

IZVIRNI ZNANSTVENI ČLANEK – ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

HOW CAN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CONTRIBUTE TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE: EXAMPLE OF THE "FAMILY-FRIENDLY ENTERPRISE" CERTIFICATE IN SLOVENIA

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Prispevek družbene odgovornosti podjetij k enakosti spolov in usklajevanju poklicnega in družinskega življenja

1 Introduction

In the last two decades or so, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an important issue in business, research, and political communities. In this context, the relation between CSR and employee issues has been gaining importance (Golob 2007). In the European Union in particular, there is much concern about human resource management in socially responsible enterprises,¹ aimed at guaranteeing equal opportunities and enabling/easing work-life balance.

Reconciliation of professional and family obligations seems to be a burning issue. In a recent European public opinion survey, half of the interviewees found it difficult to combine work and family life: For one in seven interviewees (14%), finding the right balance was very difficult, while 37% thought it was fairly difficult. As much as 55% of the women and 46% of the men found it very or fairly difficult to combine work and family life (European Commission 2008: 5).

We have witnessed a considerable increase in female employment in Europe in the last three decades that, in most of the countries, was not accompanied by any considerable change in male time-use patterns. Although men (fathers) are ever more ready to take on some of the household and caretaking tasks, (working) women are still performing the bulk of such work as well. The difficulties in balancing professional work and family obligations increase the risk of women's occupational and social exclusion. Young working women who are planning motherhood also experience discrimination. Employers perceive women as less effective than male employees because the periods of professional inactivity (due to maternity and parental leaves that are quite long in Europe² as well as the care of sick children) tend to lower their professional knowledge and skills. As a result, there is a need to improve the balance between professional work and family—particularly for young women, but also for parents with under-age children in general if we want men to take on a more active parental role.

In 2004, the European Commission initiated the second round of the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL. Within that framework, national development partnerships were started to deal with specific projects aimed at increasing various aspects of equality in the society. In this paper, some achievements and results of the Slovenian Development Partnership "Young Mother/

Abstract

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Corporate social responsibility in the field of work-life balance and gender equality (equal opportunities) is increasingly becoming a strategic issue for companies. Extensive literature indicates a positive impact of corporate social responsibility on employees, enterprises, the national economy, and society as a whole. Certifying/awarding and public exposure of best practices/enterprises/organisations have proved to be a good way to stimulate the introduction of family-friendly policies with a gender-equality dimension. This paper presents the introduction of the "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate in Slovenia.

Key words: corporate social responsibility, gender equality, work-life balance

Izvleček

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Družbena odgovornost podjetij na področju usklajevanja poklicnega in družinskega življenja ter enakosti (enakih možnosti) spolov postaja za podjetja vse bolj strateško pomembna. Obstaja obsežna literatura o pozitivnih učinkih družbene odgovornosti podjetij na zaposlene, podjetja sama, narodno gospodarstvo in celotno družbo. Certificiranje/nagrajevanje in javno izpostavljanje najboljših praktičnih primerov/podjetij/organizacij se je pokazalo kot dober način stimuliranja uvedbe družini prijaznih politik/ukrepov, ki hkrati prispevajo k enakosti spolov. V članku je prikazana uvedba certifikata "Družini prijazno podjetje" v Sloveniji.

Ključne besede: družbena odgovornost podjetij, enakost spolov, usklajevanje profesionalnega in družinskega življenja

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¹ The term *enterprise* used throughout the paper includes both for-profit and non-profit companies and organisations.

² See Moss and Korintus (2008) for an overview.

Family-Friendly Employment”³ (henceforth: DP) are presented. The DP’s main goal was to decrease (hidden) discrimination against young women—namely, (potential) mothers—due to maternity in the labour market. It planned to achieve this goal by 1) conducting economic and sociological research on the extent of the problem, on which to build the search for appropriate solutions; 2) informing and educating the target groups, particularly employers and (potential) parents of young children; 3) generating public exposure of the discrimination against young women in the labour market; and 4) publicly acknowledging the enterprises with non-discriminatory attitude towards those who are planning to have or already have small children. Among the questions to be answered by the DP were the following: What impact can family-friendly policies have on enterprises? How do these policies, particularly regarding equal opportunities, influence young women and young families?

