

EQUAL AT HOME – EQUAL AT WORK

Practical guide for working
parents and employers



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INTRODUCTION



August 2022 will see the implementation of the EU work-life balance directive in Poland, which will make fathers eligible to a four-month parental leave, of which two months will be reserved solely for them (a father will not be able to transfer his leave to the mother).

Providing fathers with the right to a parental leave means that

- the potential of women and their need for professional development are recognised
- childcare is not something which is considered to be solely a mother's role
- women are more able to combine their professional and home duties
- fathers are considered equal child carers and their right and need to become involved with the child's upbringing are recognised
- fathers are recognised as competent parents who are able to look after a child on their own when mum goes back to work.

Some commentators, experts and politicians have already called this a social revolution which responds to the needs of many contemporary parents and families. 58 percent of Poles choose a family model based on partnership in which both parents work and share childcare and household

duties (source: CBOS, December 2020). Poles continually point out that a happy family is a fundamental value and goal in life (89 percent, CBOS, 2019), with work-life balance gaining in popularity particularly during the pandemic.

For the revolution to come true, there is a need for regulations and government involvement, as well as the encouragement and support of EMPLOYERS.

We invite employers to participate in joint activities promoting sharing parental leave by women and men as a tool building equality and diversity within organisations.



PARENTAL AND JOB MARKET EQUALITY - TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Karolina Andrian
President of Share the Care Foundation

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The pandemic has significantly altered the job market. It made employees re-evaluate their life priorities and goals and necessitated a new type of relationship between employers and employees. As Albert Einstein put it, “insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

NEW SOLUTIONS ADDRESSING THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM

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The topic of job market equality has been around for some years now. It is directly linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (goal 5 - gender equality) and ESG criteria, where the ‘social’ area is associated with the impact of a company on its employees. Hence diversity and inclusion policies becoming widespread, particularly in the business services sector. Employers can see the potential of women and want to support their professional development. However, when looking for solutions, it is worth going back to one of the main sources of inequality – parental care.

It is one of the most important causes of inequality between the sexes. At the beginning of the 21st century researchers around the world still note the

existence of the so-called motherhood penalty - working mothers tend to have lower earnings than fathers. Differences in the treatment of employees according to their gender can also be seen in varying pension amounts, different social insurance law and possibilities of participating in public life as well as unequal opportunities for personal development.

TIME TO REACH OUT FOR NEW SOLUTIONS

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One response to this problem is a large-scale national policy covering regulations of paid parental leave for fathers, among other things. The EU Work-Life Balance Directive, which entitles fathers to four months of parental leave (irrespective of mothers), two months of which will be non-transferrable, i.e. reserved for fathers only, will have been implemented in Poland by August 2022.

However, the change in the law alone will not change much. **In order for parents to use the new solutions it is important to promote equality. As far as this is concerned, the private sector is as important as the state. We believe that**

employers have a key role to play in this respect.

Why? Because the main barriers to fathers taking parental leave are associated with the workplace and with earnings (it is important to remember that according to the current law in Poland taking parental leave by fathers is possible). According to the study “Opinions of Poles on parental leave” carried out on a representative sample between 18 and 45 by research agency IQS, men do not take parental leave because they are afraid of losing their position at work or losing their jobs. These conclusions were confirmed by syndicated research carried out by Share the Care Foundation at the end of 2021 among employees of big corporations. It revealed that a key barrier to sharing leave by parents is fear associated with job security and earnings. Interestingly, more often than women, men tended to quote the loss of a safe position at work (demotion, the limiting of duties, being excluded from promotion and pay rises) as an undesirable consequence of taking parental leave. And since it is usually their earnings which are crucial to the family income, few people decide to take that ‘risk’. Men earn more, so it is women who use parental leave (sometimes for years). And why do women earn less? Because their duties associated with having children reduce the dynamic of their

earnings. Thus the vicious circle is formed.

When analysing inequalities on the job market, it is important to understand where they came from. Until recently it was possible to explain them through social and cultural norms but the approach to social roles is changing significantly. According to research by CBOS from December 2020, as many as 58 percent of Poles prefer a partnership-based family model, in which both parents work and share parental and family duties.

Women wish to develop professionally and believe that work does not stand in opposition to motherhood. Men wish to become involved in the lives of their children from birth, because they want to have influence on their upbringing and the way they see the world. Not to mention how much the concept of work-life balance gained in popularity during the pandemic.

Motivating women to return to work after childbirth and strengthening their self-confidence are both very important, but when a woman becomes a mum and the difficulties associated with parental duties become mainly her burden, then irrespective of motivation and energy levels working two jobs becomes exhausting in the longer run. It is

preferable if these duties and responsibilities can be shared by both parents.

What does it all mean? The implementation of the work-life balance directive must be accompanied by involving employers in creating organisational culture supporting parental equality.

The new law will be aimed at parents preferring a partnership-based family model - mostly educated, from big cities, aged 25-36. Your employees are bound to be among them.

The work-life balance directive is an opportunity to show what diversity and inclusion policies are all about in practice. The engagement threshold is low because informing people about new benefits for fathers is alone a big and important step forward. According to the majority of employees who took part in the Share the Care Foundation's syndicated research, the role of employers should not go beyond conscientious communication about the possibility of taking leave and explaining formalities.

Of course, employers have an opportunity to become involved in building organisational culture supporting parental equality to a much

greater extent and examples of such activities are presented later on in this guide, but the most important issue is about appropriate communication - informing and building the atmosphere of acceptance.

Research by a UK think tank Behavioural Insights Team has shown that in an organisation in which men were convinced that their colleagues supported the decision to use parental leave, the percentage of men taking parental leave increased by 50 percent.

Building parental equality is a relatively small effort for an organisation, which can contribute to a huge change in providing equal opportunities for women and men in the job market.

We encourage you to get involved!

A WIN-WIN SITUATION

Wioletta Bobryk
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An ideal business situation is one where both sides win. This is an opportunity which is provided by the work-life balance directive, which will be implemented in Poland by August 2022. It will allow us to create a brand new approach in the job market which will serve employees - both women and men - and employers.

The EU regulation is consistent with what we as a sector identify with - equality, diversity, inclusivity, but it also provides us with real tools, which can help build these strategic areas in our organisations.

The overarching goal of the EU directive is facilitating a quicker return to work for women who had a baby by introducing flexible forms of working and promoting greater activity by men in benefiting from their parental entitlements. This creates opportunities not only for parents but also for employers. It allows attraction of more diverse talent and minimises the effects of an increasingly noticeable population decline. In the longer run, it will contribute to closing the pay gap between men and women and create equal opportunities in the job market, because as we all know, these inequalities result from the asymmetrical burden of caregiving roles for men and women.

Why is it particularly relevant for our sector? Because the potential of women in our organisations is very important and the share of women in total employment is significantly higher than in other areas of the Polish economy. According to our research “The sector of modern business services in Poland in 2021”, the share of women in total employment comes to 51.6 percent. As far as first-line management staff is concerned (team leader level), the percentage comes to 45.8 percent, while in senior management the figure amounts to 37.6 percent.

It is important that our organisations create development opportunities for all employees, irrespective of gender, and women want to use these opportunities. However, our cultural cliches and gender role expectations often cut their wings.

As employers we have a huge role to play in breaking down gender stereotypes - we can show that motherhood and professional development do not stand in opposition and that dads can be as good carers for their children as mothers.

Apart from communication, it is important to offer concrete tools supporting young mums and dads in reconciling these two areas of life. And indeed -

involving fathers in sharing parental duties seems to be a solution which would help kill two birds with one stone. This solution supports women returning to work after having a baby and gives men a chance to play a more significant role in their children’s lives.

From the point of view of employee welfare, it is worth noting that companies from our sector constantly try to adjust the basket of benefits to the needs of employees and the pandemic has significantly changed these benefits. Paid parental leave has been appearing in global rankings of most desired benefits for a few years now. Its importance is being underlined by LinkedIn, among others. It points out that work-life balance can take many forms and parental leave is closely related to it. It is also one of the most sought after social benefits.

The effectiveness of this policy can be evidenced by looking at Scandinavian countries, which offer the most generous programmes of parental leave in the world. Although particular systems differ from country to country, their common feature is the focus on both parents sharing the leave. Shared parental leave has many advantages, as it improves gender equality by reducing the impact on the mother’s career and making it possible for the

father to play a more visible role in the early stage of his child’s development.

Sweden, Iceland and Norway have the so-called ‘father’s quota’ which is part of parental leave reserved exclusively for fathers. This period is awarded on the ‘use it or lose it’ basis. The same principle will be applied by the work-life balance directive, which will come into force in Poland from August 2022.

In today’s war for talent, employee benefits, including parental leave play a significant role in employee retention. It’s high time companies around the world revised their benefit offer and ensure that they support the work-life balance of their employees.



FAMILY OF THE FUTURE

Kacper Nosarzewski
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By 2050, a lot may change in Polish social life. Life strategies and family aspirations will probably be no exception. The phenomena and attitudes which we consider to be in the minority or as isolated incidents may become part of widely accepted social norms. Analysing future family models using foresight methods, the 4CF team takes into consideration many varied patterns.

Some of them, e.g. patchwork families which bring up and socialise children from previous relationships, are currently common. Others, such as intentional communities, including cohousing communities bringing up children together - although announced for a long time - have not become popular and it is not certain whether they will ever become so. A 'quadriga' of two homosexual couples (lesbian and gay) jointly carrying out the procreational function and bringing up children together is currently a niche model for most Poles, but it does exist. And although various future scenarios include the participation of virtual beings and a prevalence of choosing not to have children, the majority of less or more popular family models of the future, which millions of Poles will participate in, have one thing in common: parenthood.

The main trends which will influence the Poles' decisions about parenthood include:

- growing social capital,
- growing social inequalities and the connected phenomenon of relative deprivation,
- growing acceptance of diversity, including new family models,
- declining fertility rate - what happens in one's environment influences the perception of one's own decisions
- increasing lifespan (in good health),
- loosening of the employer-employee relationship.

Some of these trends are conducive to having children, others not. However, the social environment is dominated by factors which can discourage even those who do want to have children - an impossibility of achieving work-life balance, the common negative stereotyping of parental roles, economic challenges and struggling to reconcile personal needs and cultural norms, also in the context of redefining gender roles in the family.

SUPPORTING PROGRESSIVE CAREGIVING REGULATIONS IS IN THE INTEREST OF EMPLOYERS

Regulations which today in 2022 influence models of family life, encourage or discourage people from having (more) children, have a long-term importance and tremendous impact on the common good. Therefore, the support of employers for shaping the regulations and influencing the norms within workplaces supporting the family life of every person is of particular importance. In the modern, uncertain times, by campaigning for the full and fair implementation of the EU work-life balance directive, we campaign for the framework which will make decisions possible in defining parental roles within each family according to individual economic and psychological needs and values. The long-term impact of political decisions which we have to take today as part of the implementation of the work-life balance directive is not particularly difficult to describe, although we do not think about it often.

We must define parenthood for every person as a particularly protected social good and provide

**support for the parenthood by employees,
adequate to today's needs and social challenges.**

If we do not do that, this will not only disappoint the hopes of those who want to have children but also cause long-term negative consequences. Let me quote just two undesirable consequences for employers.

Firstly, one of the reasons for the low supply of employees which almost every sector struggles with is the low professional activity of women, sanctioned culturally and legally by unequal opportunities to reconcile parental roles and the family's economic interest.

**SUPPORTING PROCREATIONAL
DECISIONS OF EMPLOYEES SHOULD
COME AS A RESPONSE TO ADVERSE
TRENDS**

Secondly, another consequence of an insufficiently brave approach to supporting parents will be a further dip in fertility rates in the generations to come, because the pool of people considering whether to have children, and how many, will

continue to drop. With every decade, this will translate into a lower supply of employees. Judging by the current trends, one may risk a statement that if no dramatic change occurs in the evolution of lifestyle and strategies, fertility rates in Poland can only drop and the base population will dwindle.

**The role of an employer is not to suggest lifestyle
decisions to his or her employees. Employers
may, however, create conditions in which the
aspirations of employees and fulfilment of their
needs outside of work would not require excessive
sacrifice or convoluted solutions.**

Supporting positive, equality-driven changes in shaping social roles within families is therefore an obligation towards the future. If you ever wondered what the social aspect of sustainable development mentioned in the context of norms and ESG reporting was all about - it's about just that.



WORK-LIFE BALANCE DIRECTIVE IN POLAND

The work-life balance directive will be implemented in Poland by August 2022. The legislators have already announced that nine extra weeks of parental leave will be available for fathers only. What does it mean for employers - the boards and their strategic decisions associated with shaping corporate policies, for people dealing with HR and workflow management? What does it mean for working parents?



THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE DIRECTIVE – KEY PRINCIPLES

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In 2019, the European Union adopted the work-life balance directive, which every member state should implement by August 2022.

