keeping, does not allow the need for organised care services to show its real extent.

- c) In Greece the traditional mentality, which is still quite powerful, requires that a "good" mother prioritise children's upbringing by interrupting or delaying her professional participation and evolution.

Assigning, therefore, care to organised services may be considered as a necessity solution that does not lead to correct children's upbringing. It is obvious that on a second level and aiming at long-term results it will take overall changes both to the way of organising labour and to the mentality of Greek citizens, men and women, those that are now young adults and the children that will be the future citizens and parents. It should be interesting to see the latest data, in which Cyprus is included, and to examine how contradictions are solved such as the one between low levels of female unemployment and social attitudes and mentalities that are common with Greece.

3. BUSINESSES

Apart from the aforementioned, gender research reaffirms that, in microeconomic level, staff policies that incorporate the gender equality dimension are beneficial not only for employees but also employers, since they contribute to a reduction in absences and growth in business productivity/competitiveness as well as the wider local and regional development in general.

Furthermore, on a macroeconomic level, the reinforcement of women's position in the labour market by combating gender equalities, as well as with a better balance of family and professional life, is absolutely necessary in order to lighten the consequences of demographic developments that cause a reduction in the labour resource and lack of skills in many professions and sectors of the economy. Supporting women so as to develop their full potential and men's greater participation in achieving equality – mostly by highlighting their parental role – broaden and reinforce the talent and skills pool that the European economy needs in order to remain competitive in international markets.

It is not certain that the majority of businesses have left behind the stereotypes regarding the role and usefulness of female employment. The

tendency of some businesses, mostly small and medium ones, to reproduce obsolete attitudes and practices, that maintain labour inequality between the sexes, undermines a couple's smooth family life. In several cases, the unequal treatment of a couple by businesses on matters of professional evolution, wages, assignment of managerial positions may even cause trouble in their private-personal lives, especially when the spouses are of equal educational-professional background.

By attributing too much of importance to cases like for example the "cost of absence" of a working mother (maternity leaves, parental benefits etc.), business often fail to understand the multiple benefit that equal treatment entails for themselves. All research points to the fact that provision of equal work opportunities to men and women contributes to growth in business productivity and competitiveness (Gasouka, 2007). Policies of attracting better human resources, regardless of sex, may offer knowledge, skills, innovation and quality services to the business. All that evidence cover whatever women's "absence cost" and help the business gradually acquire high level specialised labour resource, which is a precondition for its development and evolution in the contemporary competitive economic environment (European Commission, 2006). Another issue that highlights the influence of businesses on a couple's family-professional life is related to the family changes brought by the simultaneous employment of both spouses/parents (Warin, Solomon, Lewis, & Langford, 1999). The gradual increase in women's employability in private and public businesses not only cancels the traditional model of wife/mother that is exclusively involved in the household duties and the children's upbringing, but also introduces new parameters regarding both the internal function of the family and the work place. As a result, the time a working mother dedicates to the household and the children is limited (Journotte, 2003). The amount of time a man should dedicate in the family affairs is raised correspondingly. Quite often help is hired for the household, a fact that burdens the family budget significantly and a phenomenon that is widespread in the Republic of Cyprus.

Certain large businesses acknowledge the objective problems of time and expenses faced by the couples that work in them and affect their productivity negatively and promote measures in order to deal with them.

Some include the establishment of day care centres at the work place, the elasticity in working hours to mothers that ask for it, the grant of summer leave during school holidays, the implementation of innovative projects for a better organisation of the working time so as to facilitate couples with their family obligations (European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2006). With these actions they contribute to the harmonisation of the couple's family and professional life and develop a functional relationship of trust and understanding with the corporate staff. It is certain that similar initiatives on the employers' part have a beneficial effect on the workers' performance and raise the business's production and work circle. Additionally, employing organisations in cooperation with the workers' organisations, engage in examining the implementation of new, pilot forms of labour organisation in large and medium businesses. Their principal aim is the reconciliation of family and professional life combined with a reinforcement of women's employment and adaptability, by facilitating their participation in life long learning programmes. To this end they consider practices of flexible use of the possibilities provided by the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the implementation of telework projects, the optional implementation of part-time employment etc. In order for these practices to be successful, they are designed according to the organisational needs of the business and the workers' family/personal needs.

In several west European countries the private and public businesses have started to implement pilot programmes that facilitate the reconciliation of the workers' family and professional life. This harmonisation is expected to be achieved through actions of continuing support to workers with family obligations, as well as with the redefinition of traditional models regarding sex roles. In Austria, for instance, there is a project called "Management of Equality-Quality", which is addressed to business administrations and employing organisations. The aim of the project is the promotion of sensitising companies and employing institutions in matters of equality and the development of measures and organisational structures for the harmonisation of family and professional life for men and women. On the other hand, several European countries place emphasis on the cooperation of the private and the public sector in dealing with the problems that threaten the smooth connection

between employees' family and professional life. Thus they examine the possibility that the State grant public and private businesses with economic incentives (e.g. tax reductions) in order to promote, through targeted actions, gender equality at the work place, women's equal participation in programmes of vocational training, but also the constitution of organisational structures to the same businesses that will facilitate working couples.

Several businesses have come to realise that quality human capital can be an asset in modern market economy. It can also function as an important profit multiplier for a business, when it fulfils the necessary conditions and has the knowledge and skills to provide high level services. It is obvious that workers that have a normal family life and balance between home and work without particular problems are more productive and increase the competitiveness of the business. For this reason, medium and large businesses are invited to design and implement actions that aim at exploiting resources in relation to the harmonisation of workers', men and women's family and professional life.

A central role in this effort is played by the employees' familiarisation with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), life long learning and ongoing vocational training of the resources of every business. The human capital and the investment in the development of personal skills, in knowledge, in skills as inextricable elements of labour are the driving force for the development and productivity of an enterprise. The introduction and optimisation of ICTs in businesses are expected to lead to a quality upgrade of human resources and to reinforce businesses' competitiveness and profits decisively (Eurobarometer Survey, 2005).