The DP’s programme, including the “Family-Friendly Enterprise” initiative, was based on some preliminary findings for Slovenia:

- A survey by the Slovenian Government Information Office showed that 28% of employees had felt disadvantaged in the workplace (unequally treated by their employer) due to their status of a parent (MoLFSA 1995);
- A large number of reported cases of discrimination against women in the labour market and in the workplace due to (potential) maternity (reports to toll-free anonymous phone number of the Slovenian Government Office for Equal Opportunities);⁴
- The DP’s own research conducted in 2006 (Kanjuro Mrčela and Černigoj Sadar 2007), which confirmed the presence of discrimination based on family status. Particularly vulnerable groups are mothers and potential mothers, those men who want to use their parental rights as granted by the law, and parents of pre-school children.

Together with three other development partnerships (Italian, Spanish and Polish ones), the Slovenian DP further formed a Transnational Partnership (TNP) named “P4E” (Partnership for Equality). The common topic was similar to the Slovenian one, although somewhat more extensive:

³ Partners in the Slovenian Development Partnership “Young Mother/Family-Friendly Employment” included two research/educational institutions (Institute for Economic Research as a co-ordinator and Faculty of Social Sciences), one NGO (Institute Ekvilib, where the idea of the project was born), the Association of Employers of Slovenia, and three trade unions (Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia; PERGAM - The Confederation of Trade Unions of Slovenia, and the Institute for Information and Assistance to the Unemployed and Job Seekers, the last being founded by the Trade Union of the Unemployed of Slovenia). The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, and the Governmental Office for Equal Opportunities were strategic partners.

⁴ The Office for Female Policy (now Office for Equal Opportunities) reported on this during the Second report of the Republic of Slovenia on the realisation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

CSR and gender equality. The partners set the goal to determine whether—and if so, how—the issue of gender equality is included in the perception of CSR in their respective countries. The TNP also sought to detect those measures in the CSR practice that contribute to achieving the work-life balance, particularly with regard to care responsibilities and equal career opportunities for both sexes. TNP’s final output is a toolkit for employers to practice CSR and gender equality. It is written in the entrepreneurs’ language and includes basic definitions, practical information, suggestions and recommendations, and examples of best practices.

In the second chapter of this paper, the relationship between CSR and work-life balance is presented. The third chapter deals with positive economic impact of family-friendly policies in enterprises. The fourth chapter is devoted to certifying CSR. The case of the “Family-Friendly Enterprise Certificate” is presented, preceded by some relevant background information about Slovenia. Our conclusions are in the fifth chapter.

2 Corporate Social Responsibility and Work-Life Balance

CSR in the field of work-life balance and gender equality⁵ (equal opportunities) is increasingly becoming a strategic issue for enterprises. In 2001, the European Commission (EC) tackled it in the EU green paper “Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility”. In this document, CSR is defined as:

a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment. (...) This responsibility is expressed towards employees and more generally towards all the stakeholders affected by business and which in turn can influence its success. These developments reflect the growing expectations that European citizens and stakeholders have of the evolving role of companies in the new and changing society of today (European Commission 2001: 5).

Being socially responsible means not only fulfilling legal expectations, but also going beyond compliance and investing ‘more’ into human capital, the environment and the relations with stakeholders. (...) Corporate social responsibility should nevertheless not be seen as a substitute to regulation or legislation concerning social rights or environmental standards, including the development of new appropriate legislation (European Commission 2001: 8).

A responsible enterprise must be able to balance “internal” and “external” facets of the CSR and include both internal stakeholders (e.g., employees) and external

⁵ According to the European Commission, gender equality means equality between men and women in all activities and policies at all levels. In line with this, European Union has adopted a policy of mainstreaming in order to promote and advance gender equality (European Commission 1996).

stakeholders (e.g., customers, NGOs, local communities) in the relevant policies and activities. The "external" factors include caring for local communities, business partners, suppliers and consumers; respecting human rights; and caring for the global environment. The "internal" socially responsible practices "primarily involve employees and relate to issues such as investing in human capital, health and safety, and managing change" (European Commission 2001: 9). They include human resource management-related measures that support gender equality/equal opportunities (e.g., non-discriminatory recruitment practices and access to training, equal pay, career prospects for women, and a non-discriminative culture and climate in the enterprise⁶) and reconciliation of professional and family obligations. The latter group of practices can be in the area of work organisation (flexible jobs,⁷ flexible working hours, etc.) or provision of services and benefits for families (such as providing internal crèche, subsidised childcare, and co-unselling and assistance with childcare or elderly care).