The EU Directive contains numerous regulations on parental entitlements, including paternity leave, parental leave and flexible working arrangements. It provides for solutions concerning care leave and time off work due to force majeure, which can be used when there is a need to take care of a family member or another situation requiring the employee's urgent presence. Most of the solutions are already functioning in Polish law, often in a more favourable form than the minimum provided for in the Directive. The biggest challenge is to introduce into the Polish legal system modifications regarding the fathers' rights to parental leave. The Directive provides for two months of paid non-transferable parental leave for each parent. Importantly, the new regulations apply only to employees, i.e. persons bound by an employment contract or remaining in another employment relationship stipulated by law. It does not cover, among others, the self-employed – self-employed persons have been granted certain parental entitlements (e.g. with respect to maternity allowance) under the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment

between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity.

The aim of the Directive is to make it easier for women to return to work more quickly after childbirth by introducing flexible forms of work and to make men more active in exercising their parental entitlements. This creates opportunities

not only for parents but also for employers. It allows for attracting a more diverse pool of talent and for minimising the effects of the increasingly noticeable consequences of the demographic decline. In the long term, it will contribute to narrowing the pay gap between women and men and equalising gender opportunities in the labour market.

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE DIRECTIVE

The work-life balance directive aims to improve access to solutions that ensure work-life balance, including by means of a fairer distribution of parental responsibilities between men and women and the provision of flexible working arrangements. **This benefits all those involved in employment**

– employees (women and men), employers and the state itself. For fathers, it creates greater and more effective opportunities to participate in family life, and for employers, it enables them to tap into a diverse pool of talent and positively motivate their workforce. For the state, it partly addresses the problem of an ageing population and ensures greater financial sustainability.

KEY RIGHTS ARISING FROM THE DIRECTIVE

The Directive introduces a number of entitlements in relation to paternity:

- ten-day paternity leave on the occasion of the birth of a child, which already exists in the Polish legal system;
- four months of parental leave for each parent, including two months of non-transferable paid leave which can only be taken by the father raising the child. This entitlement can be used until the child reaches a certain age (according to the Directive, maximum eight years). This is a significant change compared to Polish legislation on parental entitlements, because

today the entire parental leave can be taken by the woman only if the parents so decide.

The Directive also provides for additional entitlements in the event of family emergencies unrelated to parenthood that may require the employee’s presence and justify his or her excused absence from work. These are:

- care leave of five working days a year that can be taken in the case of a relative’s serious illness or reliance on care. A proof of this situation may be required in order to take this leave;
- the possibility of flexible working time arrangements for employees, which is to be available to parents of children under the age of 12 and carers (employees who provide personal care or support in the event of illness or reliance on care of a relative or a person living in the household). This may mean limiting the number of working hours, flexible scheduling and/or remote working (so-called teleworking). Importantly, the employer does not have to grant the employee’s request;
- the right to time off work due to force majeure – an entitlement that can be exercised by all employees (not just parents and carers as defined in the Directive) in the event of urgent family

matters.

PAY WHEN EXERCISING THE ENTITLEMENTS UNDER THE DIRECTIVE

Of the leave regulated by the Directive, pay is mandatory for paternity leave and two months of non-transferable parental leave for each parent. When determining the appropriate amount of pay, member states should take into account that the employee exercising such an entitlement must receive pay that ensures a decent standard of living. By contrast, there is no requirement for paid care leave, although the Directive encourages member states to introduce such payment.

TRANSPPOSITION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DIRECTIVE INTO POLISH LAW

Member states have an obligation to effectively implement the provisions of the Directive in their

national legal systems by 2 August 2022. Polish regulations should ensure the achievement of the assumed result, in this case support in the area of equality between men and women on the labour market and the effective reconciliation of work and family life.



WHAT FORM WILL THE DIRECTIVE BE IMPLEMENTED IN POLAND?

At the beginning of February 2022, a legislative bill implementing the work-life balance directive appeared on the list of legislative and programmed work of the Council of Ministers. It includes nine weeks of additional parental leave for fathers only, paid at 70% of the base salary. The completion of the legislative process is planned for the second quarter of 2022.

The Board of the Share the Care Foundation has been invited to the public consultation and is working to persuade the legislators to raise the level of payment to 80% of the base salary (or 81.5% under the new law). Experience in Scandinavian countries clearly shows that the fathers quota in itself is an insufficient incentive for fathers to take parental leave. Additional benefits are needed to compensate for wage loss while on parental leave (Karu and Tremblay, 2018).

If it is the intention of the Polish government that fathers should really benefit from the new entitlements, raising this level to at least 80% of

the base salary seems critical. It is also possible to introduce additional remuneration for couples who share leave equally – this creates an incentive for equal distribution of caring responsibilities.

In addition, the Share the Care Foundation, together with experts from the Foundation’s Programming Committee, also draw attention to other issues in the bill:

- clarifying the level of each parent’s individual right to parental leave
- making the ‘upfront’ leave option more flexible (long application) by offering the possibility to split parental leave into separate parts (this is important when the mother of the child wants to use up the outstanding annual leave before she returns to work and the father goes on parental leave),
- adding three days of care leave with entitlement to care allowance to care for children and for ascendants or siblings (the bill includes unpaid care leave)



SHARING PARENTAL LEAVE IN PRACTICE

Marzena Pilarz-Herzyk
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The introduction of the legal solutions proposed by the work-life balance directive is not a revolution in the Polish legal system. Many of them exist in Poland, often in a more favourable form than the minimum proposed by the Directive. Maternity and parental leave in the form guaranteed by the Labour Code currently provides parents with the opportunity to care for their child for a year, while maintaining benefits at the level of 80% of the annual base salary.

FATHERS' FAILURE TO EXERCISE THEIR ENTITLEMENTS

It would seem, therefore, that changes aimed at extending the entitlements for fathers should not cause difficulties, but only increase privileges addressed to men. Unfortunately, observations of the labour market and parents' behaviour show clearly that so far parental entitlements are assigned exclusively to mothers and in 99% of cases it is mothers who exercise them. **Among the reasons why fathers do not exercise such entitlements is certainly the lack of adequate information about the possibility of sharing them.**

FORMS OF TAKING MATERNITY LEAVE AND PARENTAL LEAVE

It should be remembered that in the Polish legal system there is no such thing as 12-month maternity leave, contrary to what is often incorrectly said. The year after childbirth consists of 20 weeks of maternity leave and 32 weeks of parental leave, of which only the former is by definition dedicated to women. The leave can be planned in advance, by declaring that one wants to take parental leave immediately after the period of maternity leave. However, the legislation allows for discretion in planning the leave, giving the option to take leave in parts, where, within the relevant duration of leave, it must be decided which parent will exercise the entitlement and when.

SHARING THE ENTITLEMENTS

Maternity leave starts automatically on the day of childbirth and is compulsory. As a rule, it is intended for mothers, but, again, it is possible to end the leave early and transfer the last six weeks of this entitlement to the father.

Parental leave, which, as the name suggests, is by definition available to both parents, is structured differently. The parents are free to choose how they will take it. The leave can be split into four parts, and 32 weeks is the total duration that the parents can share. The first part cannot be less than six weeks and must follow immediately after maternity leave, the next two parts should be a minimum of eight weeks and the last part will be the remainder of the full leave. Nothing prevents the parents from taking the different parts of leave separately or at the same time.

However, if they decide not to take leave in parts and the mother applies for full parental leave after the birth of the child, this does not prevent the child's father from taking leave. At any time, the woman can exercise her right to discontinue the leave and transfer it to the father.

CONSEQUENCES OF ERRORS IN PAPERWORK

In the cases under discussion, however, it should be noted that the formalities relating to the sharing of leave are not limited to the submission of a single

application by the child’s mother, thus ensuring the entitlement for the whole year. If the parents wish to share the entitlements, they must do so either by opting to discontinue the leave and transfer it to the father or by declaring the leave in parts.

Experience shows that it is very difficult to get support for these processes in businesses. There is little access to correct application forms and procedures. It is not uncommon for such deficiencies to lead to serious consequences, even the loss of part of the leave.

The sharing of leave is subject to detailed rules and deadlines. The legal provisions clearly address the different procedures – taking leave ‘upfront’, a possible discontinuation of leave and transfer of leave to the father, and those relating to leave taken in parts. In the first case, it is extremely important that the paperwork is carried out in good time, because if a mistake is made and the father is unable to continue the leave immediately after the mother, the remaining leave will be lost.

Similar consequences may occur if you wish to divide the leave into parts. Here the most common mistake is failure to apply the principle that the first part of parental leave of at least six weeks must

follow immediately after maternity leave. It is not uncommon to come across a situation where in this option it has been assumed that the dad will only take the leave after a certain break, and this causes the entire period of leave to be lost.

OBJECTIVES OF THE DIRECTIVE

The EU Directive is intended to introduce an additional leave of at least eight weeks exclusively for the father of the child. One of the most important aspects is to make this entitlement independent of that of the mother.

At present, the father can only take parental leave if the child’s mother has insurance on the date of childbirth or becomes employed during the period of her entitlement to benefits. The father’s leave will not be transferable to the mother. This should make it easier for her to return to the labour market, while allowing a father to take care of and bond with the child.

THE DIRECTIVE WILL FACILITATE PROCESSES WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

Karolina Andrian
President of Share the Care Foundation

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Analysing the Labour Code, one may realise that even without the directive parents can currently share leave. However, there are a lot of ‘buts’.

The procedure associated with leave-sharing is very complicated and confusing for both parents and HR departments. Moreover, the currently available 12-month leave associated with the birth of a child is commonly perceived as a mother’s entitlement. We usually talk of 12 months of maternity leave, which is incorrect. In practice, mothers usually approach HR departments when they are pregnant, they receive a pile of documents for filling out and it is assumed that they will be using the full year of leave.

The data of the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) show that only 1 percent of fathers take parental leave in Poland. HR departments deal with so few cases that they lack the appropriate procedures. They often provide incorrect advice, which results in problems for the parents or even leads to refraining from sharing the leave (e.g. due to incorrect paperwork, dad takes over parental leave paid at 60 percent of salary base, rather than 80 percent).

It is worth pointing out that although parents are able to share leave, it is formally the mother who

has to renounce her right to leave in favour of the father. Moreover, dad using part of the leave will receive maternity benefit.

The work-life balance directive means four months individual right to parental leave for fathers, two months of which will be reserved only for them. If dad fails to use this time, it will be lost.

We are waiting for specific changes in the Labour Code but it seems that the individual right of a father to parental leave will make it possible to simplify procedures on the employers’ side. Applications for parental leave for fathers will be submitted independently of mothers.

As evidenced by the experience of other countries, particularly Scandinavian ones, most fathers use only the part of leave which is allocated solely to them (the so-called father’s quota).

According to a report by the University of Iceland for Share the Care Foundation, non-transferable leave is perceived as an important factor encouraging men to temporarily give up paid work in favour of childcare. Official statistics show that before the new law was introduced in Iceland

in 2000, men very rarely took parental leave, while today as many as 85 percent decide to do so.



WHAT DO EMPLOYERS SAY ABOUT THE DIRECTIVE INTERVIEW

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with Marta Podedworna

director of Remuneration and Employee Matters Department at Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, member of the Programming Committee of Share the Care Foundation, who prepared recommendations concerning the implementation of the work-life balance directive in Poland.



What are the most important recommendations of the Foundation’s Programming Committee, which you as an employer support?

According to the work-life balance directive, every member state should implement two months of parental leave for fathers. The period is to be non-transferable, which means that if dads do not use it, it is lost (as is currently the case with paternity leave). The Programming Committee of Share the Care Foundation has recommended that these two months should be added onto the current 12 months (the total length of maternity leave and parental leave). This would be something extra compared to what is available currently. Thanks to this, fathers will be able to actively participate in the first months of their babies’ lives, build a bond and take part in their upbringing. This positively influences a sense of responsibility and commitment, as dads look after their children without the mums’ help. **I think that two months of non-transferable and dedicated leave is a very good idea.** It emphasises the important role fathers play in bringing up their children from the very beginning.

Why is this implementation variant the best? Wouldn’t it be a better idea from a woman’s

professional activation point of view to carve those two months out of the current parental leave (it is 32 weeks long)?

This is the variant supported by the Foundation’s Programming Committee and many other organisations which were consulted over the recommendations. It is based on the experience of other countries, such as Iceland, which have many years of experience building a social policy involving both parents in childcare.

It is a variant which makes it most likely that parents in Poland will use the new law. It makes it possible for the baby to spend more time with its parents before it goes to a nursery or a childminder. It is an important argument for parents.

And speaking of financial aspects - parents should treat this solution as more beneficial. Two extra months during which the father looks after the child, at the same time retaining the right to partial salary, means savings due to no spending on nannies, private nursery or kindergarten. It is worth pointing out that public and subsidised nurseries do not satisfy demand. Only 13 percent of children are in nursery care (GUS, 2020).

This variant gives women a feeling that their rights have remained intact. It is generally thought that the 12-month period is in fact maternity leave available for women. It is believed that it is mums who are entitled to parental leave which they can transfer to the father if they wish to do so. Polish regulations have strengthened this conviction. According to the Labour Code, a father has the right to take parental leave only if the mother has the right to leave and decides to transfer part of it to the father. As a result, women are convinced that parental leave is in fact maternity leave. This view is supported by a study by the IQS research company commissioned by Share the Care Foundation, in which 20 percent of fathers declared that they did not take parental leave as the mother of the child failed to consent. Making the fathers’ right to parental leave individual seems to solve this problem and the postulate for an individual right is included in directive 2019/1158, which we refer to in detail later on in the recommendation.