The familiarisation of both sexes' employees with the use of the Internet and the development of e-business systems facilitate business activities. It is also important that ICTs can help employees organise their working time to the benefit of their family/personal lives. The widespread use of the Internet, telework, the introduction of flexible work schedules that will facilitate couples working in businesses and distance work can be utilised in order a) to offer businesses quality labour product and b) to facilitate dual career couples in harmonising their private and professional lives.

Furthermore, in cooperation with universities or private educational institutions, businesses can implement injob training programmes for the continuing vocational training of their staff (European Council, 2003). The upgrading of human resources' skills and the investment in knowledge and skills reinforce the productivity of the businesses and shield it against competition. At the same time, there is an upgrade in the role of the employee, who obtains the ability to manage information and new technologies correctly in an ongoing learning process that is continuously renewed.

National and European programmes of social policy, which include measures for achieving equality, offer businessmen the ability to implement a *future management*, that is to be able to predict a desirable future for their business and at the same time to form the conditions that will allow this prediction to become true. Consequently, policies of harmonising workers' family and professional life do not constitute – or should not constitute – a solution for funding businesses by the European Commission, but aim at the development of social awareness and economy.

Regarding the Republic of Cyprus in particular, the increased number of women in the labour market in recent years constitutes an important development in the employment sector, since it resulted in raising their participation rates in the labour force at a local and European level. However, despite the progress that has been made, the labour market in Cyprus remains one of the harder fields of action for women, in comparison with men, as they are still burdened with the largest part of family responsibilities (e.g. children's upbringing and education, housework, care for any disabled family members or the elderly), whereas most businesses are still unwilling to consciously transcend the stereotypical conditions inside their environment – the so-called "sticky floor" or "glass ceiling" etc. (Dermanakis, 2004). However, in order to achieve the combination of family and professional life, but also economic growth and competitiveness, Cypriot businesses are invited to comply with the national and European policies of equality in employment – which in part aim, as mentioned before, at the combination of workers' family and professional life – to implement the relevant law

provisions and to successfully deal with workers' demands in the frame of collective bargaining for the National General Collective agreement or the sectoral collective agreements.

4.INDICATIVE POSITIVE MEASURES AND PRACTICES OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES CONCERNING THE COMBINATION OF FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

The term “positive practices” means *measures, actions and regulations aiming at the facilitation of the combination of family and professional life for men and women* (KETHI, 2006). They are achieved through statutory and general implementation initiatives, through initiatives of the businesses themselves, as well as a product of social consultation among the social partners at sectoral or national level. The good practices of the European Countries are divided in (a) Institutional Initiatives, (2) Business Initiatives and (3) Social Partners' Initiatives (Mouriki, 2006).

Institutional Initiatives ● Subsidized care of children of preschool age (e.g. economic benefits to parents taking care of their children themselves, personal coupon for the selection of the kind of childcare, child benefit) ● Parents with children under the age of 6 have the right to ask their employers to work under a flexible form of employment in Britain. ● Establishment of a universal child's benefit for three years for all parents regardless of their professional status in Austria. ● Parents of young children have the ability to get part-time employment fully protected from dismissal and the right to return to full-time employment in Austria. ● In the non-profit sector of the economy, establishment of the ability for employees to follow a flexible career, making use of long-term leaves, or combining part-time employment with part-time retirement in Belgium. ● Establishment of a 35-hour week, without salary reduction and restriction of overtime employment in France. ● State contribution to childcare expenses (covering from 1/3 to 2/3 of the total expense) through tax rebate and the employer's voluntary aid in Holland. ● Establishment of the long-term “leave for personal reasons” for employees who are willing to exchange the income from their work with a temporary interruption due to reasons of family care, education, personal development,

early retirement etc. in Holland. ● Creation of a fund financing measures in the Medium and Small Businesses for the promotion of the reconciliation of family and work, in order to encourage working parents to make use of parental leave and later help them return to their work in Italy. ● Creation of institutionally established “Time Offices” functioning under the auspices of municipal authorities in order to encourage and disseminate successful policies and practices of time management developed in other regions in Italy etc.

Business Initiatives ● Flexible planning of the labour process and subject, stress management, provision of economic and practical benefits concerning childcare and everyday household needs, staff development, women’s re-entrance to work after a long-term absence, sports activities etc. in Finland. ● Detection and implementation of employment models that promote gender equality and the reconciliation of family and work, offering women workers the ability to return to work when their children are 2 ½ years old, gives the right to full-time women employees to temporarily ask for part-time employment, imposes the prohibition of mothers’ employment at antisocial hours and days at callcenters, while it reorganizes the shift system so that employees can organise their personal life in a much better way in Italy. ● Provision of extra benefits to business employees who wish to quit their jobs in order to take care of their children while in the public sector employees who make use of their parental leaves receive 90% of their salary no matter how big it is in Sweden etc.

Social Partners’ Initiatives ● Personal working time “accounts” are implemented in a chain of businesses as a result of collective agreements in Denmark, Germany, Belgium, France, Sweden. ● A collective agreement in the technology sector signed in 2001 anticipates new regulations for the flexibility of working time in Austria. ● The Workers’ Confederation and the Employers’ Union signed a “Memorandum of Understanding” in 2003 in Italy. ● A campaign bearing pressure to the government for the establishment of incentives for businesses in order to create a friendlier environment for their employees and introduce regulations for the protection of flexible employment in Britain (KETHI, 2006).