It all started in the 1980s, when stakeholder theory integrated ethics into the basic purposes and strategic objectives of companies and was further elaborated upon as corporate social responsibility (Wicks et al. 1994). Francesco and Gold (2005: 51-52) explain how CSR theory replaced the notion that managers have a duty to stockholders (the position strongly endorsed by Milton Friedman, a Nobel Prize-winning economist⁸). The CSR concept is that managers bear a fiduciary relationship to stakeholders (i.e., those groups who have a stake in or claim on the firm). The idea of the stakeholder was "a powerful tool to push our view of corporations beyond what it had been perceived to be" (Wicks et al. 1994: 476) and "articulate the sense of responsibility that businesses feel to those both inside and outside the 'walls' of the firm in a more useful and compelling manner" (p. 477). In order to understand that business decisions are never solely economic ones, but are rather interrelated with the social system within which they operate, the economic view of business-society relationships should be complemented by views of other disciplines, like philosophy, sociology, social psychology, and political economics (Wilcox 2006: 186-187).

⁶ For example, working mothers may feel disregarded and excluded when important decisions are being made after "normal" working hours, in the pub, and among male employees only or when they are asked about their family and parental situation during interviews, which normally does not happen to male candidates (TNP 2007).

⁷ It should be noted that flexible working options are not always as attractive and advantageous as they may seem. Women working part-time or at home often feel isolated and excluded from their enterprises' social life, contact networks, and decision-making processes. Part-time jobs and other forms of flexible employment are also considered less secure for employees (due to lower salaries and future pensions, less rights and benefits, limited entitlement to unemployment benefits, etc.).

⁸ We refer here to Milton Friedman's famous article "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits" published in *The New York Times Magazine* on September 13, 1970.

Life at work and life at home influence one another and frequently create work-family conflict as a person's time and energy are limited; demands in one domain drain resources available for the other (Francesco and Gold 2005: 181). Socially responsible organisations provide various kinds of support to their employees, thereby minimising negative outcomes for themselves and for their employees' well-being.

In the literature of the past decade, CSR and work-life balance were often linked via gender equality. Wilcox (2006: 190) notes that support structures addressing work-family conflicts may, for example, enable the inclusion of women into skills development opportunities and prevent the marginalisation of women. Grosser (2009) examined how progress on gender equality in the field of CSR might contribute to broader EU gender objectives. Her aim was to extend the understanding of CSR as a potential policy instrument to advance gender equality.

Some countries have enacted legislation to provide realistic possibilities for achieving a work-life balance.⁹ In practice, however, legal provisions themselves do not prove to be a sufficient guarantee that employees will be able or allowed to use them whenever needed. On many occasions, CSR is needed to upgrade legal provisions. According to Grosser (2009), one of the major challenges is to stimulate more progress on the part of social partners, particularly companies.

Enterprises are in no way obliged to adopt socially responsible policies and behaviours. The corporate commitment to go beyond compliance with the law is entirely voluntary and reflects the corporate philosophy and goals (TNP 2007; Grosser 2009). CSR strategies can be adopted and implemented by multinational companies, medium enterprises, small, and very small (*micro*) enterprises. The analyses have shown that family-friendly measures are formally regulated in big enterprises while they are the subject of informal negotiations between employers and employees in small and medium enterprises (Woodland et al. 2003; Yasbek 2004; Juncke 2005; Walsh 2005: 159-161).

3 Positive Economic Impact of Family-Friendly Policies in Enterprises

Enterprises are not charities; they have to follow the economic aim of producing profit. This aim, however, does not exclude policies that help employees to better balance work and family. A good CSR strategy does not have to be complicated, expensive, and/or time-consuming. Implementing employee- or family-friendly measures is not always very costly or costly at all. Many responsible, employee-targeted practices (organisational, informational, and communication measures) can be implemented at almost no cost. Family-friendly measures (flexible time schedules, work at

⁹ According to the Slovenian Employment Relations Act, for instance, the employer must enable workers to easily reconcile their family and employment responsibilities.

home, enterprise-based childcare services, free social and sport activities for employees' families, refunded training programmes, etc.) may bring not only more comfort and balance for employees, but also improve their professional satisfaction, loyalty, creativity, and productivity—remarkable indicators of good and effective management (Plantenga and Geske Dijkstra 2003: 82-84; Buddelmeyer et al. 2005; Roundtree and Kerrigan 2007).