What changes do you expect in the job market after the directive comes into force?

We hope that the involvement of women in their workplaces will increase. As the baby will be looked after by its dad - a person the baby has

known from birth - the return to work will be less stressful for the mother than if she'd had to organise a nursery or a childminder. This way the return to work will become much easier for women.

We hope that this solution will be popular among men, who increasingly express their wish to become involved in the lives of their offspring from the early days. Moreover, the results of research clearly showing how important it is for fathers to become engaged from the start have a motivating effect.

We are certain that a two-month break will provide fathers with an opportunity to build a stronger bond with their children, acquire parenting skills and take a fresh perspective.

Fathers from BGK bank who took parental leave say that the break enriched their experiences and allowed them to recharge and gain motivation to do other activities, including professional ones.

Interestingly, we have noticed a pattern concerning layettes at the bank. In the past only mums claimed them, nowadays fathers begin to request them too. Currently, their share in this benefit is coming close to mothers' share and it is clear that they are becoming increasingly involved in bringing up their offspring.

What challenges await employers in connection with the directive?

On the one hand, a two-month absence is long enough for work to be shared among other team members, but short enough, on the other hand, not to initiate a replacement procedure. Advising employers of the wish to take parental leave 21 days in advance may help the employer and team to prepare for increased workload. During the father's absence, the team will simply have more to do. In special situations, e.g. at times of extremely heavy workload, it is possible to delay the commencement of the two-month leave by up to 60 days, of course after consulting the father. Therefore, the challenge will be maintaining the motivation of the whole team during this extraordinary two-month period of excessive workload.

How to prepare for the directive?

Firstly, we have already communicated the rationale for implementing it to our employees. In our organisation, as many as 85 percent of employees believe this to be a good solution. Secondly, for a few years now, we have demonstrated our particular care for employees who are parents.

For this reason we offer training and workshops for young parents. In November 2021 we took part in syndicated research which has informed our approach to building communication and planning further activities addressed at parents in connection with the implementation of the directive. The research has shown that over 50 percent of respondents believe that men should use as much parental leave as possible. **Our employees support our encouragement of fathers taking paternity and parental leave and sharing it.** We have already got used to the idea that more and more dads will take parental leave dedicated to them. We particularly bear managers in mind, as they will have to face various challenges leading their teams.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE DIRECTIVE - A MUCH DESIRED BENEFIT FOR EMPLOYEES, BUT...

Dr Marta Bierca
PhD, sociologist (SWPS University)

Sociologist (SWPS University), author of “New patterns of fatherhood in Poland” book, specialist in family transformations, models of fatherhood and motherhood. Researcher with 15 years of experience at leading research agencies. Author of numerous academic publications. Member of the Polish Society of Market and Opinion Researchers (PTBRiO).



In 2021 only 3,700 men took parental leave in Poland. Compared to 2013, when around 800 men took advantage of this newly introduced possibility, there is a clear growth. However, when putting these numbers in the context of the whole society, it is evident that only about 1 percent of fathers exercise their parental right. What is stopping them? And why is the role of employers in supporting this social change so important?

The work-life balance directive is aimed at increasing the involvement of fathers in childcare and at emphasising their equal role. The government is still working on the regulations implementing the directive. Employers have until August 2022 to consider how the new laws would influence their organisations.

Share the Care Foundation has been running syndicated research #Dyrektywa2022 since July 2021. So far our survey has been filled out by over 800 employees from eight large organisations and we are planning further editions for other sectors and organisations. The study was made up of two parts - surveys of employees and surveys of the organisation via HR departments. The main goal was to assess equality in the organisation's use of parental leave. We have gathered the opinions of

employees regarding their vision of parenthood, the roles of mother and father, as well as their knowledge about employee rights in connection with leave and their willingness to share parental leave. We have closely observed the role of employers in supporting committed parenting or preventing such attitudes from developing. We analysed both hard data showing organisational processes and soft data revealing organisational culture. Through employee responses, we checked what role an employer could play in supporting parents and what expectations employees had in that respect.

What follows are the key conclusions which an employer can use to help the employees attain parental equality, while at the same time build its image as a modern and socially-responsive organisation.

FERTILE GROUND BUT THERE IS A NEED FOR EDUCATION

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The results of the research reveal a discrepancy between declarations of equality and actual practice. Both men and women agree that the time

spent with the father is as valuable for a child as time spent with the mother (92 percent), that both mum and dad should have the same obligations and rights concerning childcare (91 percent) and that, apart from biological issues, both men and women are equally able to look after a young child (83 percent). However, when we take a closer look at the practice, it turns out that very few male respondents actually decided to take parental leave. Of course, the decision about parental leave does not only depend on men, but in our research there were few women who wished to share their leave with their partners. It turns out that parental leave (often colloquially referred to as 'maternity leave') is commonly understood as a 12-month period reserved for the child's mother.

In this context, employers can run information campaigns concerning leave terminology and the possibilities of taking leave, thus emphasising being open to equal involvement in parenting.

INFORMING AND OFFERING DISCRETE SUPPORT

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According to the majority of employees, the role

of employers should not go beyond providing reliable information regarding the possibility of using parental leave and explaining the necessary formalities. Employers should not attempt to persuade employees to share the leave but it is expected that they will provide information about the benefits of such a solution. In our research, men clearly expressed the need for employers providing reliable information on sharing leave (46 percent). At the same time, both the processes of many organisations and the opinions of employees reveal that employers do not use their information potential. Line managers can have a particularly important role to play, as after relevant training they can become ambassadors of equal parenting helping HR departments communicate parental privileges. It is they who usually know their underlings best and through the relationship based on mutual trust they can openly inform employees and support them in their parenting decisions.

COMMUNICATING BENEFITS

Men are motivated to use parental leave by the need to spend time with their sons or daughters, building bonds, accompanying them in discovering the world. There is, however, some uncertainty

whether they would cope with childcare. The motivation of men is therefore consistent with the function of parental leave.

The right kind of support by employers based on popularising the idea of engaged fatherhood could provide an impulse for many employees to take the leave. Examples of other men in the organisation, particularly from higher positions, who could testify to the benefits of taking parental leave would be of particular importance. All other communication and education concerning engaged fatherhood (webinars, guides, case studies, podcasts) would also be of importance. The employer could thus showcase that the family wellbeing of employees is important and that the company supports parental choices.

JOB SECURITY FOR MEN

According to both men and women, a key barrier to sharing the care are fears associated with job security and income. Interestingly, men more often than women name losing a safe position at work (demotion, reducing the scope of responsibilities, losing out on promotion and pay rises) as an undesired consequence of taking parental leave.

Therefore, the best incentive for fathers would be providing job security and removing the financial barrier resulting from family income reduction by paying men 60 percent or 80 percent of their salary in the form of maternity benefit (70 percent of responses). Men need the guarantee that after returning from leave they will retain their employment (60 percent of those surveyed expect this) and that they will not lose out on any benefits which they would have received if they had not decided to take leave.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE SUPPORTING ACTIVE MOTHERS

Women, on the other hand, need the support of employers in spreading information about leave and the possibility to share (44 percent). More than one third of ladies would want the employer to support them in returning to work earlier. They believe it to be very important to debunk the stereotype of women sharing leave as careerist. Many of them currently feel that whatever choice they make is under scrutiny and none is considered to be right. It is easy for women to get labelled as a ‘lazy mother’ if their priority is childcare or a ‘selfish materialist’

if they decide to develop their professional career. They do not want to be faced with an unfair choice - motherhood or work; on the contrary, they want the society to believe that it is possible to reconcile these two areas of life with the appropriate support. It seems that employers can play a key role in conveying the message portraying women as important employees, whose decisions about sharing parental leave are respected.

COUNTERING THE FINANCIAL ARGUMENTS

A common argument against the use of parental leave by fathers concerns finances. In Poland it is men who earn on average 20 percent more than women and a longer leave taken by fathers could result in a financial gap in the family budget. It is clear, however, that employers try to implement solutions which would allow fathers to engage in childcare without losing out financially. One example of such an initiative is additional paid paternity leave which does not constitute an incentive to engage men in individual childcare, despite its undeniable benefit in allowing men to spend time with their children. Both practice and

research confirm that the best tool for creating parental equality is parental leave for fathers - highly paid, non-transferable and used by fathers without the presence of mothers. Therefore, the optimum solution consists in subsidising up to 100 percent of the salary received on parental leave (above maternity benefit). Parental leave allows men to be alone with their children and women to return to work uninterrupted.

To conclude, despite many barriers and still limited knowledge of the work-life balance directive we can be certain that we are facing changes in the area of parental roles. Our research has revealed many tensions experienced not only by mothers and fathers but also those planning parenthood. The workplace environment can become an incubator of changes, while employers can actively support parental equality and build an image of a modern, engaged organisation sensitive to social trends. The work-life balance directive encourages reflection and offers an impulse for positive change.



ARE WORKING PARENTS OPEN TO PARTNERSHIP AND SHARING PARENTAL LEAVE?

Joanna Włodarczyk
sociologist

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The introduction of the directive must be accompanied by a campaign making parents aware of the new possibilities and advantages. A question arises - what arguments will motivate women to be open and to trust that their partners/husbands will be able to cope with childcare and what arguments will convince men that this step is worth taking.

In November 2021, the IQS research agency and the Share the Care Foundation jointly carried out qualitative research aimed at finding out the attitudes to partnership in childcare, including sharing parental leave in the context of the new EU directive. What was of key importance was understanding why couples who in the light of current law are eligible to share leave do not do that and what could encourage them to share leave when additional weeks of parental leave just for fathers are implemented. We also asked whether the additional privilege for fathers was a good idea and whether they would take advantage of the new benefit.

CONCLUSIONS

The vision of masculinity has undergone dynamic

changes in recent times and is significantly different from the one which was in place for the previous generations.

Despite this many responses included references to traditional male tasks, such as financial security.

Partnership was understood in various ways by the respondents. Some (mainly women) pointed out sharing duties and supporting one another in difficult times, but also helping with childcare. Others indicated talking about each other’s needs and compromising. The area of household duties is the less controversial aspect of partnership in a relationship, especially in the case of couples where both parties work outside of home. The situation with childcare duties is a little different: young women often also lack any experience in it, but the conviction that these duties are natural for a woman is very strong. It seems that this is also connected with the abovementioned aspect of household duties - the final assessment of how well a task was carried out is given to the man by the woman and it is her standard that becomes the binding one. Hence the popular belief that a father is unable to look after his child as well as the mother.

The way childcare is divided between the parents is

strongly connected with the perception of the roles of the mother and father. Although the distinction becomes gradually blurred, the majority of the respondents finally conceded that the role of the mother is, after all, bigger than the role of the father. It is something so obvious that it does not require a justification. The respondents we talked to, both men and most of the women, considered mothers to be the best caregivers for the child - tender, delicate, empathetic, better at reading the needs of the baby and able to satisfy them more effectively. Many respondents stated that a father is unable to live up to this caregiving ideal. According to the respondents, one of the reasons for this state of affairs was breastfeeding and a bond created in the process. Another important element of a mother’s role is managing all the matters associated with the child. It is mothers who are usually responsible for the logistics associated with the child, organisation of free time activities and education. As in the case of household chores, even if a father becomes involved, he does it to ‘help’ his partner or to carry out the tasks which his partner assigned to him. Both men and women taking part in the research see the role of the father as less important than the role of the mother, particularly in the initial period of a child’s life. One of the respondents, used a football metaphor to describe this: the father is a winger, i.e.

a person helping the striker (the mother).

Men do not feel they are that necessary in the child's life – they have a feeling that they harm both mother and the child if they try to get in their way.

Knowledge about parenthood-related leaves is relatively scarce – even if they know what types are available, they often confuse them. Few respondents were aware that parental leave rather than 12-month maternity leave was available. Paternity leave, i.e. two weeks of leave just for fathers, is the best known of all types of leave to which fathers are eligible. Mothers tend to know more about leave, some fathers directly state that they are not interested in this topic.

The main argument in favour of the mothers using the whole leave period is the child's welfare and conviction that children needed mainly their mothers, as fathers are not able to provide the same level of care. Additionally, men pointed out that women wanted to spend this time with their children and they did not want to disturb them. One of the few men who was seriously considering such an option quoted lack of confidence regarding his parenting skills as a barrier. Some mothers also do not trust the parenting skills of their partners.

One of the main barriers to sharing parental leave was breastfeeding which, as emphasised by the respondents, is the best solution for the child. Many respondents were of the opinion that a mother should stay with her child even if the child is bottle-fed. Fathers pointed out that they were unable to calm the child down and put it to sleep the way mothers can and that they lacked the patience.

According to the respondents, the most objective argument which cannot be undermined is the argument concerning work and finances. Asked about their willingness to share parental leave, they often responded: "it depends on who earns more". Many fathers pointed out that they did not even consider sharing the leave, because they earned more and a large part of their earnings were bonuses. Some respondents also mentioned that being self-employed makes going on parental leave particularly disadvantageous.