On the other hand, collective bargaining is a very significant institution for the regulation of work relations in all the countries of the European Union. In some of the countries, such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden, very few issues can be regulated by law, since collective bargaining is the primary source of labour law. On the contrary, in countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal, legislation regulates all terms of employment and defines the rights that can be improved through collective bargaining (KETHI, 2001). In total, however, the European Committee recognises the part of the collective labour agreements for the promotion of both equal opportunities in employment (E.C., COM(2003), 98 final) and the reconciliation of family and professional life for all employees (European Foundation for the Improvement in Living and Working Conditions, 2006). The approach of Collective Negotiations requires attention, as the differentiations in the legal framework, the financial situation, the work relations and the social and family values of each country make their comparison extremely difficult. However, we can recognise a series of positive practices recently implemented through collective labour agreements in several E.U. countries, which could be a useful guide for future collective negotiations in Cyprus. Studying the analysis conducted by the European Foundation for the Improvement in Living and Working Conditions (2006) concerning family-friendly policies included in the latest collective labour agreements in the countries of the E.U. we can distinguish the following positive practices:

i. Belgium: The intersectoral collective agreement of 2001-2, in which the collective negotiations eventuated, provided employees with the right of 1 year-long time credit, the right to have a rest from work equal to 1/5 of the week for 5 years, the right to work 50% or 80% of the full-time shift for employees over 50 years old, the right to special leaves (parental or patient care), with a simultaneous increase of the paternal leave from 3 to 10 days. The most important of all is the new system of time credit, which allows flexible entrance and exit from work both for men and women, in order for them to achieve a reconciliation of professional career and family obligations. The same agreement reduced the maximum of working hours per week from 39 to 38 hours from 2003 without any salary reduction. At the same time,

more specific collective agreements, such as that of the mining sector, include even more favourable regulations.

ii. Denmark: Collective agreements have kept the reconciliation of professional and family life high on their priority list for many years. Thus, flexible types of employment are constantly promoted, such as telework, which becomes more and more attractive after the 2000 agreement. Moreover, in 2003 in the collective agreements of certain sectors (economy, production) employees are free to choose individually which part of their income they wish to use for a longer interruption from work, higher salary or pension. In this way they can choose more rest time instead of money. Finally, the flexibility of working time has been promoted by many collective agreements, since a 37-hour week can often be estimated in a much broader period of reference, allowing for working time differentiations from week to week.

iii. Finland: Since 2003 there has been a big effort to reconcile family and professional life through more flexible working hours. Thus, the implementation of a bank of work hours – wherever it is possible – is promoted through sectoral collective agreements.

iv. France: In France in 2004 a national intersectoral agreement was signed concerning gender equality and balanced gender participation in the labour resource and setting the framework for further commitments at sectoral and business level. So, the agreement indicatively (i.e. Renault) provides an increase of part-time employment to those who prefer it, paid maternity leave, reduction of working hours during pregnancy, a two-week extension of the maternity or adoption leave without salary retention, leave of absence for the completion of the adoption procedure, and increased adoption bonus of 1,500€ and extra leave for the care of sick children, while at the same time absences related to maternity, paternity and adoption are included in the real working hours for the calculation of day offs and bonuses.

v. Germany: A collective agreement signed in 2001 promotes equal opportunities in the private sector and the reconciliation of family and professional life for all business employees. Indicatively, women's access to managerial positions is reinforced through the admittance of a larger number

of women in relevant training programs and the possibility of part-time employment in those positions.

vi. Italy: In 2003 an innovative local collective agreement was signed in Milan, encouraging parents to use their parental leaves and ensuring retraining programs for them in order to facilitate their smooth reentrance after their leave. In addition, those programs were set to take place during the working hours and even by distance if possible.

Beyond institutional regulations, social partners' organisations have undertaken a series of common initiatives either at sectoral, national or super-national level, in order to facilitate directly or indirectly the reconciliation of family and work. The following are indicative examples:

- In Ireland social partners jointly agreed for a three-year-long "Prosperity and Justice Program" (2000-2003) which covers, among others, several issues concerning the reconciliation of family and work.
- In Britain a joint committee consisting of 22 members "Employers pro balancing work and life" was formed, in order to promote flexible forms of employment.
- Information campaigns take place in several E.U. countries in order to sensitise businesses and public in issues of reconciliation of family and work.
- Personal working time "accounts" are implemented in a number of businesses, as a result of collective agreements (Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Sweden).
- The Belgian National Collective Agreement 2001-2, introduces, among others, innovative measures such as the "Time Credit Program".
- Flexible working hours have been established through numerous sectoral or business agreements, while the same happened lately with telework (i.e. in Italian commerce, German and Italian telecommunications, Danish civil services etc.).

At an E.U. level the inter-occupational organisations of the social partners UNICE, CEEP and CES have so far entered the following framework-agreements (which led the E.U. to issue certain relevant directives and acquired legal status): for the health and safety of pregnant and breast-

feeding women (1992), for parental leaves (1995), for part-time employment (1997) and for fixed-term labour agreements (1999). At the same time, the sectoral social dialogue at E.U. level resulted in three agreements regarding the reduction of working time, in the agricultural sector (1997), the railway (1998) and sea transport (1998). Recently, an agreement for the implementation of telework on telecommunications and commerce has been achieved.

Concluding with the positive Reconciliation practices we should point out something: Investigating the legislation of the European countries it is evident that in the framework of the implementation of reconciliation of family and professional life policies, the member-states of the E.U. proceed to the adoption of laws concerning new forms of employment (flexible working hours, personal working time, annual working time management, reduced working time, telework) **8**, economic benefits, either direct in the form of salary increase, or indirect in the form of tax-reduction and, finally, the provision of extra leaves for the employees with families (“parental leaves” according to which the parents have to decide who will make use of the leave). In some countries (Norway, Sweden, Iceland) the measure starts to be implemented exclusively for men, especially on the basis “use it or lose it”.

Based on the European policy and legislation, the legal rules of the member-states keep expanding and improving in recent years. Here are some indicative legislative regulations applied in Italy, concerning the reconciliation of family and professional obligations: Law 53/2000 on “Provisions for the protection of maternity and paternity, for the right in care and training and for the co-ordination of the working hours in the cities” and the framework-agreement for the experimental implementation of telework in public administration. The regulations including the following issues are common ground for all the member-states:

- Maternity leave: concerns type of leave taken after childbirth, whose duration and compensation level differs from country to country.
- Parental leave: the occasion, duration and payment vary in this type of leave, as well as the policies of its adoption, since some countries have established certain extra incentives for its use by both parents.