The literature on economic aspects of family-friendly policies in enterprises reported positive economic consequences for enterprises if appropriate measures are introduced (Gottlieb et al. 1998; Bevan et al. 1999; Dex et al. 2001; Gray 2002; Prognos AG 2003, 2004 and 2005; Poelmans and Sahibzada 2004; Rürup and Gruescu 2005; Levin-Epstein 2006). The proven consequences of a family-friendly policy in enterprises include:

- increase in employees' motivation,
- higher commitment and loyalty of employees toward the enterprise,
- lower absenteeism,
- higher level of satisfaction,¹⁰
- less stress among employees,
- higher productivity,
- lower costs resulting from staff turnover,
- attractiveness for the best experts and talented workers,
- higher enterprise reputation among its business partners and customers, and in the society as a whole, and
- increased competitiveness of an enterprise (Stropnik 2007).

Positive impact on various stakeholders can be summarised as follows:

1. Employees manage to better reconcile their professional and family duties, which a) lowers their exposure to stress, b) contributes to their own and their families' higher quality of life, and c) enables (particularly among women) uninterrupted working careers and better opportunities for professional development and promotion.
2. Enterprises consequently have lower recruiting costs, competitive advantages on the labour market and the products/services market, and better business results including higher positive net financial results.
3. The national economy benefits from higher employment rates and higher growth rates.
4. The country does better if public authorities are supported (complemented) by enterprises in attaining the aims of social policy. Higher employment rates mean higher inflow of taxes and social security contri-

butions into the state budget on the one hand and lower social security outflows on the other.

5. Society as a whole benefits as well since work-life balance a) prevents problems in families that negatively influence society and b) may stimulate births (which is of high importance for modern-day Europe) (Stropnik 2007).

4 Certifying/Acknowledging Corporate Social Responsibility

The awareness brought about by the spread of the CSR concept raised the question of how one could support the introduction and adoption of family-friendly practices in enterprises. Certifying/acknowledging best practices (for instance, "Beruf und Familie" in Germany, "Familie & Beruf" in Austria, and "Family-Friendly Enterprise" in Slovenia) proved to be a good way for stimulating the introduction of family-friendly policies with a gender equality dimension (Kanjuro Mrčela and Černigoj Sadar 2007). Such an audit is a multifunctional CSR instrument—namely, an instrument for achieving better human resource management with an emphasis on the reconciliation of professional and family obligations.

We present here the Slovenian "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate. In order to better understand the circumstances in which it was implemented, some background information about Slovenia is provided first.

4.1 Background information about Slovenia

For more than 50 years, Slovenia has been a country with a high female employment rate due not only to the professional aspirations of Slovenian women, but also to the need arising from the relation between income and the cost of living (Stropnik and Šircelj 2008: 1034). In the last quarter of 2008, the employment rate was 62.7% for men and 51.4% for women (Svetin and Rutar 2009). Only 11.4% of employed women worked part-time. Typically, after parental leave, women continue to work full-time. In 2005, the economic activity rate for women with a child aged 0-3 years was 73% and 87% for women with a child aged 3 to 5 years (Eurydice 2009: Figure 2.6). Since almost the entire generation of females at relevant age today attend higher secondary education and half the relevant generations continue schooling at the post-secondary level, it can be expected that women in Slovenia will remain highly attached to the labour market (Stropnik and Šircelj 2008: 1036).

In our view, the Slovenian legislation in the field of labour relations, parental protection, and equal opportunities represents an appropriate legal framework for an equal position of young women/mothers and fathers in the labour market. Nevertheless, a potential threat (and incidence) of informal discrimination has been detected in practice. In addition, research has demonstrated that the Slovenian managers do not regard balancing work and family as an

¹⁰ Satisfied employees are kinder, attract clients/customers, and increase the enterprise's turnover.

issue to be discussed in the workplace. Rather, it is treated as something that the employees need to manage by themselves and ought not to raise at work with their supervisors (Kanjuo Mrčela and Černigoj Sadar 2007). Consequently, in today's Slovenian society, young women perceive (potential) motherhood as a drawback in the labour market.