The aspect of the importance of work and a sense of being indispensable was often mentioned along with finances. **Some men stated directly that employers are prepared for women to take a longer break from work. With men there is no such expectation.** Many men fear the reaction of the employer or even have experience suggesting

this would not be tolerated by the employer. On the other hand, mothers said that the work argument sometimes tends to be an excuse.

Asked about the associations with a father who decided to take at least part of parental leave, men often expressed their surprise, sometimes jealousy and nearly always tried to rationalise this decision. They spontaneously added that if a mother was to take such a decision, they would assess her negatively. Women were more positive about a mother who decided to share parental leave. She was described as: independent, resourceful, brave, caring (as she cared for the relationship of the father with the child). However, ladies tended to point out that such a solution would generate additional work for them associated with organising everyday life and logistics. In their opinion, planning would become their extra duty. The only group which was clearly positive about the father taking parental leave was the group of women planning to have children.

The first reaction to the information on the introduction of two months of parental leave only for fathers was often the question whether the leave would be additional to the current amount of leave or whether this time would be taken away

from mothers. When learning the former option was considered, respondents calmed down and were willing to take advantage of it.

This confirms the Share the Care Foundation’s Programming Committee is right in suggesting that these two months should be additional. Many respondents who thought that a young child should stay at home with mum accepted that a 12-month old should be big enough for the dad to take over everyday childcare.

The respondents were positive about the idea of a campaign on two months of additional parental leave for fathers. Opinions were divided over whether this should be strictly an information campaign or whether it should encourage fathers to use this opportunity. The campaign should be addressed mainly to men, but it would be worth addressing it to mothers as well, as they often have a final say in matters related to children. Finally, the campaign should be addressed to employers, as male respondents doubted whether employers’ reaction to this legal change would be positive.

Many men were surprised by arguments indicating the role of fathers in childcare. They were particularly persuaded by the arguments about

a better bond with the child and the fact that this was the most durable relationship in their lives. Another topic which convinced them to share the care was equality in the division of duties and an opportunity for mothers to develop professionally.

One of the extremely important conclusions from the study is the need for men to talk about fatherhood and their role in childcare. Many respondents pointed out that the research was their only opportunity for them to talk with other men about their experiences and sometimes give advice. It was clear that this was important to them.

WHAT AN EMPLOYER CAN DO WITH THESE CONCLUSIONS

The respondents have confirmed the need for the employer to carry out information campaigns on the new law and the benefits resulting from sharing parental leave by both parents. It seems that such a message coming from the companies would be more efficient than nation-wide social campaigns. Employees hearing about this option from their own bosses will have a sense of greater security and acceptance for this type of decision.

Various employee groups (the so-called affinity networks and employee resource groups) already exist at many companies. Some companies have created such groups for women, some for parents. It seems that creating a space for fathers where they could talk about parenthood and their personal experiences in this area is much needed. We encourage employers to take action in that respect - men should be made aware how important their childrearing role in the first months of the child’s life is. Mums, on the other hand, need to be reassured that their professional development does not stand in opposition with motherhood and that a woman returning to work after childbirth is not ‘careerist’ but a responsible person who wishes to give the child a chance to bond with both parents.

MUST THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE DIRECTIVE CAUSE A RIFT BETWEEN GENERATIONS?

Marzena Strzelczak
CEO, director of the Responsible Business Forum,
coordinator of Diversity Charter in Poland

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Expert in sustainable development, diversity management, jury member of many competitions: Verba Veritatis, LGBT+, Business Awards, Charity Stars, Pióro odpowiedzialności, People Changing Business. Since 2016 she has been responsible for developing the Diversity Charter and cooperating with the EU Platform of Diversity Charters affiliated with the European Commission.



At the beginning of February we learnt about the government's proposals concerning the changes in the Polish labour code associated with the implementation of the directive on work-life balance for parents and carers announced by the European Commission in 2019.

The rationale behind the regulation was the belief that greater flexibility of parental leave and the encouragement of men to participate more in caring roles may help achieve greater harmony between work and private life and lead to an increase in the professional activity of women. This, in turn, would lead to closing the gender pay gap, overcoming gender segregation by sector and increase the presence of women in the public sphere and in management positions. The work-life balance directive is not only to counteract the exclusion of the biggest group in danger of discrimination in the labour market but also to increase the growth of GDP in many EU countries affected by these problems. Does the national transposition proposal really respond to the key challenges faced by employers, society and legislators in Poland?

The aims of the directive are particularly important in the context of Poland. The female employment

rate is one of the lowest in the EU. At the same time, Poland tops the list of countries where unpaid women's work associated with caregiving and household duties significantly exceeds the engagement of men. Despite high qualifications - the most popular education level of women working in Poland is higher education - compared to other EU countries Polish women are relatively rarely present in the public space and seldom hold top management positions in business. This is accompanied by a certain paradox. The rate of women employed in middle management roles in Poland is among the highest in the EU. Experts tend to agree on the causes and effects of this situation but disagree on the assessment of public policies. Are they effective in introducing the necessary changes in the current shape? Or do they, perhaps, reinforce the traditional gender role division, thus being counterproductive in fighting women's discrimination?

The implementation of the directive is undoubtedly one of the elements of these policies.

NOT ONLY CHILDREN REQUIRE CARE

Comments on the implementation of the directive

in Polish law usually concern the situation of women in the labour market and family welfare. There is a focus on searching for optimum solutions concerning sharing parental leave in many dimensions: work-life balance, children's welfare, gender equality and economic effects of the new regulations. Many social organisations have become involved in this topic. They point out the positive effects of fathers staying at home with their children for bonding, child development and the possibility of a more equal division of household duties, the burden of which is currently carried mainly by women. Due to the implementation of the work-life balance directive, a gradual change of the current disadvantageous position of women in the labour market should be possible. Employers may also take advantage of a greater diversity of teams and a pool of talent becoming available, while the whole society and economy would gain more equality and a higher GDP.

However, childcare is just one of the challenges facing employees. As shown by research, every tenth employee combines work with caregiving to adult dependents. The issue concerns about 1.7m people. The results of the research carried out by the Responsible Business Forum at the turn of 2019 confirm the existence of a relationship

between caregiving roles and giving up work or taking a temporary break from work. This situation concerned as many as 75 percent of employees. The majority of cases concerned women and childcare (62 percent of responses), but as many as 30 percent quoted taking care of an adult dependent. The data is alarming and confirms well-known problems. On the one hand, the system of institutional childcare has a low availability of nursery and kindergarten places, on the other hand, there are also challenges resulting from demographics and the ageing population. This aspect is not present in the public discourse on balancing care with work, as it almost entirely focuses on childcare. Meanwhile, every fourth citizen of Poland is over 60 and the number of people over 80 comes to 1.8m. That is more than the number of children born in four years! Seniors and their carers are a group requiring better support and attention and the COVID-19 pandemic and corona crisis have only made the challenges more difficult.

HALF A LOAF IS BETTER THAN NONE?

When preparing the directive, the European

Commission did take into account the challenges associated with the ageing population, which is reflected by the full name of the directive and the reference to ‘parents and carers’. It has to be admitted, however, that the solutions for supporting the carers of adult dependents are quite modest and concern the introduction of five days off. Although it is not much, it is still the first regulation which refers to the situation of adult dependents and their carers in a systemic way. The labour law in Poland has not assumed such solutions so far. The allowance of 14 days for looking after a parent existing in the law only applies in case of illness of a close relative.

The directive, leaving the member states discretion to define the requirements for the additional five-day entitlement, opens a new door. The legislator may treat this as an opportunity to introduce additional support for people caring for adult dependents beyond the already mentioned five days. We should bear in mind that according to current regulations, only employees bringing up children under 14 years of age are entitled to extra days off in the amount of 16 hours, or two days, with the right to full pay. In practice, these constitute two additional annual leave days for parents of children under 14. Unfortunately, the

recently announced draft transposition of the directive includes the introduction of five additional days off only, but without the right to full pay.

WORK AND CARE OR INEQUALITIES THE POLISH WAY

The proposals put forward by the Polish legislator are very disappointing, particularly in the context of benefits addressed to parents bringing up children. It is worth emphasising that the currently binding law in Poland already includes many solutions supporting this group and Polish regulations in this respect are among the most parent-friendly in the EU, even exceeding the solutions assumed by the directive. They include two weeks of leave for employees who are fathers (the directive includes 10 days) and 32 or 34 weeks of parental leave available for both parents. The novelty introduced by the directive is the non-transferability of two months of leave. Transposition of the directive in Poland does not require lengthening the leave available to parents because it already is relatively long compared to other EU countries. The government’s proposal assumes, however, the introduction of additional nine weeks of leave

in addition to the current allowance, in order not to reduce the total allowance, which in Poland is currently usually taken by women in full.

Therefore, the discussions mainly concern the rate that these benefits will be paid at. The government has proposed 70 percent, which reveals the legislator's dilemmas. The legislator could retain the current rate and introduce, for example, 100 percent payment for the benefit of fathers and mothers. However, fearing accusations of depriving mothers of the right to two months of childcare (even though today a father can also share leave with the mother within 12 months), the legislator is attempting to encourage fathers to engage in childcare, without violating the status quo, and reduce the costs of this solution at the same time. It is difficult to expect that with this level of financing the solution will become an effective incentive for men. Most likely, in practice the vast majority of mothers will continue to spend 12 months with their children.

The government's proposal in its current shape will not have any positive influence on the situation of Polish women in the labour market. The proposal shows that in the case of childcare the legislator decided to take the local social and cultural

context into account, but caregiving roles to adult dependents are considered irrelevant and marginal. This is a big mistake because it may also be a potential cause of deepening divisions - mainly intergenerational ones - in an already polarised society. It is also an example of a bad social policy which does not take into account the current social and economic situation and the future effects of the changes implemented.

POLAND IS AGEING FAST, BUT THE LAW DOES NOT RECOGNISE THIS

Just a few days before the government's proposal on the directive was announced, initial results of the National Census 2021 had been published.

The data clearly shows that despite being a relatively 'young' society compared to other EU states, Polish society's ageing is fast and inevitable. In a decade, the number of people at post-working age increased by over 1.8m. In the decades to come, Polish society will not only be reduced in size (Eurostat expects it to shrink by 10 percent in 30 years' time) but will also be increasingly composed of older people. In 30 years' time, the proportion

of people aged 15-64 compared to people over 65 will come to 100/60 (now it is at 100/30). With the extension of lifespan, the number of people over 80 will continue to rise and the number is already - as mentioned before - quite large.

All of this suggests that adult dependent care requires long term and systemic solutions. Today it is based on the free and informal work of family members, mostly women (although men become engaged in this more often than in childcare). The percentage of older people who receive professional care in Poland comes to about 1 percent of the population over 60 (NIK, 2018).

Combining childcare with caring for a dependent adult will become more frequent. At the base of this family model of care are not only widely-held convictions and conventions but also social and living conditions, as well as financial limitations.

Poland is one of the leaders when it comes to the percentage of people living in intergenerational households. At the same time, about 60 percent of Poles believe that caring for their elderly parents is their moral obligation. To compare, the EU average comes to just 30 percent.

LET’S BUILD BRIDGES, NOT DIVISIONS

The role of the state is to create solutions which will help families look after their older relatives without restricting professional activity. The government’s transposition proposal does not take these aspects into account at all. It is especially saddening as we often hear about the importance of the family and its welfare. However, pro-family solutions are currently limited to supporting childcare only. This help is needed, of course, but not taking the situation of carers of adult dependents into account and lack of strategic thought about elderly family members is a striking example of both shortsightedness and the dividing of generations, instead of building and strengthening these bonds.

No single tool is able to fill the gaps between the demand associated with the growing population of elderly people in Poland and the supply of care. Combining various policies and solutions, plus those implemented voluntarily by employers, may help reduce the care gap and support working carers. Family members will still continue to bear most of the burden of care for their adult dependents - no

major change will occur here in the next few years. However, what is important and necessary is that when working on the transposition of the directive, the government should not limit family support to just childcare. A clear signal should be given that the challenges associated with caring for adults are understood. Solutions proposed by the government should confirm this and strengthen social solidarity, not divisions.



(ALL) CHANGE - MUM RETURNS TO WORK, DAD TAKES OVER CHILDCARE

According to the recommendations of the Programming Committee of the Share the Care Foundation, the optimum scenario of using parental leave by both parents consists of dads taking parental leave after mums, so they could return to work undisturbed, while fathers could then bond with their children and improve their childcare and housework skills.

How can employers support mums returning to work after childbirth and why are fathers part of this jigsaw puzzle?



MUM GOES BACK TO WORK

Paulina Janiak
work-family balance expert

Psychologist, accredited EMCC Coach and Game Coach certified by the Norman Benett Academy, graduate of Warsaw University, Saxion Hogeschool Enschede scholarship recipient. She is particularly interested in parent coaching and coaching of women. Co-owner of Femmeritum, a company offering work-family and work-life balance solutions.



Employers, particularly corporations, increasingly respond to the need to look after women returning to work after giving birth. This takes the form of various benefits. Among the most popular are layettes, gifts for mums, nursing rooms, extra days of fully-paid leave, subsidised childminding or nursery places, flexible forms of employment in the initial period after returning to work.