- Adoption leave
- Emergency leave
- Educational leave
- Subsidized care of pre-school aged children: its implementation varies as well, from traditional to very innovative forms, such as economic benefits to parents taking care of their children themselves.

Apart from the common legislation found in all countries, some European countries have proceeded to more specific regulations, which could favour the objective of reconciliation of family and professional life. For instance:

- Favourable regulation of parental leaves. In Italy the father deserves extra leave time if he exclusively makes use of it, while in other countries there is the right to share the leave between the two parents
- Implementation of telework: in Italy and other countries as well, telework is experimentally implemented 2 to 3 times per week.
- Implementation of flexible forms of employment.
- Flexible working time arrangement: Since 2000 in Holland a law has been put into effect giving employees the right to increase or reduce their working hours according to their availability.
- Increase of the care provision structures through the creation of day nurseries in or near businesses.
- Provision of advice and support on issues concerning children's health and care or other personal problems of the employees.
- Leaves of absence beyond what has been provided.

At the same time, the following are positive practices at European level: ● the creation of an observatory in Italy for flexibility of labour, which observes the consequences of the flexibility measures from the gender perspective ● the provision of training opportunities for employees who made use of long-term leaves of absence in Spain, in order to facilitate their return to the labour market ● the organisation of training programs in Spain concerning equal opportunities and the sensitisation for those taking part in collective negotiations by the labour organisations of both employees and employers ● the “Time credit programme” in Belgium, established by the National Collective Agreement 2001-2002 ● the Equality Organisations in Denmark and Sweden, which deserve to defend in court the employees' right to

combine their family and professional life in case it has been violated ● law regulations for the prohibition of dismissal of female workers who exercise their right to interrupt work for breast-feeding in Spain and Portugal ● the legalisation of equality organisations for the initiation of the legal procedure on behalf of the gender based discrimination victims in Denmark and Sweden ● the expansion of free legal help before and during legal procedures to all citizens with low salaries and creation of free legal counselling services for everyone in Spain ● the legal protection of irregular forms of employment with the safeguarding of protection equivalent to that of the conventional ones etc. Finally, a number of businesses based in Europe, familiar with the European development policy and aiming at keeping their valuable high-rank employees who might quit their jobs because of family obligations, adopt family-friendly practices, such as the creation of day nurseries in their facilities, flexible forms of employment, flexible working hours, extra leaves of absence, etc. (KETHI, 2001 & 2006).

5. PROPOSED MEASURES

Cyprus has already conformed its family law with the European data since 1995 (L. 19(1)1995), especially as far as children protection is concerned, although it was not a member of the European Union then. In 2003 law L.104(1)2003 modernized the institution of marriage by the establishment of the civil wedding among Greek-Cypriot citizens as well as among Greek-Cypriot citizens and others. A very significant aspect of this law is the fact that civil weddings between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot citizens are allowed for the first time (Gassouka & Tsoukala, 2007). During the procedure of adjustment to the European acquis, Cyprus also proceeded to the adjustment of legislation relevant to maternity, which concerns laws related to parenthood and parental leaves, maternity protection (maternity leave, prohibition of dismissal of pregnant women, facilitation of breast-feeding), protection and care of childhood, creation of a family court etc. Of special interest is the institution of family mediation that concerns every family affair including parental care, children's maintenance and property relations between husband and wife etc. that complies with Recommendation R98 of the Council of the Ministers to the member-states. In Cyprus the actions

concerning issues such as protection of motherhood, family and childhood protection, combating domestic violence etc., the treatment of which is a precondition of the reconciliation of family and professional life, are still under the jurisdiction of the National Mechanism for Women's Rights and several other equality institutions, NGOs etc.

From the overall effort – but for some occasional exceptions thanks to the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation – the employers and especially the Cypriot businesses were missing, which do not yet systematically include gender dimension in their corporate environment and their business options, although most of them have a very powerful social profile. At the same time a powerful non-conformity is quite evident between the institutional framework **9** and the social practice, as the patriarchal traditional perceptions on the social roles of gender demonstrate significant historical endurance and unwillingness to differentiate, despite the formal public rhetoric which is relevant to gender equality and equal opportunities. However, nowadays the recognition of the significance that the promotion of gender equality with emphasis on the reconciliation of the employees' – and especially the women's – family and professional life has for the economic growth and the social cohesion of the Cypriot society is common ground. One must not however forget that in the framework of interprofessional dialogue the European social partners are committed during the Spring Summit in March 2005 to a "Framework of Actions for the promotion of gender equality" with an implementation and consequences calculation deadline in 2008 (KETHI, 2007) and Cyprus, although recently a full E.U. member, will have to present its relevant national experience soon, in order to contribute to the design and dissemination of "proper practices and actions at national, sectoral, local and business level" (KETHI, 2007). At the same time, although the biggest part of the responsibility belongs to the State, the fact that the issue of gender equality more generally and reconciliation more specifically directly concerns both the employers and civil society, men and women, something that calls for direct changes in the collective social consciousness and the set of attitudes and beliefs related to gender, is common ground. This particular study, drawing from both the Cypriot reality and the now rich European experience and the multitude of positive practices that emerge from

it, results in a package of proposals that can be utilized by the State and the Cypriot social-economic institutions, which, although indicative, it is possible to direct future institutional actions. More specifically:

I. To the State:

- Immediate integration of the gender dimension in the educational procedure of the pre-school, primary, secondary and vocational (initial and continuing) education with a relevant adjustment of the curriculum, the school textbooks and simultaneous training/sensitisation of the teachers on issues of gender equality and equal opportunities.
- Immediate integration of Gender Studies in all Universities and all their Departments.
- Training/sensitisation of the Ministry officials – and especially of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Employment – for the integration of gender dimension in all policies and the possibility to evaluate consequences. More specifically, preparation of the Ministry of Economics officials in order to become capable of Gender Budgeting.
- Financing of research and studies by Universities and other institutions for the registration of gender inequalities in the Cypriot labour market, their causes and their qualities as well as specialized proposals for their elimination.
- Legal clarification of an expanded definition of modern “family”, without prejudice and exclusions, which will include the equity of its members and will contribute to the reconciliation/co-ordination of their family and professional life (Pilavaki, 2007)
- Adoption of direct measures of protection and support of “sensitive” families (single-parent families, families with dependent members, large families etc.)
- Legislative protection of extended, fully paid paternity leave (Pilavaki, 2007)
- Reform of the inflexible rules of working time regulation.
- Synchronisation of societal hours (city hours) and working hours **10**.
- Regulation of insurance and pension rights and encouragement of men to make use of parental leave.
- Establishment of new childcare structures and improvement of the quality and accessibility of the already existing ones, with free provision of care, or –

in the worst case – with services at so low prices in order to be affordable to the economically weak groups of the population **11**.

- Establishment of permanent or occasional dependent persons care provision structures, in combination to various caretakers' reinforcement measures.

- Financing from national and E.U. resources of businesses of every size in Cyprus for the development of actions such as the establishment of day-care nurseries in their facilities, training of female employees in new professional subjects or the sensitisation of men in regard to reconciliation, the emergence of the paternal role, etc.

- Regulation of organisations', services', public and private businesses' professional working hours and legislative regulation of the correspondence of the working hours of the public and private services (i.e. a civil service employing parents and a private day-care nursery) **12**.

- Provision of economic or tax incentives to public or private businesses and institutions in order to promote gender equality and reconciliation of family and professional life for their employees through defined actions (“balanced employment of men and women in empty or new positions, women’s promotion to managerial positions, adoption of innovative programs of working hours management, so that men and women could be facilitated in their family obligations etc. after the certification of implementation of relevant plans” (KETHI, 2007).

- Adoption of incentives similar to the above that will contribute to changing gender-related stereotypes, highlight the new domestic and public roles of the sexes, emphasise on the importance of a new fatherhood for children and family and promote through their programmes and commercials the connection of economy, social inclusion and democracy with equality and the reconciliation of family and professional life.

- Establishment of annual awards to businesses, organisations and the Media.

- Development of employment policies aiming at informing the social partners and the businesses about the cost and the benefits resulting from Reconciliation processes that integrate the gender dimension.

- Development of a recurrent campaign of sensitisation and informing the public opinion about the content and the philosophy of the importance of gender equality and equal opportunities, with an emphasis on the big social

demand for Reconciliation. These campaigns should raise the fundamental issue of the redistribution of the social roles of the sexes inside the family, the redistribution of family time in favour of women as well and the replacement of biological with social motherhood (Gasouka, 2008).

- Establishment of Structures for counseling women on employment, entrepreneurship and networking, some of which being mobile.
- Establishment of an Observatory for the Reconciliation of Family and professional Life, that is a documentation centre, aiming at *the collection, processing and utilisation of qualitative and quantitative data related to that significant social demand in Cyprus, with a simultaneous dissemination of relevant information and positive practices and examples as well as the creation (design-realisation) and submission or similar research, studies and proposals to the State or anyone interested, with simultaneous development of networks of business relations to social-economic institutions and public services both at national and international level* (Gassouka, 2008)

From all the above-mentioned, the fundamental role of the State to the accomplishment of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities and especially Reconciliation is evident. For this study this role is the most important, while the roles of the social institutions and the civil society are exceptionally important but always complementary and auxiliary. And as the State shoulders this big social, economic and political responsibility, it also has to provide the necessary financial resources for its realisation. Without realising the significance that gender dimension of economical state budgets has nowadays – something that has been recently put forward by the E.U. bodies – it would be an illusion to expect radical changes both in the field of labour and family, and society in general.

II. To the businesses

- Design of business strategies of Reconciliation of professional and family life of the employees and especially of the women with gender dimension (Reconciliation plans).
- Improvement and enrichment of family friendly policies, where they already exist.

- Encouragement and promotion of radical changes in labour organisation and business mentality.
- Implementation of measures for the improvement of the possibility of employing persons with family obligations and for the quality of balance between work and family obligations.
- Incorporation of the reconciliation of family and labour dimension in the collective negotiations' agenda.
- Establishment of childcare structures in the facilities of medium and large businesses or financing the parents for this reason.
- Establishment of a new type of work position and a new professional profile, that of the Equality Advisor with the responsibility of designing and realising actions concerning Equal Opportunities and Reconciliation.
- Organisation of seminars and conferences concerning the information/sensitisation of officials and employees on the significance of the Reconciliation of family and professional life of the employees and especially of the women and the utilisation of their lost skills, talents, expectations and wishes.
- Development of corporativeness and networking actions with social-economic institutions among which are trade unions and Equality institutions.

Along with the businesses in the specific sector it is necessary for the employing organisations to take certain actions, such as:

- Conduct of research on gender discriminations in the labour market and studies on the contribution of the businesses to their elimination.
- Initiatives of relevant information/sensitisation of their members on the institutional framework, the incentives and the positive European practices.
- Actions of enforcement of women's entrepreneurship and their promotion to managerial positions.
- Design of models of new types of work organisation, which take family needs into account.

