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What are family friendly policies?

Family friendly policies work towards the improvement of the work-life balance of the employees combining working life and active family life.

Different models and practices of policies exist, often in dependence on governmental recommendations and laws. However, there are also additional practices performed by the institutions. This report contributes to the understanding of the situation within EDIT. The learning from the best practices of our partners is desired.

The parameters

Parental leave: The legal time-off to take care of the child (usually right after the birth or adoption).

Paternity leave: A special time-off for the father, often in connection with the child birth

Time-off for emergency leave: A spontaneous short term leave, e.g. if a child is ill

Term-time working: An unpaid prolonged leave during school vacations

Flexitime: Flexible starting and ending time of work, respecting the number of working hours per day

Job sharing: Several people share one full-time position

Working from home/tele-working: Possibility to work during regular working hours from home

Ability to change from full-time to part-time hours: e.g. after child birth

Career breaks: A break lasting some months up to several years, e.g. in connection with certain family situations

Equal opportunity parameters: Certain rules implemented when recruiting new staff to respect equal recruitment of e.g. different races, sexes, and people with disabilities.

Survey on family friendly policies within EDIT

The family friendly policies have been analysed by means of a questionnaire sent out to all EDIT partners via the team-leaders mailing list (questionnaire in Annex). In cases where no answer was received, also the GAP representatives have been contacted.

The following 17 partners participated in the study: Belgium: BG Meise (NBGB), NHM Brussels (RBINS), Museum for Central Africa Tervuren (RMCA); Denmark: BG&NHM Copenhagen (UKBH-NHMD), France: NHM Paris (MNHN); Germany: BG Berlin (FUB-BGBM), NHM Stuttgart (SMNS); Poland: NHM&University (MIZPAN); Russia: Bot. Inst. St. Petersburg (BINRAS); Slovakia: Inst. of Botany (IBSAS); The Netherlands: National Herbarium (NHN), Schimmelcultures (CBS), NHM Naturalis (NNM Naturalis); UK: BG Kew (RBGK), NHM London (NHML); Organisations: Species 2000 and SMEBD.

The family friendly parameters in EDIT

This study focuses mainly on the practices concerning parental leave and flexible working schemes. Some additional questions about child care facilities, equal opportunity parameters, and meeting times have been addressed as well. The statistics can be seen in the Annex.

A. Practices of parental leave

All contributors (1 partner did not answer on parental leave) have rules concerning parental leave. The length of leave and amount paid (often calculated in percentage of the original salary) during this time vary between the partners. Sometimes there are different modules of parental leave which the parents can choose upon.

Three partners have an unpaid parental leave. Four partners a parental leave of three months (50-80% of salary) and nine partners have a paid parental leave longer than 3 months. Here the length of leave and amount paid differ. For example, some partners have 5 months of leave with full salary, 6 months with 80%, 1 year with degrading salary or the length of the leave is in correlation with the usual working hours per week. At 13 institutions there is the possibility to take paternity leave. These rules, however, are only valid for staff working under certain contract conditions. Staff working under project conditions may not profit of these policies.

B. Practices of flexible working schemes

All institutions (one skipped answer) offer several modules of flexible working schemes. The most common practices are the possibility to change from a full-time position to a part-time occupation (14 institutions), to work from home (12 institutions), to have career breaks and to work flexi-time (11 institutions). Other practices are job sharing (7 institutions) and term-time working (practiced in 6 institutions). At almost all institutions the employees have the possibility to take emergency off, for example when a child is ill. In some institutions it is possible to agree on flexible working schemes depending on the personal situation and the job profile, even if concrete rules are missing.

C. Child care facilities

Two institutions offer child care facilities at the working place, three partners provide financial aid for child care.

D. Meeting hours

In general there are no official rules on family friendly meeting hours. However, in most cases there are no staff meetings during weekends (10 institutions) or after 17:00 (8 institutions).

E. Equal opportunity parameters

Fourteen institutions apply equal opportunity parameters when employing staff.

F. Documentation on family friendly policies

Ten institutions have good available information on family friendly policies for their staff, whether in printed form, on the web or they have especially trained staff providing information on these issues.

Best practices from EDIT partners

BG Berlin and NHM Brussels provide child care facilities, saving travel time to the kindergarten and allowing mothers to carry on breast feeding. BG Berlin, belonging to the Freie Universität Berlin, has also access to a family office, **supporting families in different matters**.

The NHM London has all documents available on internet and offers also an Employee Assistance Programme available to all employees and their families, providing information, support and assistance on a number of issues including legal matters, childcare, eldercare, work/life balance (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

BG Meise implies especially during school vacations tele-working to facilitate child care.

In NHM&University Poland travel costs of a 2 weeks holiday is partly refunded in relation to the financial situation of the family and Christmas presents (cheques for shopping) are distributed.

Recommendations

All EDIT partners should make the information about family friendly policies easily available to their staff, e.g. as printed material handed out to all employees or on the internet. Especially helpful is human resource staff trained on these issues.

A kindergarten in the institutions saves time and travelling way for young parents.

A recommendation for EDIT meetings from the GAP liaison group (Faro, January 2008) is that international meetings should start anytime but Monday morning. Monday morning meetings require to travel already on Sundays and means less family time.

The EDIT-GAP child care grant gives financial aid for child care during international meetings and workshops, please inform your staff about this possibility.

Abbreviations:

BG: Botanical Garden; GAP: Gender Action Plan; NHM: Natural History Museum

ANNEX: The survey outline and results can be consulted at:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=xKPbZoCeQ0MzsPr5VaviYg_3d_3d

http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=CrU6_2b8GKufNEvy3sl21hBwMIP09IxW0o8Tu3xHD8Z3k_3d