In recent times, we can observe a new trend, which concerns supporting mums with their mental health. It is a very important area as returning to work is associated with huge emotional effort. Mothers want to believe that motherhood does not stand in opposition to their professional development. Ensuring a female employee is comfortable, showing her empathy and giving her ample support to facilitate going back to work after a longer break are all in the employer's interest. This builds engagement on both sides, but it has to be approached strategically.

This was mentioned in one of the 'Common children = common duties' podcasts by Anna Gromada, social policy researcher cooperating with the UN and the Polish Academy of Sciences. She posed the question of whether we wanted to have a labour

market which favours those who are prepared to sacrifice their personal lives for work or a market which is aware that people go through various stages in their lives. This is not only about childcare but also about looking after older people. It is also about the moments of mental health crisis and the need to look after one's wellbeing.

If we adopt such a perspective, we will come to understand that there are stages in our lives when we can offer more and stages when we can offer less. An employer who accepts this is able to enter into a long term relationship based on partnership.

What does it mean in practice? That organisational culture which appreciates partnership in its many guises is of key importance.

SHAPING MUM-FRIENDLY ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Organisational culture is defined as a collection of social norms and systems of values, a specific organisational climate or behavioural requirements. It should concern opinions, convictions, expectations and norms which will connect all

employees. It is important that this is not just a declaration 'on paper'. Values must manifest themselves in the company's activity and in its communication with employees.

A woman employed at a given company should feel that she works at a place that would look after her during her pregnancy and after her maternity leave. Through appropriate communication and visible activities she should know what to expect. This will give her a sense of security. This will also build a conviction that she is in a good place, as she does not need to worry about her return to work, because everything has been explained beforehand. She will feel she works at a company where there is space for her development despite her temporary absence.

We will achieve success as an employer when appropriate communication goes hand in hand with procedures and when managers, i.e. immediate superiors, are involved in the process.

It is worth building such an inclusive workplace with the participation of employees as they are often able to design certain solutions better, bringing in their personal experiences and bouncing them off the possibilities offered by the company.

One interesting example is offered by an initiative of BNP Paribas - ‘WomenUp’ - an internal development programme empowering women. As part of the programme, the bank’s female employees were able to put forward their ideas, the most interesting and useful of which were carried out. One mum returning to work after maternity leave suggested that a one-stop-shop with useful information for parents-to-be and new parents should be created. She knew that the information on benefits, procedures and HR and legal matters was available somewhere but she wanted it to be available in one place that would be known to the parents in the organisation.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO AVOID THE UNAVOIDABLE?

A woman becomes pregnant and goes on sick leave long before giving birth. This scenario is often every employer’s biggest fear, especially since Polish women often tend to take advantage of long sick leave when pregnant.

It is worth creating programmes for women encouraging them to continue working while

pregnant. Some may smirk but this could actually work. It is worth realising that most women really want to develop professionally but social norms, other’s expectations, lack of support and understanding for working mothers make them disappear from the labour market for a long time.

Campaigns such as ‘Proud to Be a Working MUM’ aimed at increasing women’s involvement in their own professional and personal development may help encourage them to remain at work during their pregnancy and then return to work faster. Women need assurance that professional development does not stand in opposition to motherhood. Pregnancy may turn out to be a good time to talk about it.

Of course for a pregnant woman sick leave may prove to be a time for resting. Sometimes this need tends to be provoked by the employer and the attitude towards the employee. At other times, however, claiming sick leave is unjustified and problematic.

Observations of the labour market show that employers are to some extent at peace with this situation and consider this scenario highly likely. It seems, however, that in the long run everybody

loses out - both mums and employers. Young women, who may wish to become mums in the future, are also harmed by this situation.

What can employers do about it? Again, we are going back to organisational culture based on partnership and openness. The role of immediate superiors and their reaction to the pregnancy news are very important. It is worth preparing managers for such conversations and supporting them at the level of procedures and clear guidelines, where a mum-to-be could get all the necessary information on pregnancy and leave, etc.

It is also important to build a culture of acceptance among employees. It may be pointed out that it is often other women who cut the wings of young mums. For this reason, showcasing female role models who successfully combine these two areas of life seems to be a valuable practice.

TIME OFF WORK

Employers have an opportunity to research the needs of their employees and it is worth making use of this tool. One company asked parents-to-be and young parents whether they wished to stay in touch

with the employer while on maternity, parental or child-rearing leave. The survey revealed that there were those who wanted to spend this time focusing exclusively on the child and family life and also those for whom contact with the employer was important. Based on the data collected through the survey, the company created a voluntary activity plan adapted to the expectations of young parents. For many mums, participating in training, cyclical meetings or discussion groups is an important element building a sense of belonging to the company. But not for all.

It is worth realising, however, that returning to work after a year or a longer period more usually translates into a feeling of enormous isolation. Being in touch with the company and other employees may minimise this feeling. Meetings and events with some development value for the young mum may help, while at the same time allowing colleagues to check on her situation.

In an attempt to look after the parents on parental leave, the BGK bank sends them a newsletter entitled ‘Family at BGK’ which brings them up to date with what is going on at the bank. In this way, the bank counteracts a sense of exclusion and makes return to work more enjoyable and

reboarding easier.

Another challenge in returning to work is keeping up with the pace of the organisation, which may initially terrify and overwhelm a new mum. For those who continued working, nothing changed, for her - the company went through a revolution. This feeling usually results from the fact that the brain grows unaccustomed to the rhythm of the organisation while the mum’s attention was focused on the child for many months. It is important to remember that picking up the pace of work after a long absence would be challenging for anyone and requires time.

An interesting solution has been introduced by Philip Morris International. Parents returning to work after a longer parental leave (at least six months) are allowed to work part-time during the first month after returning, retaining the right to full pay.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RETURN

Mums often think of getting in touch with the employer a few days before their planned return date. In my work with them, I often emphasise that if they wish to continue to work at a given organisation and they care about progressing,

they should express their involvement and loyalty. I advise that mums who decided not to stay in touch with the team and the company for whatever reason should make contact with the employer well in advance and not at the last minute. Women then often admit that they have no idea what to say and that they are worried about their situation.

Employers have a huge role to play here. If the process of returning to work after childbirth has been formulated, the woman knows how to start her conversation with the boss. If not, it is advisable that the company should be the first to get in touch with the employee and lead the conversation.

THE BIG RETURN

If the previous stages were appropriately defined and prepared, the return to work should be smooth.

It is worth pointing out that employers talking about benefits for mums usually focus on the moment of return and the already mentioned layettes and gifts for mothers. However, in order for the return to be relatively pleasant, such benefits should be the icing on the cake of a comprehensive programme and process associated with building

a supportive organisational culture.

Parent Coaching may turn out to be an interesting tool, as it may help look after work-life balance and prepare mums for the return to work. Mums (or generally parents) appreciate all sorts of workshops and webinars delivering knowledge and tools concerning childcare, e.g. work- life balance, sleep of young children, time organisation, setting of priorities.

We should bear in mind that the woman is not the only parent. Organisational culture should also focus on shaping parental awareness of men - future or current fathers. Many of them declare their support for equality and engagement in childcare but in reality they rarely take parental leave. However, as the name suggests, parental leave is dedicated to both parents, even though it is women who take most of it.

In August 2022, when the work-life balance directive comes into force, there will be an opportunity for fathers to use their potential in childcare. Employers can become the allies of this change.



WHAT DOES A DAD THINK OF ALL THIS?

Łukasz Dominiak

Recruiter at Friisberg, Ambassador of the Share the Care Foundation

For over 10 years on the lookout for employees for various sectors, mainly pharmaceutical. In his work, he often deals with mums returning from maternity and child-rearing leave. Hearing their concerns and fears, he decided to become involved in the activities of the Share the Care Foundation. Psychologist, fan of music and football, dad of Mila and Leon. In his spare time he runs popular parenting profiles on social media.



I really do not know who called maternal and parental leave a ‘leave’. We know very well that not all children just sleep and feed (such babies are actually a rarity). The birth of a baby is a demanding time for the whole family - both for the woman who stays with the baby 24/7 and the man who is considered to be the ‘breadwinner’ and is expected to bring home the bacon. These expectations impose a massive pressure on both parents but in different areas.

From a male perspective, I can easily say that the pressure connected with job and financial security is enormous, which causes additional stress and much greater fears of losing one’s job than before. We tend to believe that it is the woman who should stay at home with the baby, as she would take better care of it, particularly in the initial period.

Of course, it is important for a mum to be close and there are moments in the first months of a baby’s life when mum is indispensable, particularly in the context of breastfeeding. However, I would risk the statement that a dad is equally important and not because he provides financial stability.

I believe that each of the parents is equally responsible and capable of wearing the armband

of the family team’s captain and it is best if the armband is worn interchangeably. I am a father of two children and in my professional life I specialise in recruitment. I am saddened by the fact that our culture still expects women to deal with childcare. Apart from social pressure, there is a simple economic calculation and analysis of what would ‘pay off’ better in the context of family budget. However, women increasingly play a leading role with regard to income and the disproportion between partners contributing to the family budget is becoming smaller, especially for those living and working in cities. Perhaps undermining the economic argument will lead to the revision of cultural filters and exposing of gender stereotypes, as there is no space for them in our world. I would even say that persisting with these patterns is just not worth it. Women, men and children all lose out - and this is evidenced by research.

Let us go back to the topic of ‘maternity and parental leave’ which has little to do with ‘leave’. A new mum is under a huge pressure from her environment but also from herself - she is a mum, after all and she should know how to cope, just as her mum knew how to cope and her neighbour and that mum from Instagram. This coupled with the real effort of looking after a baby makes this

an exhausting and demanding time for a woman, both physically and mentally. Strong support of the partner is much needed. Although I have to point out that I am irritated by the word ‘support’ - it makes me think of a pat on the back. I can see the role of dad as an equal partner who becomes involved to an extent that is sufficient for the woman to get real support and a sense that she does not carry this weight herself.

Another element which can be overwhelming for a woman is worrying about her professional life. As a recruiter for over 12 years I heard many such stories. Women return to the job market and the problem is not that they have nowhere to return to. The point is they return to slightly different organisations, new staff members, sometimes a new boss. This new environment adds to the already considerable stress connected with leaving their children with other people - often strangers - a nanny or a nursery teacher.

What could make return to work easier for women and increase their comfort is sharing parental leave with the father. The advantages of such a solution reach much further, one would say they impact the whole life. Considering this from a short-term perspective, when mum goes back to work, the child

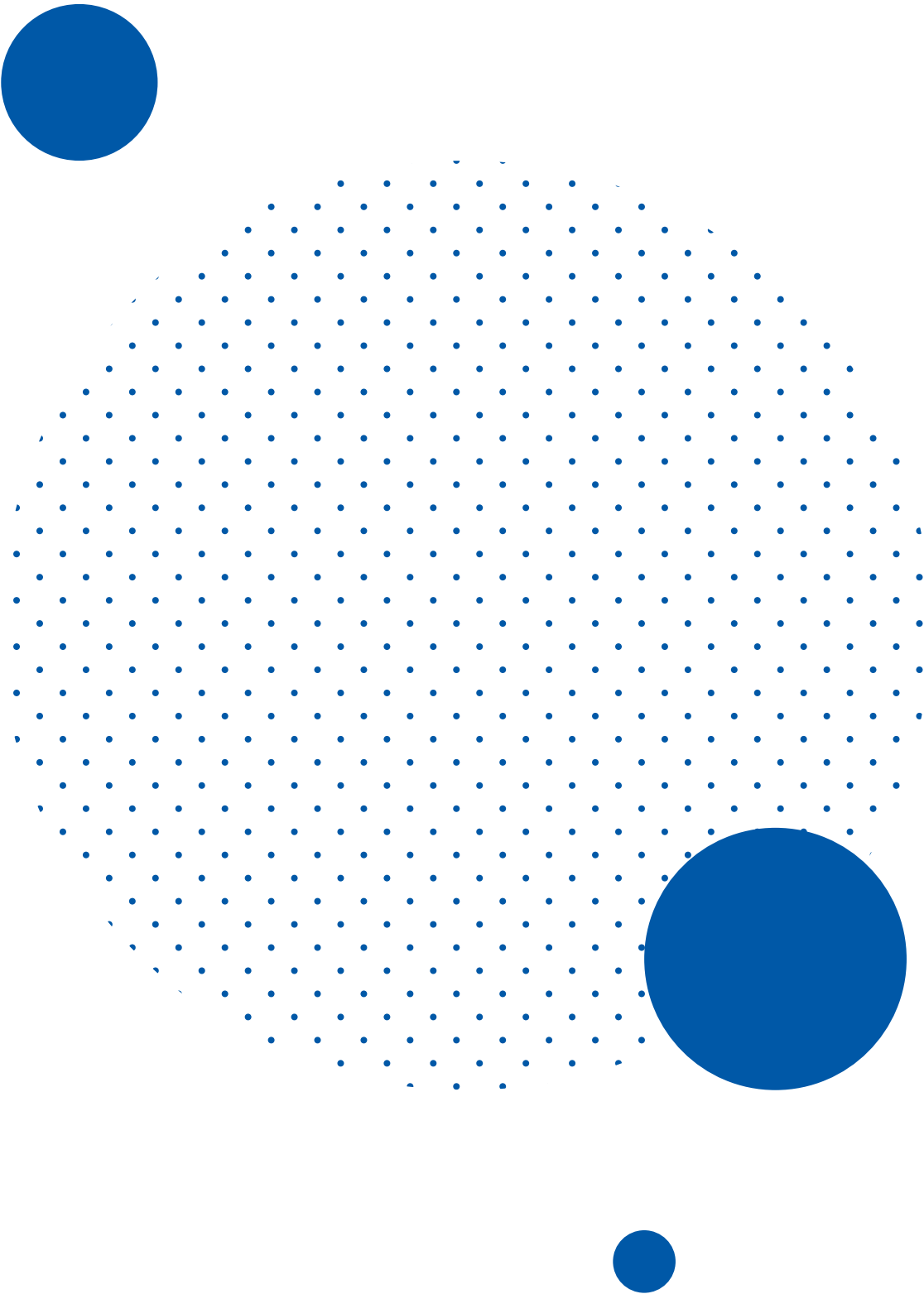
is looked after by a trusted person. In the longer term, a dad who gets a chance to stay at home with a child full-time becomes competent in his parental duties and has space for bonding with his child without the mum's supervision. This experience positively influences his ability to understand the needs of the child and the level of his engagement in the upbringing and household matters. It also increases his understanding of his partner. Moreover, he has a chance to take a break from work, get a different perspective and consider his life priorities. This time is very valuable as it allows men to look at their professional lives and decisions from a different perspective.