III. To trade unions

The role of trade unions to the achievement of eliminating gender discrimination and the realisation of gender equality is of utmost importance. We should never forget that it often acts as the voice of female (and male) employees in expressing and asserting their occupational demands. As mentioned, (KETHI, 2007) "trade unions must actively participate in the promotion of regulations for the harmonisation of family and professional life, promote systematic measures of preventing gender or social discrimination or loss of protection, pointing out workers' relevant needs at the same time. Trade unions should intensify their efforts in promoting measures of education and training that will help working parents respond more effectively to the balancing of family and professional life". However, the following should be added to these:

- information/sensitisation of their members regarding the demand of gender equality in all areas of the social, economic and political life.
- Design of policies in order to highlight female executives in their frame and election of a significant number of women in their bodies.
- Adaptation of their modus operandi and their discourses to women's needs and life style, in order to render trade unions more appealing to women.
- Ensuring women's participation at all levels of collective negotiations.
- Firmness in defending full-time employment, as a dominant employment model for men and women (KETHI, 2007).
- Establishment of as many as possible childcare structures, so that parents and especially mothers can exercise their trade union activities without obstacles.
- Integration of the gender dimension in all training activities of the trade unions and their scientific-training structures.
- Integration of the gender dimension in collective labour agreements and all the agreements included in the Collective Labour Agreements at all levels.

IV. To the Civil Society

It is obvious that the Civil Society and its institutions – above all women's organisations and equality institutions – act as pressure groups, but also contribute to the State towards achieving Equality and especially the Reconciliation. It is necessary that they actively participate in the design and

development of all processes and regulations, especially those that reinforce the family and professional balance, but also women's human/social rights that are questioned even today under the pressure of the patriarchal commands. They should aim for dialogue, the exchange of positive and negative experiences, the dissemination of information, and if this is not possible, fight for it. They should promote networking with each other, and endorse the development of forms of corporativeness and networking with employing, scientific, academic and other institutions, but also with institutions of the broader public sector, aiming at establishing measures and policies that promote gender equality and equal opportunities and especially the balancing of professional and family life of working people and – the emphasis is not accidental – especially women, that are still burdened by the multiple roles of the private sphere of life and their occupation.

AFTERWORD

Based on the above, the emphasis placed by the European Union on the adoption of measures and practices that enhance the combination of private and professional life becomes understandable **13**. Of great importance is also the provision of maternity leaves (paid, if possible), as well as other parental leaves and also with the adoption of incentives for men, so that they are motivated to receive them (Warin, Solomon, Lewis & Langford, 1999). In this way women will not be forced to stop working for good, during or after the postpartum period and it will be possible for men to assume their share of responsibilities, thus preventing the loss of valuable female labour force. Towards this there is a decisive contribution from the creation of an advanced system of care structures for the children and the elderly, so that women (who are usually burdened with their care) may continue to work without distractions if they wish so.

However, the efforts that are made at a European and national level (European Union, member state governments, businesses, trade unions, employees) for the reconciliation of family and professional life, the development of human resources and the achievement of business profit, are

likely to fail if they are not combined with the development of social awareness through social policy and change in mentality. At the same time, the defence and expansion of full-time employment has to be the aim of the reforms for the reconciliation of family and professional life, although it is often omitted from the relevant studies, as it offers stability, permanence, equal participation of the sexes, therefore occupational entrenchment and assertable rights. The implementation of "flexible" forms of employment, which have caused much discussion and are often advertised as the only solution to unemployment, cannot be done without cost for the worker. Research reveals that often employees accept to increase their working hours in order to secure employment. In Finland, for instance, employees tend to work more than average hours especially when their children are young (even though they have the ability to work with more favourable hours). In Italy, a form of employment that is being promoted is the "on-call job", in which workers are hired on an open contract and few work rights and are called to work in hard conditions completely dependent on their employers. Consequently, in any similar proposal a lot of attention is required, as in the frame of implementation the safeguarding of employees rights should be taken into consideration.

On the other hand, the reconciliation of family and professional life should be related to combating unemployment, to the elimination of occupational segregation and obstacles in evolution and to the incorporation of the gender aspect in all policies, practices and measures for supporting employment. In order to achieve this goal, what is needed is constant effort and encouragement towards the State, but also to the socio-economic organisations that are involved in this matter one way or the other. Of vital importance, according to the present study, are the possibilities provided by the collective negotiations and by extension the collective labour agreements in promoting equal opportunities and the reconciliation of family and professional life. Especially in cases where there is a legislative gap or the law provisions are inadequate, the collective agreements are called to protect employees and to promote their interests at the work place. This estimation, however, does not hold back the unpleasant finding that the negotiations themselves are likely to perpetuate unequal distribution of power between the

sexes by the absence of women in them – unfortunately a phenomenon across Europe – with a further consequence, the absence of gender aspect from the collective agreements **14**.

In the European Parliament important proposals are submitted regarding the improvement of balancing family and professional life. Europe should tackle a three-fold challenge: shrinking active population, low birth rates and increasing elderly population. At the same time, the increasing world economic competition demands a more flexible and mobile labour force. According to the above, consequences are more perceptible on women, who are obliged to choose between career and children, because there is a lack of flexible work arrangements and care services or because gender stereotypes are persistent and the distribution of family obligations with men is unequal. The progress that has been made with women's participation in basic sectors of the economy and society, such as research and education, is not fully reflected in women's position in the labour market. It is a loss of human resources that the European Union in general and Cyprus in particular do not have the luxury to miss.

NOTES

1. The Treaty article 141, paragraph 3, empowers the Community to adopt measures in order to ensure the application of equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, whereas Treaty article 141, paragraph 4 aims at defining terms, reinforce protection of individuals lodging complaints, clarify the scope of exemption from certain principles, boost positive action measures to promote equality and safeguard special protection for women on grounds of pregnancy and maternity (Economic and Social Committee, 25 January 2001).
2. Several interesting proposals are submitted regarding the improvement of balancing family and professional life. Commissioner Amalia Sartori, for instance, in the Draft Report she submitted regarding the Roadmap for equality between men and women (2006-2010) in the frame of revision of policies of combining family and professional life proposes to the

committee to "ensure that the cost of motherhood is borne not by business, but by society as a whole" (so as to eradicate discriminatory behaviour at work and help boost the birth rate), to "make care services and assistance to those who cannot look after themselves (children, people with disabilities, and the elderly) more accessible and flexible by laying down a minimum target for facilities remaining open at night so as to meet the needs arising from work and personal relationships" and "to lay down an initial form of compulsory paternity leave, amounting to 30 days". "The rapporteur suggests that each Member State appoint a national official to deal with equal opportunities issues, a '*Ms Lisbon*', who, as the strategy is implemented and reviewed, should seek to bring about genuine gender mainstreaming in the implementing policies and keep political attention focused at all times on the matter of gender equality".