Employers (rightly) presume that women will take the whole of the leave, which undermines women's labour market opportunities and professional careers. Paternity leave and fathers having the same entitlement to parental leave as mothers do not significantly influence mothers to return to work earlier because the traditional gender division of roles in a family persists (Stropnik 2005). About three quarters of fathers took up to 15 days of fully compensated paternity leave from 2006 to 2008, but only 15% of leave-takers took more than 15 days in 2008. Research suggests that most fathers do not take more than 15 days of paternity leave because their earnings are not fully compensated during additional days. The share of fathers who took some of the parental leave stood at about 1% and has increased to 2% in the 2000s. In 2008, 5.6% of fathers took a part of parental leave, compared to only 0.6% in 1999.¹¹ Considering the full wage compensation during parental leave, the reasons for fathers' low participation may stem from the traditional division of tasks within the family, attitudes in society (not the declared ones, but rather those that rule people's behaviour), the absence of a positive image attributed to the father who assumes more family responsibilities, and employers' expectations and demands regarding their male employees (Rener et al. 2005; Stropnik 2005; Stropnik and Širčelj 2008: 1043). A higher level of equality in parenting (starting with fathers taking all of the available paternity leave and half of the parental leave) would contribute to equal opportunities in the labour market.

Since it is still considered normal for parents to take parental leave in full (about nine months following maternity leave), families very rarely face the reconciliation problem earlier than when their child turns one. As many as one third of children younger than two years of age are enrolled in kindergartens, which is true for about 55% of children aged two years. At age five, as many as 89% of children attend kindergartens (Ložar 2008). Although childcare is widely available and affordable (particularly for those with a below-average income), parents face continuous stress if there is no other person to collect the child in the afternoon as childcare centres' working hours are not sufficiently adapted to those of parents' working hours (Stropnik and Širčelj 2008: 1048).¹²

¹¹ This shift may be attributed to higher awareness of fathers' rights following the introduction of paternity leave.

¹² Childcare centres open mostly between 5.00 and 7.30 a.m. and close between 4.00 and 5.30 p.m., five days a week. There is small number of childcare centre units (mostly in urban local communities) that are open into the evening or on Saturdays.

4.2 Case study: "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate in Slovenia

The Slovenian DP's project dealt with the "internal" CSR—namely, those CSR practices focused primarily on employees. It aimed at impacting business, cultural, and psychosocial behavioural patterns, including:

- Management's approach to reasoning in order to make managers understand that their employees' parental role does not automatically decrease the enterprise's financial results; to encourage them to—jointly with their employees—take actions leading to a work-life balance; and to make them aware of the negative business consequences of discriminating against (potential) parents in the workplace; and
- Public opinion, in order to attract wider support by increasing public awareness of the reconciliation problem and attain a positive attitude toward it.

The DP was looking for a long-term audit system that would not be just a one-time recognition of the existing situation, but would also encourage enterprises to improve their situation regarding equal opportunities and could be applied in any enterprise. The "European Work & Family Audit",¹³ developed by the German organisation "Berufundfamilie", was selected as appropriate. Since, at the time of the project and due to the ongoing revision of the methodology, it was not possible to obtain the licence, the methodology applied in Slovenia is a combination of the Austrian and German systems, with some modifications based on the Slovenian economic and legislative framework.

Through the introduction of the "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate, as it was named, the DP intended to:

- provide employers with tools for implementation of such human resource policies that enable better balancing of work and family for their employees, and
- publicly recognise enterprises with a positive attitude and practice in this field.

The methodology (DP 2007) includes both consulting and an audit procedure. There are two phases. The first one, lasting about six months, is mostly a period of consultations and analyses. It starts with a kick-off meeting of the applying enterprise representatives (personnel manager and the representative from top management) and the person representing the licensee (organisation holding a licence for the auditing/certification procedure). If they agree upon the enterprise's inclusion in the audit to obtain the "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate, they set the time schedule and name the enterprise's audit representative. A project team is formed that is balanced according to sex, family cycle, age, department, and hierarchy. A trade union representative may be included as well.

¹³ The "European Work & Family Audit" licence is the basis for the certificates currently awarded in Austria, Hungary, Slovak Republic, and the Italian region of South Tyrol.