From my own experience I can say that building a bond with a child from the very beginning is valuable and unique. It is not possible to recover certain things once you have missed them and once at work during the day you do not have such contact with your child – particularly since men who feel the pressure of maintaining the family tend to work even longer and harder.

Sharing of parental leave between the parents will build a healthy balance in the family and in the lives of each of the parents. If somebody says that they care about the work-life balance, they should

start by sharing parental leave. As a dad and as a recruiter, I believe that everyone will benefit from it – parents, children and employers.

To conclude, here is one more observation from my professional practice. I often talk to women who return to the job market after childbirth. During recruitment meetings they lack self-confidence, they doubt their qualifications and whether they would cope in the new workplace. I can see a big role to play by the partners. Supporting one's partner in the process of going back to work so that she believes in herself is not to be overestimated. From my experience, I can see that contrary to women, men tend to overblow their qualifications and experience and exaggerate their achievements. Perhaps it's time men transferred some of that energy to women to help them fully realise their potential. It is definitely not likely to harm anyone. I will risk this statement – If we did that then we would all live in a much better world – a world managed equally by men and by women.



PARENTAL EQUALITY – A FLEDGLING BUT NOTICEABLE TREND IN THE POLISH LABOUR MARKET



According to the report ‘Parental equality in the Polish labour market’ by Polityka Insight commissioned by the Share the Care Foundation and Diversity in Check, activity for parental equality in the private sector in Poland is still niche.

A vast majority of businesses do not take up any additional activities (at their own cost) aimed at strengthening the culture of engaged fatherhood, while some do not even provide the benefits guaranteed by the state (e.g. using instead unofficial employment options outside the Labour Code). However, change leaders do appear. They can sense a wind of change in the labour market and new expectations of their employees.

The report prepared by Polityka Insight was based on indices which are not publicly available. For this reason only interested companies took part in the research. This way, an initial pre-selection was carried out - the surveys were filled out by representatives of companies which have already implemented some gender equality policies and which they wished to communicate.

The results of the analysis made it possible to select trendsetters in the area of parental equality and indicate five key categories of activities, which show the different approaches of companies to parenthood:

- 1. Funding for strengthening parental equality
- 2. Organisation of childcare by the company
- 3. Activity of employees who are fathers
- 4. Employee and management policy
- 5. Communications policy

In the context of the work-life balance directive, informing employees who are parents or carers about the changes and about how employees can take advantage of the new privileges will be extremely important.

Companies will implement packages of soft activities promoting equity, equality in sharing duties or encouraging working fathers to take leave. They can take advantage of the practices of companies participating in the ranking of Polityka Insight.

Nearly 40 percent of them:

- inform new employees, particularly those of working age, about rights and benefits they are eligible for,
- prepare guidelines and handbooks for parents-to-be,
- carry out training, workshops and webinars made accessible to employees on internal platforms,
- organise networking meetings for fathers to exchange experiences or express their fears,
- implement support programmes for parents and children (wellbeing, meetings with a psychologist).

BUSINESS IS NOT WAITING FOR THE DIRECTIVE

Good practices supporting equal
opportunities and rights of mothers
and fathers in companies



PHILIP MORRIS IN POLAND SUBSIDIES TO 100 PERCENT OF SALARY



Since 1 September 2021 Philip Morris International has been encouraging male employees to use parental leave by covering the difference in earnings for eight weeks of the father’s parental leave. This way the employer removed the key barrier discouraging men from taking parental leave.

Since 1 September 2021 Philip Morris International has been encouraging male employees to use parental leave by covering the difference in earnings for eight weeks of the father’s parental leave. This way the employer removed the key barrier discouraging men from taking parental leave.

The company introduced this solution with reference to a standard which Philip Morris International implemented globally. The employer decided to introduce top-down guidelines in a way adapted to Polish reality, so they could serve the overarching purpose – ensuring equal opportunities for women in the job market and for men in childcare.

“Mothers and fathers returning to work after parenthood-related leaves have an opportunity to work part-time with full pay for one month. This allows them to return to professional reality under

friendlier conditions. In September we extended the programme by offering fathers full pay while on eight-week parental leave by subsidising the pay over the level of parental allowance to which they are entitled. **We decided to introduce this solution to level the financial barrier and facilitate decision-making with regard to sharing the care between both parents. We believe that the whole family benefits as a result.** Fathers have an opportunity to provide care on their own, which makes it possible for women to return to their professional activity,” said Karolina Gębura-Nowak, People&Culture Director, Philip Morris International, PM Poland&Baltic States.

Such company policy does not only empower women to bridge the gender gap on the labour market, because it encourages them to return to professional activity, but also supports fathers on parental leave as carers with equal rights and abilities. “It is worth emphasising that women’s professional development does not stand in opposition with motherhood. Both these areas can be combined through greater engagement of the father,” added Anita Rogalska, Head of Global Leadership Development, PMI. An educational campaign about parental rights is an important element of parent support. When the Happy Parents

programme with extended benefits for fathers was introduced, Philip Morris launched an intranet page where employees can find key legal parental leave information and forms, as well as educational materials regarding benefits of leave-sharing for women, men and children.

It is worth pointing out that the introduction of this solution was preceded by research in which both parents and future parents working at PMI took part. It turned out that one of the areas requiring support was the period surrounding the birth of a child. It is a special time for both parents, but for women there is often additional stress associated with a gap in professional work.

Mums who took part in the research confirmed that the decision to stay at home with the child for longer was not often motivated by their own need. Some of them would be keen to return to work earlier – with appropriate support. Among men one could observe readiness to become more involved in the lives of their children and families. Fathers increasingly appreciate family relationships, but in order to look after them properly, one needs to find time. Men who had taken parental leave emphasised that it was a valuable time for bonding with the child and strengthening

their relationship with their partner. They admitted that after such a break they returned to work motivated and with renewed energy.

Thanks to this insight, the employer prepared a comprehensive parent-support programme.

Apart from the solutions described above, employees returning from maternity or parental leave are offered a special package by PMI called 'First month'. It is a unique solution for the Polish market. An employee is not obliged to work (up to half of the full time equivalent) during the first month after returning from maternity or parental leave with the right to full pay.

Employees on parenthood-related leave are taken into consideration for pay rises. If according to internal remuneration regulations they were due a pay rise (which they missed due to absence), employees receive it upon their return to work. The employer continuously takes care of adjusting the levels of remuneration to employee skills, irrespective of their gender.

The implementation of the extended Happy Parents programme was accompanied by a big campaign addressed to the employees and external recipients

building awareness of parental equality. Bus stop hoardings and adverts on buses in Warsaw and Cracow asked: "Why should a man go on parental leave? Because he became a parent", "Children or career? Or: children and career!". This campaign is an important step in normalising gender equality in society.



CITI EXTRA FULLY-PAID PATERNITY LEAVE



Since January 2021 Citi has offered its employees in Poland additional two weeks of fully paid (100 percent of salary) paternity leave. This way fathers can spend a whole month with their babies without losing out financially.

The bank came to a conclusion that since more and more mothers and fathers succeeding in the organisation have similar ambitions - both regarding investing in personal development and involvement in bringing up children - it is necessary to support both parents. Such an approach is present in Citi branches across the world.

How is this postulate carried out in practice? As a financial institution serving customers in over 140 countries, Citi has a global rule stating that men and women in equivalent positions are remunerated in the same way and have equal development opportunities. For this reason, in all its branches around the world the company implemented the so-called minimum standard - at least 16 weeks of fully-paid maternity leave (which in the case of Poland is already guaranteed by law) and four weeks of fully-paid paternity leave. In Poland, men are entitled to two weeks of fully-paid paternity leave, so the extra two weeks are financed by Citi. According to research, fear of losing one's job is the

main reason for men's failing to take parental leave in Poland. Therefore, Citi's initiative is important not only due to financial but also psychological reasons. **Noticing such a need is important, as the weight of gender stereotypes which we have to face all the time is enormous.** Many fathers would like to take parental leave but they refrain due to fear of losing their jobs or position and the employer's reaction. Many mums are also bound to have similar thoughts and mothers who return to work early are scared of social ostracism and expectations that women should look after children and home.

"I hope that such partnership will become increasingly popular and normal and initiatives of employers, like the one implemented by Citi, can also accelerate this change. **I know from my own experience that it's a wonderful time when we can focus on something we cared so much about and so eagerly awaited - a new family member.** This way we also help our partners carry out their own plans," emphasised Paweł Wróbel, director for remuneration and employee benefits at Citibank Europe PLC, Citi's business service centre in Poland.

The employer can also see that such a solution decreases the risk of men burning out. It is not often discussed but a month away from work and

diverting attention and energies to children and home makes it possible to gain some distance. Moreover, Citi takes various actions to support the development of women. They include mentoring, dedicated training and bridging the gender pay gap - carried out, among others, by the Inclusion and Diversity team responsible for diversity management and Citi Women Network. Levelling salaries requires regular pay reviews, which the company carries out in cooperation with a leading global consultant in remuneration systems management, including bridging the pay gap.

Parenting-related activities are also carried out by Families Matter Network, a group of volunteers supporting families, particularly parents, in striking the right balance between work and personal life. The Network focuses on educating parents, exchanging experiences, organising regular training and workshops where employees discuss good practices of partnership. All these activities are aimed at showing that the time spent with the family and with children is valuable, as is supporting employees becoming parents. The Network creates space where parents can openly discuss their everyday problems and get information on how to deal with children's aggression or how to support their emotional development.

The strategy is built in two ways - through shaping the attitudes of employees, both fathers and mothers, and by preparing the business and managers for actively supporting organisational culture open for parenthood, irrespective of gender. Childcare is still associated with a mother

- there is a need for education and big cultural change in that respect. Until now the organisation focused on the stereotype of a working mother and on how motherhood impacted the development of her career. Now a question arises: will a father wanting to take parental leave be understood? The employer is aware that a decision about several weeks of absence from work may constitute a barrier comparative to suspending one's career and so it may be difficult. For this reason, there are plans to organise psychological workshops on conscious fatherhood and the ability to adapt - switching between roles.

Moreover, Citi plans to launch a campaign: "I am a working dad. And what is your superpower?". As part of sharing good practices, meetings with fathers in senior positions who have taken advantage of parental leave will be organised.

The HR team continues labour law training for managers and employees. There is also a plan for

workshops for managers focused on working out business solutions dealing with the absence of the fathers.



STATE STREET BANK STRONGER TOGETHER - COMMUNITY BUILDING BASED ON EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS (ERGS)



Employee resource groups (ERGs) are voluntarily initiated employee networks, aimed at supporting varied and inclusive workplaces aligned with the organisations and communities they serve. Such initiatives are gaining in popularity, because they give employees a real opportunity to formally influence matters of importance to them in an organisation.

The groups are created by employees with common characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation), lifestyle or interests. **ERGs exist to provide support and help in personal and professional development. They create a safe space where employees may discuss topics of interest and initiate desirable changes in the organisation.** Their goal is also to educate the wider community about the issues important to a given group, which may result in greater understanding and support by co-workers and the organisation.

ERGs may be top-down, i.e. initiated by the management, and/or bottom-up, i.e. created and run by employees identifying with a given topic. ERGs should be endorsed by the management and receive a budget for their activities in order to have a real impact on behaviour or perception in the

workplace.

WORKING PARENTS CLUB AT STATE STREET BANK POLAND

The Working Parents Club has been active since 2012. Its main aim is to support parents working at the organisation to achieve balance between professional and family life. The club creates a friendly environment for sharing experiences, motivating and meeting other parents and is involved in creating pro-family solutions for employees, e.g. a development programme for parent employees and their managers, themed support groups and a parenting and work-related skills development programme.