3. Of course we are talking about women who finally manage to find employment, because we should not forget that the large majority of the unemployed and long-term unemployed people in Europe are women. Thus the question of studying the living conditions of these women remains, as well as their ability to access the systems of social security.
4. National policies should focus more on the establishment of a supporting institutional framework that would help lighten the negative consequences that implementation of flexible labour forms and to ensure a greater control on time management to individuals working under these conditions (Mouriki, 2004).
5. The adoption of the principle of gender mainstreaming is an important step of progress, possibly the greatest regarding the E.U. policy of equality, after the first registration of the right for equal pay in the Treaty of Rome. "Mainstreaming" means that *the promotion of gender equality is clearly incorporated in all policies and programmes and at all levels.*
6. On this basis we distinguish four kinds of fatherhood: a) the biological fatherhood, which refers to a child's biological descent from a man, b) the legally recognised fatherhood, which defines fathers' rights and obligations based on the legislation and court decisions, c) the social fatherhood that

recognises the role of the father to someone who shares their lives with a child whether or not they are their biological fathers and d) the psychological fatherhood that refers to the close relationship a man develops with a child whether they live together or not.

7. The international bibliography points out the fact that both the concept of fatherhood and the ways that men behave as fathers has changed dramatically. The spearhead of these changes is what we traditionally refer to as "paternal responsibility". This responsibility now transcends the economic sphere, that is a man-father's obligation to satisfy the survival needs of the mother and children. In contemporary circumstances the role of the father becomes more "rounded", more "full", demanding the emotional support and coverage of the children and the mother apart from the economic responsibility.
8. A typology of the most common flexible forms of employment applied in E.U. countries:

- flexible working hours*
- personalized working time or personal time accounts*
- yearly organisation of working time*
- reduced hours schedule*
- compressed working week*
- telework: place-specific flexible work: employment outside the business location*
- partial retirement*
- place-specific flexible employment*

9. Legislative equality does not in any case anticipate of safeguard the equal access and evolution of the two sexes in the labour market. Besides, reforms of this kind and wider social changes are very hard to realise in such a short period of time (Athanasiadou, Petropoulou & Mimikou, 2001).
10. Working time and its organisation are one of the most important problems that must be dealt with, for the combination of family and professional life. At a Community level there is Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997, *concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC and Council Directive 93/104/EC of 23*

November 1993, concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, amended by Directive 2000/34/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 June 2000, concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time to cover sectors and activities excluded from that Directive. The first of these Directives invites member states to adopt the necessary measures so that, in compliance with the general principles relating to the protection of the safety and health of workers, the weekly working hours are limited and the average working time for each seven-day period, including overtime, does not exceed 48 hours (www.kethi.gr).

11. In order to achieve the combination of family and professional life there have to be certain legal rules, as well as public structures of care that the State and regional and local governments must offer to the citizens for the coverage of the needs of dependent individuals. At a community level there is a special legal document, the Recommendation of the Council of 31 March 1992 *regarding childcare*. In this way initiatives are taken aiming at encouraging the flexibility and diversity of childcare services. Moreover, it encourages the possibility of access to child care services enabling parents who are working, following a course of education or training in order to obtain employment or are seeking employment or a course of education or training in order to obtain employment to have as much access as possible to local child-care services. The services are offered at prices affordable to parents; the needs of parents and children are taken into account when access to services is determined; the services are available in all areas and regions of Member States, both in urban areas and in rural areas; the services are accessible to children with special needs, and to children in single-parent families, and meet the needs of such children.

12. The problem of coincidence of the working hours of the public and private services is mainly a result of women's increased participation in the labour market. In general, the working hours of the services (such as banks, shops, administrative authorities, the health system and schools) coincide with the working hours, resulting in hindering the combination of family and

professional life. Public services have even less flexible hours, while the opening hours of the shops have become more flexible under consumer pressure.

The same applies for school hours. Schools usually are open less hours than businesses and this creates a gap between the parents' work obligations and the care of their children. Only in the Scandinavian countries, where there are many childcare structures, organized and funded by the local authorities, this gap is bridged by full day care services and centres for creative occupation of children.

13. Another reason for reconciling family and professional life is that nowadays most young people work long hours resulting in delaying the creation of a new family. Furthermore, there is a large percentage of young people who, due to unemployment or low wages, do not have the necessary resources to start a family and have children. This in turn results in low birth rates.

14. The new institutional framework for the collective labour agreements provides more freedom for bargaining than in the past and offers the ability to escape the passive solution of the provision of leaves towards more active practices. The history of the collective labour agreements has demonstrated that there is a dynamic of improving decisions towards equal opportunities and the reconciliation of family and professional life. The encouragement and reinforcement of female presence in collective bargaining will have a significant contribution towards equality and social justice.

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Διαδικτυακοί Τόποι

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APPENDIX

Terms analysis

The diversity and complexity of the actions, programmes, etc. realised in recent decades within the frame of the European Union, as well as the development and establishment of Women's Studies/Gender Studies have imposed the formation of a common "discourse", which to a large extent requires new terminology. This terminology contributes to an understanding of the terms and issues at a European level, despite the existing, significant difficulties resulting from rendering this "discourse" – which is based on English – into the other European dialects. However, it is a tool in the service of the effort made by the Community to transmit in a comprehensible way the information regarding European policies to all citizens, men and women. For this reason already since 1998 the Official Publications of the European Communities went ahead with a very important publication: "100 words for Equality – A Glossary of terms on Equality between women and men", according to which the glossary "is addressed to policy makers, to Members of Parliament, both at national and European level, to those working in the field, to those simply interested, to all women and men". The following term analysis is based on the aforementioned publication:

Balanced participation of women and men

The sharing of power and decision-making positions (40-60% representation of either sex) between men and women in every sphere of life, which constitutes an important condition for equality between men and women (Council Recommendation 96/694/EC of 02/12/96, OJ L 319).