The project team evaluates the actual relevant situation in the enterprise, identifies deficits, defines the enterprise's objectives, and searches for appropriate strategies and concrete ways of improvement. To this end, the project team is assisted by an external consultant (an expert in human resource management) nominated by the licensee to implement the audit process. That person reviews the project team's analysis (actual situation versus desired situation) and helps select the most appropriate measures to be implemented in order to move closer to the desired situation. A minimum of three measures are chosen from an extensive catalogue of measures grouped according to their area of impact:

- work time,
- work flow and contents,
- workplace,
- information and communication policy,
- management competence,
- human resource development,
- salaries and perks, and
- family-focused support.

The consultant presents his/her recommendations to the project team and the management. Top management decides which recommendations will be followed within the next three-year period. The first phase is concluded when an authorised top manager signs the Action Plan in which objectives, time frame, milestones, responsibilities, personnel and financial resources, and expected results are defined. The enterprise is awarded the basic "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate after the Audit Council's¹⁴ positive evaluation of the audit process, selected measures to be implemented, and the Action Plan.

The basic certificate is normally held for three years, during which the selected measures are implemented (accounting for the second phase). The enterprise is obliged to produce annual progress reports in which it documents the ongoing implementation. If it fails to do so, it has to return the basic certificate within six months of the last unmet deadline. If everything goes well, after a three-year period, the implementation of measures and achievement of the objectives (desired situation) are examined by the consultant. If he/she and the Audit Council give a positive appraisal, the enterprise is awarded the certificate valid for 12 months. It can be kept for another three-year period if the enterprise decides to renew it by starting the next auditing procedure. This means that within those 12 months a new Action Plan has to be signed and positively evaluated. Such rules encourage the continuous improvement of existing conditions in the enterprises that have joined the auditing process.

¹⁴ The Audit Council is an independent body consisting of national experts in the field of CSR, equal opportunities, family policy, labour market, etc.

The Slovenian enterprises were invited to participate in the certification process by a public call issued in October 2006 in the leading Slovenian business daily *Finance* (a media partner of the project). Certification was done under the auspices of the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and was financed through the Community Initiative Programme EQUAL (European Social Fund). Before engaging in the first round of certification, the methodology was tested in a pilot enterprise (the insurance company Zavarovalnica Maribor). The first group certification process started in January 2007 and was successfully completed in April 2007.

In the first round, the "Family-Friendly Enterprise" basic certificates were awarded to 32 enterprises¹⁵ employing more than 20,000 persons. Among them there were large companies, multinationals, and SMEs representing different industries as well as public sector organisations. Their size was ranged between 10 and 9,458 employees. A total of 305 measures for easier reconciliation of work and family were selected for implementation (i.e., an average of 9.5 measures per enterprise, far exceeding the minimum of 3 measures required to obtain the certificate).

The most popular measures belong to the area of information and communication policy (109 measures altogether). Among them, the most frequent measure was public relations (internal and external), selected to be implemented in 44 enterprises. An attorney (authorised officer) for reconciliation of work and family will be introduced in 15 enterprises. A total of 60 measures were selected in the area of work time, with child time bonus being the most popular one (to be implemented in 22 enterprises). The area of human resource development ranked third according to the total number of measures selected (38), of which the measures for easier re-inclusion after a longer absence were most popular (to be implemented in 12 enterprises). Frequently selected measures from the other five areas included education and evaluation of management (to be implemented in 12 enterprises), health protection measures (9), tele-work/work from home (7), holiday bonus for annual leave dependant also on the number of children (6), and children in enterprise¹⁶ (5).

The DP project's results were high profile. A media campaign was one of the core activities of the project. The major daily financial journal, regularly read by managers and a similar audience that the DP wanted to reach and attract, served as the DP's media partner. It provided space for advertisements free of charge and occasionally published articles about the ideas and progress of the project. A TV spot to raise awareness among employers about their social responsibility toward employed parents was produced and

¹⁵ This far exceeded the original expectations (10 enterprises). This may have been partly due to the fact that in the first round the certification was free of charge, as the project was financed through the EQUAL initiative of the European Social Fund.

¹⁶ Exceptionally and for a short term, employees may bring their children to work. In such cases, a separate and adequately equipped working area is available.

broadcast on major TV programmes in the course of several weeks before the basic certificates were awarded. The award ceremony was purposefully scheduled a day before International Family Day (May 15) in order to increase mass media coverage of the event. The Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs signed the basic certificates, awarded them herself, and declared that the continuation of the project was among the Ministry's objectives.