The club currently consists of 25 active members, the so-called leaders. The initiative reached out to over 600 employees in Poland who subscribed to the club’s mailing list or logged into an internal site dedicated to the initiative. Leaders consist of both mothers and fathers.

In 2021, the club organised over 25 events for employees and their children. They included online

meetings and workshops, which concerned widely-defined support and development (e.g. webinars with a psychologist on bonding, nonviolent communication and practical tips on how to organise work at home with children in remote education).

One of the key initiatives of the club is the “Buddy for parent” programme, which offers support to employees returning from parenting-related leave. Persons returning after a longer absence receive a ‘buddy’ who helps them find themselves anew in the work environment.

“A guide for parents” has been in circulation for a few years. It is a document created together with the HR department containing key information which could be helpful both for parents-to-be and parents planning longer absence in the company or returning from leave.

One of the club’s initiatives is a “Development programme for parents and their managers”. It consists of workshops led in parallel:

- for parents - workshops concern planning parental leave and return to work supported by the company
- for managers - workshops show ways of building

an inclusive environment for working parents, enable participants to learn how to talk to parents or parents-to-be, teach recognising their needs and planning their career path together.

During the pandemic the club identified the needs of parents resulting from the new situation and organised support for caregiving employees. The biggest challenges were working from home with children, division of caregiving and home duties between men and women, a general feeling of uncertainty accompanying adults and children during the pandemic and the need to look after one's wellbeing while homeworking. In response to these needs, the club organised webinars and workshops with experts and prepared content showing the experience of parents working at State Street - their fears, reflections, and ways of dealing with difficulties. The articles concerned both everyday functioning in the pandemic and specific challenges faced by parents (e.g. parents of children with disabilities, adoptive parents, divorced parents). The club also organised virtual coffee break support group meetings. These were regular meetings dedicated to popularising the practice of nonviolent communication as a tool to use in family and professional life. Such meetings are a good opportunity to exchange experiences and

employees often voiced such a need. There were also seasonal online workshops concerning customs and traditions in various countries and cultural circles.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ERGS?

According to Monika Lis, Talent Development & Learning Project Manager and Mentor at State Street Bank, the main leader of the club, ERG plays an important role in supporting the theme of parenthood in an organisation and raising its profile. **“Employee resource groups are nothing new, but the pandemic renewed and strengthened the need for such programmes focused on building social bonds among employees, creating a space for expressing one's fears out loud and sharing experiences,”** Monika says. She adds that parents often have an impression that certain problems only concern them. When they join a group, they realise that others have similar experiences and they gain new energy and optimism. Moreover, their thoughts may become concrete solutions within the organisation because as a group they can be heard and noticed, since they prove a given problem is not individual. Some of State Street's good practices include

a development programme for parent-employees and their managers and constantly developing themed support circles, e.g. associating parents of children with disabilities. These initiatives are the result of active club members' discussions with their co-workers. The leaders surveyed the needs expressed by the employees and prepared solutions in cooperation with the Inclusion, Diversity & Equity department (IDE).

RULES OF OPERATION AND SUCCESS FACTORS

Employee resource groups operate as voluntary groups. They may have their separate budgets managed by ERG leaders. It is very important, as such an operating model guarantees independence and builds a sense of agency.

The management should support and finance ERGs. One of the best practices is ensuring that every ERG has a senior leader as an executive sponsor and full participant. In the case of the Working Parents Club at State Street Bank Poland, such a sponsor has been selected (Director of the IDE department), and cooperation with IDE enables

the promotion of the idea of inclusivity through the club's activities. Both men and women become involved in the club's activities, which is particularly important in the context of promoting engaged fatherhood within the organisation.

In order for ERGs to develop, executive management, immediate superiors and representatives of HR departments should bear a few elements in mind: individual appreciation of ERG members, recognition of effort put into voluntary work, engagement, e.g. in the form of mentoring, and aligning the group's work with business goals (e.g. representation of diverse groups or retention).

Complementing ERGs with an element of mentoring is an important success factor. The Working Parents Club is proud of a mentoring scheme initiated four years ago for women who wanted to return to work or change their career path. The programme is carried out in cooperation with NGOs, such as Mamo Pracuj and Fundacja Rozwoju Kwalifikacji Stella Vitrium. The mentors are recruited from mums working at State Street. The success of the programme is evidenced by the mentees who find employment, some at State Street Bank Poland.

The club cooperates with numerous NGOs. Apart

from the ones mentioned above, they include the Share the Care Foundation, Adoptive and Foster Families Association Profamilia and others. "Reaching out to organisations which are experts in a given topic and can not only support employees with their expertise but also indicate good practices from other organisations, is a valuable idea," says Monika Lis.

A company developing programmes engaging employees in ERGs can also carry out employee volunteering schemes. State Street Bank Poland offers 32 fully-paid volunteering hours per employee. Many employees use this time cooperating with social partners (foundations and associations) to help those in need, e.g. organisations supporting children in foster care (Sarigato Foundation or Ronald McDonald House)

At State Street Bank Poland, the combination of business goals with social goals translates into employee engagement in employee networks - many leaders and ERG members emphasise that this engagement increases their job satisfaction and gives them an opportunity to continuously develop other skills, such as management of project teams, project management, budget management, planning, cooperation and communication. ERGs also allow companies to build their brands and improve visibility on forums and social media.

First and foremost, however, ERGs have an enormous potential for social change both inside the company and outside in the local environment and sometimes even globally.



BNP PARIBAS BANK POLSKA AND THE POWER OF GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES



The ability to listen to the employees and understand their needs is one thing. Another thing is responding to these needs. As a large organisation BNP Paribas offers many benefits to its employees, including ones associated with parenthood. At the same time - and equally as important - it created an environment in which employees are encouraged to come up with ideas which are helpful in both professional and private life.

Employees are eager to take advantage of such possibilities, which is evidenced by the programmes run as part of employee networks - ‘Women changing BNP’ and ‘Dad, you can bank on it’. Let’s take a closer look.

‘DAD, YOU CAN BANK ON IT’

It is an initiative which was started by fathers employed at the bank focused on developing parenting skills, fathers’ rights, parental equality and taking of parental leave by men. The initiative was born in the office corridor when Konrad Siedlecki, a dad of two, started a conversation with his male colleagues about parenthood. It turned out that there was a need among fathers to share

experiences concerning childcare and talk about fatherhood with fellow men. The initiator of the project was taken aback that so few fathers were aware of their rights.

“Only just over 50 percent of fathers in Poland take the two-week fully-paid paternity leave, even though the first moments of a child’s life are unique and unrepeatable - it’s worth being present from the very beginning,” emphasised Konrad.

He took paternity leave after the birth of his first child. He knows from his personal experience how this translated into the bond with his child. “It’s no longer: ‘mummy, mummy!’ but also ‘daddy!,” he added.

Konrad’s observations are in line with the results of a quantitative study carried out by IQS on the perception of parental leave by fathers. “One of the key conclusions from the research is the need for conversations between men about fatherhood and their role in childcare,” pointed out Joanna Włodarczyk, sociologist, researcher, graduate of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences at Warsaw University, co-author of the study.

Many respondents stated that it was the only

opportunity for them to talk about their experiences and exchange advice in a group of other men.

Some statements of men taking part in the research included:

- “I have an impression that such conversations used to be a taboo topic for guys. We often tried to transfer the responsibility for bringing up a child onto the partner. Now the times have changed, we are responsible modern guys who want to actively participate in family life. Talking about this is extremely important and desirable.”
- “I’m glad that I could learn the perspectives of other men who have a few years’ experience bringing up children. So far, looking at my own family and friends, I have an impression that whenever a child is born it’s women who’ve had the biggest say and guys are standing aside without a voice. It was good to listen, in detail, to what happens, how our lives change, what both the challenges and benefits are of the period when the child is so young and can get more of your time.”
- “It’s cool to exchange experiences with other fathers.”

The narratives of men often emphasise that it is women who tend to talk about parenthood with other women, while men lack such a space. Additionally, as mentioned before, many men were surprised to learn that they play an important role in child development from the very start. A change in their way of thinking about this was visible during the discussion. Of course, it is difficult to judge how serious and permanent this change was, but there is at least the potential for conversations with men on this topic. This could be one of the ways to persuade them to become more involved in childcare and take at least two months of parental leave, which the work-life balance directive will guarantee.

- “After this conversation, I feel more motivated to spend more time with my child.”
- “Now, after this conversation, I think I would like to go on parental leave.”
- “Frankly speaking, I never sat down and discussed this topic with my partner. I think this evening we’ll sit down, have a cuppa and discuss this.”
- “After this meeting I would be inclined to take such leave.”

As part of the ‘Dad, you can bank on it’ initiative, members of the fathers’ network actively share knowledge through webinars and workshops covering fatherly needs in respect of both infants and older children. As part of last year’s ‘Days of Diversity’ an expert webinar on homeschooling was held, while events of Parental Week included, among other things, a meeting with a specialist on children’s psychosexual development. Fathers had an opportunity to share photos and discuss how they spend time with their children.

‘WOMEN CHANGING BNP’ SUPPORT WORKING PARENTS

The initiative ‘Women changing BNP’ was also created in a bottom-up way. The idea was initiated from the need to build gender equality, ensure greater representation of women within management and project structures and support diversity. The initiative was also aimed at including groups threatened by discrimination or exclusion by involvement in joint activities. For these reasons, some very specific solutions supporting parents were also launched as part of this initiative. It turned out that the women working at BNP Paribas

had a lot of ideas on how to further improve the conditions of mothers and fathers working in the organisation. All these initiatives were included in the ‘Friendly workplace’ programme.

This way an idea to create a one-stop shop with all the information on benefits and contact details for relevant specialists was created. “I knew that all the information was available somewhere, but I wanted to gather it all in one place so that it is easily accessible for parents in the organisation,” added the project’s author.

Kasia Zasada, expert in change management from the Quality and Change Management Team, at the initiative of the division’s head Sebastien Rollet, was involved in preparing two handbooks facilitating the return to work after childbirth: one for managers and one for parents. On the one hand, they included recommendations for managers on supporting parents-to-be, on the other - they provided key formal, legal and procedural information on matters such as how bonuses are calculated at BNP Paribas, whom and when to contact before taking parental leave or when returning to work after leave.

After the project was trialed internally within the division, Kasia thought it would be a good idea to

introduce these practices on a bigger scale. In order to action their ideas and popularise them, Kasia and Sylwia joined forces to develop them. They cooperated with a BNP Paribas unit responsible for benefits, which had a plan to create an intranet page for future and current parents. “We joined forces and suggested content, which parents needed but which was lacking,” said Kasia and Sylwia.

The central element of the project was an internet site where parents could find all the useful information - from becoming pregnant, through maternity leave, parental and child rearing leave to planning reboarding after parenting-related leaves. Activities addressed at parents already on such leave were also an important element.

As part of the project, Kasia and Sylwia carried out surveys among employees who had taken leave associated with the birth of a child in the previous 14 months and those who were on such leave at the time.

It turned out that not all employees had a need to be in touch with work while on leave but some did express such a need. The project looks after the needs of those who want to stay in touch with

the employer and systematises the matters which concern them. It gives an opportunity to take advantage of the initiatives organised by the bank on a no-commitment basis, such as a wellbeing programme not connected directly with work, online back exercises and webinars with interesting experts.

“We want parents on parenthood-related leaves to be aware of various events and employee benefits and have access to them. Especially now that most workshops, webinars and consultations are conducted online. It is useful for those on longer leaves to know about them,” Kasia and Sylwia pointed out.

Parents who want to be up to date with what is happening at the bank or who wish to take advantage of the initiatives of BNP Paribas bank during parental leaves are requested to provide their private email addresses.

Part of the ‘Friendly Workplace’ programme is including employees returning from long leave in the onboarding programme. The surveys suggested that many employees considered it important to be made familiar with the workplace again, refresh practical information useful in everyday work and

become acquainted with the benefits offered. “We are convinced that taking part in the reboarding training will make life easier for all those employees returning to work after a long break,” emphasised the initiators of the programme.

Project groups associated around parenting topics do not only develop parenting skills but are also meant to look after the health of all employees, e.g. by co-organising a cycle of webinars as part of ‘Health starts from the head’ project or Days of Health (in 2021 the event was largely dedicated to cancer prevention). Mental and physical wellbeing is, after all, a basis for good parenting. Issues such as support for parents - defining the role of grandparents and generational dialogue - are also important.

SANTANDER BANK POLSKA STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S SELF-ESTEEM



When starting a parental equality initiative, including the aspect of fathers’ use of parental leave, we automatically think that activities should centre around men. We assume that it is men who need to be encouraged to become more involved in the lives of their children early on.

Meanwhile, what is equally important is creating an environment of acceptance for women who are stereotypically labelled ‘the only good caregiver’ for their children. The weight of social and cultural expectations turns out to be a big barrier to reaching for what women really want.

