Balanced work-life model

GRAND CHALLENGES :

C1. Health, demographic change and wellbeing

C4. Smart, green and integrated transport

C6. Europe in a Changing World – inclusive, innovative and reflective societies

CHALLENGE

Work-life unbalance can be felt at many levels: time wasted in commuting between home and work, long working hours preventing from social interactions, work stability, lack of time for personal development and family and children care, restricted work flexibility, unhealthy lifestyles. In the future, it will be important to distribute work flexibly throughout life and also flexibly shift between employed (paid) and unemployed (volunteer) work.

This is needed and proved by research from two perspectives:

- From the organisational perspective: a more balanced model would make employees more productive and efficient.

- From a societal perspective: a more balanced model would make people more fulfilled and by consequence healthier. Thereby people will be able to take care of their loved ones when needed, pursue personal fulfilment and/or follow multiple careers and slowly shift into retirement. Nowadays workers experience a tension between too much flexibility and too strict boundaries and vice versa. If from one side there is a need of more flexibility on the workplace, on the other side there is a concern that too much flexibility would destroy boundaries between personal and professional life. This can negatively affect well-being. There is a need for making the negotiation between employees and employers more balanced and fair.

SCOPE

Research should rethink the definition of "work" and develop approaches that permit to recognize and reward as "work" all different kinds of human activities including socially valuable daily life activities such as domestic work, childcare, caring for the elderly and social work. Research should help identify and define the different flexible forms of work. Studies could be carried out to analyse the sectors that would fit and not fit for different flexible forms of work, and identify/evaluate the barriers for introducing new forms of flexible work. Research should also pay a particular attention to the relation of negotiation between enterprises and employees (balanced and fair). However, research should also investigate different frameworks to assess the workload and/or it's accomplishment. It will intend to help people feeling satisfied (and healthy) with their tasks/work, as well as with their personal life as they experience a sufficient degree of flexibility. In this sense, research should help to create a setting where there is flexibility within boundaries and boundaries within flexibility. What is missing is performance research from the organisational perspective, in order to link it with the existing on personal life research. As work-life balance has been researched for a long time, there is a need that the research that has been done is put into practice.

EXPECTED IMPACT

Online consultation rating

- Assessed impact on family and social relations of more balanced work-life models
- Workers would be more satisfied overall and even more productive during working time
- This will allow people to more freely choose their lifestyles and reduce social judgments and prejudices
- Greater understanding and recognition of the impact on the society in short and long term of extra-work activities/personal activities

6 Balanced work-life model

Grand Challenges :
1: Health, demographic change and wellbeing
4: Smart, green and integrated transport
6: Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative and reflective societies

CHALLENGE
Work-life unbalance can be felt at many levels: time wasted in commuting between home and work, long working hours preventing from social interactions, work stability, lack of time for personal development and family and children care, restricted work flexibility, unhealthy lifestyles. In the future, it will be important to distribute work flexibly throughout life and also flexibly shift between employed (paid) and unemployed (volunteer) work.
This is needed and proved by research from two perspectives:
- From the organisational perspective: a more balanced model would make employees more productive and efficient.
- From a societal perspective: a more balanced model would make people more fulfilled and by consequence healthier.
Thereby people will be able to take care of their loved ones when needed, pursue personal fulfilment and/or follow multiple careers and slowly shift into retirement.
Nowadays workers experience a tension between too much flexibility and too strict boundaries and vice versa. If from one side there is a need of more flexibility on the workplace, on the other side there is a concern that too much flexibility would destroy boundaries between personal and professional life. This can negatively affect well-being. There is a need for making the negotiation between employees and employers more balanced and fair.

SCOPE
Research should rethink the definition of "work" and develop approaches that permit to recognize and reward as "work" all different kinds of human activities including socially valuable daily life activities such as domestic work, childcare, caring for the elderly and social work. Research should help identify and define the different flexible forms of work. Studies could be carried out to analyse the sectors that would fit and not fit for different flexible forms of work, and identify/evaluate the barriers for introducing new forms of flexible work. Research should also pay a particular attention to the relation of negotiation between enterprises and employees (balanced and fair).
However, research should also investigate different frameworks to assess the workload and/or it's accomplishment. It will intend to help people feeling satisfied (and healthy) with their tasks/work, as well as with their personal life as they experience a sufficient degree of flexibility. In this sense, research should help to create a setting where there is flexibility within boundaries and boundaries within flexibility.