The implementation of the "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate has continued. As of October 2007, another 72 enterprises have expressed interest in being included in the second generation of certification— significant success for a young initiative in a labour market of approximately 800.000 persons. In November 2008 and May 2009 the second generation of basic certificates was awarded to 17 enterprises, and in May 2010 the third generation comprising 11 enterprises joined them (DP).¹⁷ In the third generation, an average of 13 measures will be implemented per awardee (Turk 2010). Measures in the area of work time are the most popular (particularly flexible time of arrival to work and child time bonus) while human resource development gained in importance as well.

The "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate has been included in strategic documents for Slovenia and its regulation. For instance, the implementation of the certificate is one of the aims of the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for women and men in 2005-2013 (adopted by the Slovenian Parliament October in 2005).¹⁸ It is also present in the current Social Agreement (2007-2009)¹⁹ and in the mid-term programme of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The same Ministry has also included it among key elements of the (unfortunately failed) draft Strategy for Increasing Fertility in the Republic of Slovenia. The intended revisions of the Employment Relations Act foresee a chapter on reconciliation of work and family. The Socio-Democratic Party of Slovenia included a debate on family-friendly employment in its political campaign before local elections. All this proves the considerable impact the project has had in Slovenian society.

5 Conclusion

Gender discrimination in the labour market cannot be prevented only through good normative (legislative) regulation. In order to advance CSR topics (including the issue of equal opportunities), a combination of legal compliance,

the business case, and social regulation in the form of stakeholder expectations and pressures is needed (Grosser and Moon 2005). The first focus of any CSR programme should be on attaining positive impact for the stakeholders, not taking advantage of the opportunity for positive publicity. Implementation of CSR policies should take gender equality aspects more fully into account and promote them through the adoption and implementation of CSR principles and employment policies. The European Community's framework to promote CSR and issues such as equal opportunities is a non-binding resolution.

Since the implementation of CSR is increasingly becoming a strategic issue for enterprises, CSR has a great potential to enhance the equal opportunity issues and contribute to diminished social inequality as well. Equal opportunities for men and women, employees of different age, or disabled employees are the key elements of a responsible enterprise in its internal dimension. Case studies have proven the huge positive financial effects of the implementation of appropriate strategies and measures.

The "Family-Friendly Enterprise" certificate was a significant novelty in the Slovenian business environment. The project launched a discussion in Slovenian society about CSR towards employees. It increased awareness of the need to solve the problem of reconciliation of professional and family duties of employees with (small) children in the context of the corporate responsibility towards employees. Thanks to this project, Slovenian enterprises gained a better understanding of the relationship between family-friendly policies and productivity, loyalty, and work efficiency.

A family-friendly culture should continue to be developed within enterprises. Such a culture includes a) a positive image of a father who assumes more family responsibilities; b) assistance for parents whose presence at home and absence from work are necessary at times (e.g., due to the care of a sick child); and c) measures to enable parents to fulfil other family-related duties (taking children to medical check-ups, accompanying children to their leisure-time activities, attending events at day care centres and schools, etc.) (Stropnik and Šircelj 2008: 1050).

The current global crisis represents a great challenge for maintaining and upgrading CSR policies. We would argue that it is not very probable that it would seriously threaten the established family-friendly policies—at least not in the long run and not in Europe. "A major challenge for enterprises today is to attract and retain skilled workers" (European Commission 2001: 9). The important reason for companies to increasingly include gender equality within their CSR programmes is the shortage of skilled labour and growth in the participation of women in the workforce (Grosser 2009). Employers compete for the best workers/experts, particularly in economically tough times. They simply cannot afford to neglect the needs of their employees as family people since otherwise they risk losing them and thus decreasing the level of their enterprise competitiveness and performan-

¹⁷ These enterprises had to pay a lump-sum fee to cover the cost of certification, but the goal is to secure a public subsidy for this purpose. This may have been the reason for the rest of the interested enterprises delaying their applications.

¹⁸ It was also present in the social agreement for the period 2003-2005. However, there had been no concrete plan how to realise that aim.

¹⁹ There is a special chapter on the reconciliation of professional and family obligations. The government's task is to encourage enterprises to obtain the »Family-Friendly Enterprise« certificate. The employers' and trade unions' task is to take an active part in the certification process.

ce. In the long run in Europe, this is stressed by the conditions of (very) low fertility and rapidly ageing populations.

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