Democratic deficit

The impact of (e.g.) inadequate gender balance on the legitimacy of democracy.

Desegregation in the labour market

Policies aiming to reduce or eliminate segregation (vertical/horizontal) in the labour market.

Dignity at work

The right to respect and in particular freedom from sexual and other forms of harassment in the workplace (Council Resolution 90/C 157/02 of 29/05/90, OJ C 157).

Domestic violence/family violence

Any form of physical, sexual or psychological violence which puts the safety or welfare of a family member at risk and/or the use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence, within the family or household. Includes child abuse, incest, wife battering and sexual or other abuse of any member of the household.

Empowerment

The process of gaining access and developing one's capacities with a view to participating actively in shaping one's own life and that of one's community in economic, social and political terms.

Equal opportunities for men and women

The absence of barriers to economic, political and social participation on the grounds of sex.

Equal pay for work of equal value

Equal pay for work to which equal value is attributed without discrimination on grounds of sex or marital status with regard to all aspects of pay and conditions of remuneration (Art. 141 (ex 119) of the Treaty).

Equality between women and men

The principle of equal rights and equal treatment of women and men (see also Gender equality).

Equality dimension

The aspect of any issue which relates to equality.

Gender

A concept that refers to the social differences between women and men that have been learned, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures.

Gender audit

The analysis and evaluation of policies, programmes and institutions in terms of how they apply gender-related criteria.

Gender based violence

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Any form of violence by the use or threat of physical or emotional force, including rape, wife battering, sexual harassment, incest and pedophilia.

Gender contract

A set of implicit and explicit rules governing gender relations which allocate different work and value, responsibilities and obligations to men and women and is maintained on three levels - cultural superstructure – the norms and values of society; institutions - family welfare, education and employment systems, etc.; and socialisation processes, notably in the family.

Gender dimension

The aspect of any issue which relates to gender/the differences in the lives of women and men.

Gender disaggregated data

The collection and separation of data and statistical information by gender to enable comparative analysis/gender analysis.

Gender equality

The concept meaning that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

Gender equity

Fairness of treatment by gender, which may be equal treatment or treatment which is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

Gender gap

The gap in any area between women and men in terms of their levels of participation, access, rights, remuneration or benefits.

Gender impact assessment

The assessing of policy proposals on any differential impact on women and men, with a view to adapting these proposals to make sure that discriminatory effects are neutralised and that gender equality is promoted.

Gender pay differential

The gap between the average earnings of men and women arising from job segregation and direct discrimination.

Gender perspective

The project is co-financed by 50% by the European Social Fund and by 50% by the Republic of Cyprus 61

The consideration and attention to the differences in any given policy area/activity.

Gender planning

An active approach to planning which takes gender as a key variable or criteria and which seeks to integrate an explicit gender dimension into policy or action.

Gender proofing

A check carried out on any policy proposal to ensure that any potential gender discriminatory effects arising from that policy have been avoided and that gender equality is promoted.

Gender relations

The relation and unequal power distribution between women and men which characterise any specific gender system (see Gender contract).

Gender roles

A set of prescriptions for action and behaviour allocated to women and men respectively, and inculcated and maintained as described under 'Gender Contract'.

Glass ceiling

The invisible barrier arising from a complex set of structures in male dominated organisations which prevents women from accessing senior positions.

Invisible barriers

Attitudes and their traditional assumptions, norms and values which prevent (women's) empowerment / full participation in society.

Occupational segregation

The concentration of women and men in different types and levels of activity and employment, with women being confined to a narrower range of occupations (horizontal segregation) than men, and to the lower grades of work (vertical segregation).

Parity democracy

The concept of society as equally composed of women and men and that their full and equal enjoyment of citizenship is contingent upon their equal representation in political decision making positions, and that the close or

equivalent participation of women and men, within a 40/60 range of representation, in the full democratic process is a principle of democracy.

Positive action

Measures targeted at a particular group and intended to eliminate and prevent discrimination or to offset disadvantages arising from existing attitudes, behaviours and structures (sometimes referred to as positive discrimination).

Quota

A defined proportion or share of places, seats or resources to be filled by or allocated to a specific group, generally under certain rules or criteria, and aimed at correcting a previous imbalance, usually in decision making positions or in access to training opportunities or jobs.

Reconciliation of work and family/household life

The introduction of family and parental leave schemes, child and elderly care arrangements, and the development of a working environment structure and organisation which facilitates the combination of work and family /household responsibilities for women and men.

Sex

The biological characteristics which distinguish human beings as female or male.

Sex disaggregated statistics

The collection and separation of data and statistical information by sex to enable comparative analysis, sometime referred to as gender disaggregated statistics.

Sex discrimination – indirect

Where a person is treated less favourably because of his or her sex.

Sex/gender system

A system of economic, social and political structures which sustain and reproduce distinctive gender roles and attributes of men and women (see Gender contract).

Sex trade

The trade in human beings, largely in women and children, for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Sexual harassment

Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work including conduct of superiors and colleagues (Council Resolution 90/C 157/02 of 29/05/90, OJ C 157).

Trafficking/trading in human beings/in women and children

The trade in people, primarily in women and children, for the purposes of modern slavery or cheap labour or for sexual exploitation (see Sex trade).

Vertical segregation

The concentration of women and men in different grades, levels of responsibility or positions (see Job segregation).

Women's studies/gender studies

An academic, usually interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of women's situation and gender relations as well as the gender dimension of all other disciplines.