Many women want to combine professional development with motherhood, but they are often perceived as ‘careerist’. In the syndicated research carried out by the Share the Care Foundation among the bank’s working parents and parents-to-be, women were asked what would motivate them to share parental leave with fathers. The second most popular response was “employer’s action for changing the stereotypical perception of gender”. This result was comparative with the data from other companies and shows how important it is to support women and counteract limiting cultural patterns.

Santander Bank Polska has created the ‘Santander Women’ programme, which is aimed at raising women’s self-confidence and self-esteem. As stated by Marta Pszczoła, Head of Talent Management and Organizational Culture Transformation, through its activities Santander Bank Polska shows that rather than diligent students, business requires discussion participants, who are not afraid of being themselves.

Through cooperation with organisations associating women and through partnerships in social campaigns, Santander Bank Polska defies stereotypes and inspires women to take leadership roles. The company pays attention to ensuring balance between the number of men and women taking part in development programmes, as well as succession and recruitment. These activities are particularly important for working mums, who often need support and confirmation that professional development does not stand in opposition with parenthood.

The programme includes inspirational meetings, developmental sessions, videocasts with experts supporting women. Experts help women plan their careers and deal with the stereotypes which block women’s potential. **“Society expects us to be meek**

and subtle. Luckily, we learn how to elbow our way and take the space we deserve,” emphasises Marta Pszczoła.

The programme provides support but what decides its effectiveness is its alignment with the bank’s business strategy. “We have particular indicators concerning recruitment of women in senior positions, mums returning to work after childbirth, bridging the pay gap. We are monitoring how our actions translate into particular goals we wanted to achieve,” points out Marta Pszczoła.

In March 2020, Santander Group announced the introduction of the so-called minimum standard concerning parental leave in all its markets. As emphasised in the communication, the bank implemented these standards to achieve the aim of increasing the number of women in senior positions to 40 percent in 2024.

In the next few months, global guidelines will be adjusted to the legal situation in every country where Santander is present. In Poland Santander is preparing for the implementation of the work-life balance directive. It is expected that the directive will encourage fathers to take parental leave. Over 90 percent of respondents indicated that men and

women should have the same rights and obligations regarding childcare and that the time spent with the father is as valuable for the child as the time spent with the mother.

The bank has already planned its activities which will prepare the organisation for parental leave for fathers. They include webinars for managers concerning parental equality and awareness-raising activities for HR Business Partners. Santander Bank Polska will continue and intensify the information campaign on the directive and parental prerogatives. In 2022, the ‘Santander Parents’ employee network has already been launched and work on an intranet site on parenting issues and rights is under way.



3M

BUILDING AWARENESS AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE



According to an annual trust and credibility survey ‘Edelman Trust Barometer 2022’, business remains the most trusted institution, ahead of NGOs at 59%, government at 52% and media at 50%..

Seventy-seven percent of respondents trust their employers, which makes the relationship between employer and employee particularly important.

The research clearly indicates that societal leadership is currently one of the key functions of business. Across every single issue, people want more business engagement, with economic inequality being enumerated in second place (after climate change).

According to the survey, business was most often indicated as taking a leadership role to solve societal problems and successfully executing plans and strategies. When asked about a trustworthy source of information, respondents tended to indicate their employers. The role of business and what is expected of it have never been clearer. For this reason the workplace environment is a good space for running educational and awareness-building campaigns.

Currently, to a large extent 3M focuses its activities

on widely-defined partnership, which is associated with the company’s global values resulting from its diversity strategy.

Every year in November 3M organises a Month of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity. Throughout the month employees take part in discussions, workshops and panels concerning respect, understanding and openness. Invited guests share their experiences associated with the culture of inclusion and tell their personal stories. In 2021, 3M started cooperation with external organisations such as the Share the Care Foundation and the United Nations Global Compact, which conducted webinars for employees about diversity.

The workshop run by the Share the Care Foundation ‘Partnership through women’s and men’s eyes’ was an opportunity to look at many everyday matters without the stereotypical filters which assign particular social roles to men and women. It turned out that having the ability to look at the other person from a different perspective was insightful and necessary. We don’t realise that in our everyday lives we are often ‘on autopilot’ and succumb to patterns which do not necessarily fit our needs.

The webinars run by the representatives of the

UNGC were focused on job market statistical data indicating significant differences according to gender. Among the topics discussed were gender pay gap, differences in education, involvement in household duties and also how the pandemic affected the comfort of both men and women.

3M also carries out its internal programme Women’s Leadership Forum (WLF). It is aimed at strengthening the role of women and promoting their development. It is important to the company that women working at 3M are more self-confident and have equal opportunities when it comes to employment and climbing the career ladder.

One of the main activities of the WLF are regular ‘Lean in Circles’ meetings. In a welcoming atmosphere of trust, openness and respect, the female participants can talk about self-confidence, mental resilience or personal branding. The meetings are attended, among others, by female 3M leaders who talk to their junior colleagues about career development based on their own experiences.

3M does not only support women’s professional development but also strives to balance out the number of male and female employees. The effects

can already be seen - while the average share of women in the industrial processing sector comes to just under 32 percent (data from Q3 2019, GUS), women working in 3M's Polish factories constitute 41 percent of staff. 3M's activity in that respect has recently been appreciated by the UN Global Compact Network Poland. **In October 2021, the company received prizes during the UN DAY ceremony for achieving the goals of the 2030 agenda in three categories, including activity in the area of equity in business.**

At 3M diversity is a strategic goal which is measurable. "When I talk about diversity, I mean first and foremost respect for the other person and the uniqueness of each of us. Our company draws on it and this is why we work in a friendly community based on mutual understanding. For me this is very valuable," said Agnieszka Wereżyńska, customer service manager at 3M Global Service Center in Wrocław.

In 2020, 3M prepared its first ever Diversity, Equity and Inclusion report. It sets a global goal: increase diverse staff (as regards gender, race, religion, etc.) in management positions from 32.6 percent to 65.2 percent. The progress of achievement in that respect is monitored by the Diversity Index, which

since 2015 has been measuring how effective action focused on diversity, justice and equity has been. Currently, the index is at 43.3 percent, which means an increase by over 10 percent in 5 years.

A global inclusion index developed by 3M in 2017 measures to what extent 3M employees feel an important part of the company. The index is based on the data from employee surveys and is the foundation of activity supporting the culture of inclusion. The recent research has revealed a 5-percent rise of the index year-on-year (from 71 percent in 2019 to 76 percent in 2020), which confirms that 3M is an employer focused on openness, understanding and respect. This fact is reflected in the results of the Great Place to Work cyclical research where 3M has consistently found itself amongst the leaders. In 2021, 3M ranked sixth, also thanks to its presence on the Great Place to Work list in Poland.

In addition to the activities associated with communication, 3M offers a range of work-life balance benefits to working parents. Topics such as wellbeing, health, relaxation and combining professional life with family life are key elements of the company's organisational culture.

Employees with children may count on help with childcare. July 2018 saw the organisation of the first ever summer day camps for children of employees. The event met with very positive feedback from both employees and their children and so it has continued. Extra support in childcare was much sought after and highly appreciated by employees, especially during the pandemic.

FlexAbility is yet another programme at 3M GSC aimed at allowing employees to maintain balance between work and private life by changing habits associated with ways of working and the workplace. As part of the programme, employees can choose between the following tools: task-based working time for employees meeting particular conditions, flexible work starting time for particular departments and working from home.

Additionally, for the past three years, 3M employees have participated in the 'Two hours for family' campaign. The initiative received warm welcome from employees and their families. Employees can freely decide when, on one day per year, they wish to devote two hours to family life - some prefer to spend them having a relaxed breakfast with the family, others prefer to finish work earlier and play with their children or go on a family walk. As part

of this initiative, we send employees an email with the information about this event and let them know they are entitled to two hours off on that particular day.



RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARDS

- If your company implements a strategy of diversity and inclusivity in its activities, then promoting parental leave for fathers is indisputably in your interest and will help you achieve your goals.
- The work-life balance directive will come into force in August 2022, so if you want to be a change leader, start acting today.
- If you want fathers working at your company to use parental leave, make sure that this issue is included in the company policy and that departments working on communication, processes and procedures understand that this topic is backed by the board.
- Involve communications, HR, payroll and legal departments to jointly prepare solutions supporting fathers wanting to use parental leave.
- Include line managers in the change-making process. To a large extent, the success of this process depends on their attitude to fathers on parental leave, because they are the ones who are approached by new fathers first. It is they who in fact represent the company's stand and it is their reaction that may influence a new father's decision whether or not to take parental leave. Managers must feel the board's support because they are the ones who are responsible for maintaining the company's business processes.
- The conversation about parental leave for fathers can open up a discussion about women returning to work after childbirth. They often do not feel they have potential within the organisation, they feel guilty of not being good enough and - being mothers - of not being able to satisfy the company's demands. Showing women that motherhood does not stand in opposition to their careers and can even significantly enrich them is a way to build a truly diverse organisation, consisting of happy employees (both at home and at work).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HR AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Research and analyse. Start your change-making process from checking the parents’ attitude to parental equality, sharing parental leave, needs of mums and dads. The material acquired will allow you to better plan the activities responding to real fears, barriers and strengthening key arguments supporting the change.
- Address your communication and activities separately to mums and dads. Practice shows that when you talk or write to both parents, your communication is received mainly by women.
- Create a team which will ensure the communication is in line with company procedures and processes. Practice shows that a discrepancy between official communication and what the employee really experiences contacting HR and the manager may bring a reverse effect.
- Acquire ambassadors and promote role models, i.e. mums who reconcile motherhood with professional development and fathers who have taken parental leave.
- Support the acquisition of parental skills by men and create a space for sharing their parental experiences. Workshops, webinars and grassroots employee groups (for fathers or parents) will be helpful in achieving this.
- Keep on assuring women that professional development does not contradict motherhood. Build a positive image of working mums.
- Help debunk harmful gender stereotypes claiming that men are reliable employees and breadwinners, while women are the ones looking after the family and not really interested in professional development.
- Include managers in the process of building a culture supporting parental equality. Organise workshops which will make them realise why such activities are important for the company and what benefits they can get. Listen to their concerns and create solutions supporting managers during the fathers’ absence.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PERSONNEL AND PAYROLL DEPARTMENT

- Ensure that your knowledge of parental leave options for fathers is up to date. Practice indicates numerous errors in this area.
- The work-life balance directive will influence the changes in the Labour Code.
- Analyse your procedures and forms associated with parental leave sharing. If you do not have such procedures yet, it is worth preparing them.
- Together with the HR department, outline the procedures and processes in a way that is understandable for parents. We recommend that separate instructions for mums and dads should be created, because their paths of completing formalities may differ.
- If mums approach you directly with questions about formalities, let them know about the various options for using leave. Do not assume that the woman will take full 52-weeks leave up front.
- Inform parents about advantages and disadvantages of taking leave ‘up front’ and ‘in parts’ so that they are aware of the consequences of choosing a particular option.
- Ensure that fathers know of all the available options for spending time with a newborn included in the Labour Code. Many of them do not use their entitlements because they have no knowledge of them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGERS

Managers are the key link of change when it comes to leave for fathers. An employee wishing to probe the company’s reaction to his application for parental leave will come to you first. Your first reaction demonstrates the company’s stand. Let’s say it straight – you have a great responsibility.

Employees who are fathers may have similar questions in mind:

- Will my manager understand my need?
- Will my manager be angry that I want to go on parental leave?
- Will I be fired?
- Will the team cope without me?
- Will my team think that I”sit at home with my child” instead of working?
- Will I be stripped of bonus, pay rise and will no longer be assigned to interesting projects?

If you were to apply for parental leave, you would probably have similar thoughts.

Perhaps you are a father already and your children have grown up. Perhaps when they were born there was no option for fathers to take parental leave. Older generations of men understand family love as ensuring financial stability.

Younger men perceive it as having a deep bond with family members. Think about this change – how do you understand loving your family?

Irrespective of your attitude, bear in mind that the world is changing – be open to these changes. The labour market and employee needs have changed dramatically. If you want to have an engaged team, you have to treat your employees like partners and pay attention to their work-life balance needs.

If company policy regarding building parental equality is not clear to you or you understand its importance but you feel that at the end of the day it is you who will be left with the problem,

let the team responsible for communications and processes know. Support for managers is an indispensable element of the success of any activities in that respect.

It is normal to be afraid of changes. For years we were being persuaded that childcare should be performed by mothers. Recognising fathers as fully-fledged carers is very important, but difficult. Men want to bond with their children from the very beginning, they want to equally share the duties resulting from having a family and give their partners a chance for professional development which they themselves enjoy.

We are witnesses to great changes – you are part of them.



FUNDACJA —
SHARE THE CARE

We know that employers play a key role in building equality in the labor market, which is why the Share the Care Foundation supports companies in implementing parental equality solutions.

We will help you prepare your company for the implementation of the work-life balance directive through:

- workshops for employees, managers, HR and human resources and management departments
- syndicated research to help prepare a proper strategy, communication and procedures that will answer the work-life balance directive
- advisory activities in the field of strategies and activities aimed at building parental equality in the organization
- preparation of e-books and educational materials for internal communication

Take advantage of our knowledge and experience. Let's create a world of equal opportunities together.

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