What is missing is performance research from the organisational perspective, in order to link it with the existing on personal life research. As work-life balance has been researched for a long time, there is a need that the research that has been done is put into practice.

EXPECTED IMPACT

Assessed impact on family and social relations of more balanced work-life models
Workers would be more satisfied overall and even more productive during working time
This will allow people to more freely choose their lifestyles and reduce social judgm
and prejudices.
Greater understanding and recognition of the impact on the society in short and lon
term of extra-work activities/personal activities
 Online consultation rating: average importance: **4.**4/5
 Countries where this is priority: Italy, Poland (1), Austria-Citizens, Slovenia (2), Latvia (3), Austria Stakeholder **(**4).

CITIZENS' VISIONS
[LAT] Vision 5: Work as a means of expression
"Job is 100% flexible: work at home and elsewhere, choice of working hours, a possibility to adapt and choose responsibilities and tasks; appropriate reward. One life – a lot of roles – continues development."

[HUN] Vision 2: The rise of a backward region
"They declared their satisfaction with the shorter and flexible working hours (6 hour workdays), the higher wage that provides well for their livelihood, and the healthy working conditions."

 [FR] Vision 5: Living in a balanced society
"Our working time (around 20h/week) allow us to participate to citizen actions and to be radiant in our family life and leisure time. Our free time allow us for instance to be involved in volunteering and educational fields."

[DE] Vision 6: The future of work
"Flexible work models are par for the course
More working from home /also half days and quarter days" [...]
"flexible annual working time"

[LUX] Vision 4: Technology at society's service
"I work 4 hours. This allows me to have lunch with my children and my partner in the community kitchen in our participatory house. Then I spend some time with my daughter in the surrounding wood. I started to get involved in participatory life in various forms …"

[SVN] Vision 6: Equality and Human Rights – A driver of Social Development
"Intergenerational cooperation - the transfer of knowledge and traditions, care for the elderly after working active age [...] Fair society of responsible people who act for the common good."*

[SVN] Vision 5: Prosperity and work activity of citizens

"- optimization of labor situation today: flexibility today means working + 8 hours and a lot of working overtime;
- emphasis on individualization, rather than on the importance of taking care for the community."

[FR] Vision 4: Sharing common values to live better together
"- Reflection of feasibility of a minimum income or unconditional income or basic income, financed through local currency
- Education"

[IRE] Vision 3: Relationships with one another and the environment
"Work / life balance will be different. More time for relationships, culture, society e.g. look at Danish model."

[PORT] Vision 4: Culture with all for development
"In 2050 we do not concentrate on productivity (which means ultimately aiming at profit) but on everybody's individual happiness index. That will feed the happiness of the collective." [WP2]

Policy recommendations for work life balance and wellbeing

1. At work, there is a need to **shift the focus of technology implementation from the organisational interests to the end-users interests**. And due to technological developments this represents a huge potential for the organisations and the employees. Therefore we recommend a **policy which systematically introduces a "well-being gate" anytime a technology is introduced within the workplace, in order to assess if the "human" requirements of employees (end-users) are met.** A lot of research in this field has already been done the innovative part is to put into practice the findings (applied research).

So far employees passively have to go through what employers decided. Technology development has to become more "end-user centric", starting from the employees' needs and not just from the business ones (employer, organization…). There is a need to introduce an "integrated system design" process while developing and adopting new technologies within the workplace, pursuing a bottom-up approach. In this way it is guaranteed that the needs of the end-user are taken into consideration and not just the interests of the

employers. In order to reach this goal and guarantee that a satisfying level of well-being is preserved, human factors specialists should be integrated inside organisations.

Despite the fact that this might appear not innovative, the reality is that this recommendation is not generalised yet, even though it is obvious.

2. Organizations should include **strategies to "deliver" the research findings that have been already done about more balanced work-life models**.

A lot of research has been already carried out in this field but what we need are tools to develop skills in areas such as personal ability to organize the work. This recommendation suggests the way the research already done needs to be applied within business contexts.

Additional comment: There is a need to reposition "labour unions" in contemporary society. They not appear in the citizens visions (Step 1 of Cimulact) and this may be a signal for a need for research and policy initiative to redesign the role of labour union in the 21st century.