



## **Project Result 2 - Better Balance:**

### **A Guide**

#### **A1. Creation of knowledge base**

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## Introduction

Work-Life Balance refers to the balancing between work and personal life including unpaid labour (European Parliament, 2016). However, there is not a single definition of it and there are many aspects that are important such as income, working hours, support from the job environment, maternity leave, etc. In the BALANCE project, there are two important factors regarding work-life balance. First, the gender-equality factor because the project is more focused on women, and second, the COVID-19 pandemic that affected their Work-Life Balance.

The Knowledge Base document not only presents the Work-Life Balance situation in each partner's country but also further good practices and references for more information and study regarding the specific topic.



## European Union Introduction to Work-Life Balance

### **Work-life Balance (WLB) as an activity area of the European Union**

Reconciliation of work and family life has been on the European agenda since the early 1990s. Since then, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union have increasingly acknowledged the issue of care, insisting on the need for European countries to enhance work-life reconciliation and allow parents to reconcile their paid and unpaid work (D'Andrea, 2022).

Work life Balance (WBL) means according to the European Pillar of Social Rights the following: “Parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to special leaves of absence to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them in a balanced way” (European Commission, 2022, p. 45). This area of WLB-related activities is currently embedded within the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission and addressed by its different subordinate directives and legal frameworks (Filippi et al., 2021). The most relevant directive is the EU Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers that European Union Member States needed to implement by mid-2022. The directive aims to address women’s underrepresentation in employment and encourage a better sharing of care-giving responsibilities between women and men (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2021). Additional European bodies are involved in providing measures and recommendations on WLB, e.g. the Council of the European Union, as they participate in enacting European legislation, the European Works Councils, or the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). The European Works Council is an information and consultation body representing employees in European multinational companies. Here European employee representatives of a specific multinational and their management counterparts meet to discuss topics related to the progress of business and how it affects employment, working conditions and working



methods. Eurofound focuses on managing research, gathering information, and communicating its findings in the EU. Therefore, the agency provides survey data and information on the topic of healthy workplaces and WLB.

## Policies / Research on the effects of WLB

As mentioned in the previous section, the European Commission works on the topic of WLB via the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, European efforts to promote more sustainable forms of WLB through improved policy support takes on even greater importance. Therefore, the European Commission provides legal measures (e.g. the European WBL Directive) to support member states in implementing awareness raising on the topic. This directive is primarily designed to address WLB challenges faced by working parents and carers to balance work and family requirements. The WLB Directive has the potential to improve the situations of family members of people with intellectual disabilities, and people with intellectual disabilities themselves, to better combine their work with their parental and/or caring responsibilities. The WBL Directive introduces, amongst other things, minimum standards for parental leave including paternity leave, carers leave, the right to flexible working arrangements for parents and carers, and safeguards against unfair dismissals (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2021). The directive also introduces changes to the existing EU minimum parental leave requirements and new provisions on paternity leave, carers leave and flexible working arrangements to ensure a cultural shift towards equal distribution of care between men and women. However, implementing the WLB Directive across European countries varies. The most extensive national work-life policies can be found in the Netherlands, Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Estonia. In the rest of the European countries so far, no draft law or only draft legislation is in place. Apart from legal frameworks, also different monitoring surveys give insights into WLB issues between European countries. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge to assist in the development of better social, employment and work-related policies. Eurofound conducts surveys such as



the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) which provides comparisons between countries on the reconciliation of work and family life, flexible working time arrangements and the provision of quality care services. The European Company Surveys (ECS) provide data on why and how companies make use of a broad variety of working time arrangements. The European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS) look at the organisation of working time across the EU and issues related to it including flexible arrangements, working time preferences and work-life balance (Eurofound, 2022).

Apart from conducting surveys and legal frameworks in relation to WLB, the European Commission also provides competence frameworks addressing the topic of WLB, but in a broader sense by focusing on competences of self-regulation, critical thinking and personal wellbeing. The European competence framework for better lives LifeComp is a non-prescriptive conceptual framework, and it can be used as a basis for the development of curricula and formal and non-formal learning activities. Within this framework personal competences refer to the care of physical, mental, and social health, and the management of emotions, thoughts and behaviour (European Commission, 2020).

## Initiatives

This section will focus on best practice examples of European countries in implementing projects or initiatives on equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men. Additionally, we present current results of work-life Balance Index surveys showing countries with good WLB indicators in a broader sense.

Best practice examples of EU member states are broad, here we will present three initiatives of Germany, Sweden and Italy. The city of Munich in Germany developed a project supporting women entrepreneurs to get into self-employment. In Sweden an initiative aims at making full-time jobs the norm for female care workers. In Italy a project aims to support employers and employees alike by considering the organisational needs of companies and the right to WLB of workers to make home-based childcare accessible to all.



## The 'guide' project of the city of Munich in Germany

<b>Logo</b>	
<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Support women's life
<b>Title</b>	The "Guide" project
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	
<b>Date released</b>	
<b>Partners/ network</b>	European Social Fund
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women who are returning to the labour market after a break due to family responsibilities</li> <li>• Women over the age of 50 who want to be self-employed</li> <li>• Unemployed women who want to be self-employed</li> <li>• Women with a migration background who want to start a small business (European Commission, 2019).</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To support the specific needs and situations of individual women's lives, including their employment history, health, family commitments and personal interests. This practical approach helps guideadvisors to make a realistic assessment of how setting up a business will affect the individual entrepreneur's life.

## The Avesta Municipality of Sweden promotes full-time employment

<b>Logo</b>	
<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Full-time Employment



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Erasmus+ Programme  
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<b>Title</b>	Avesta Project
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	
<b>Date released</b>	2011-2013
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Avesta Municipality of Sweden & European Social Fund
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An annual check with employees regarding their desired percentage of part-time leave of absence</li><li>• A timetabling method with employees responsible for timetabling at their workplace</li><li>• The adoption of software to support this whereby each employee indicates their desired, individual timetable using Time Care software, followed by a collective process of negotiation to adjust individual's desired timetable into a functional whole</li><li>• The creation of a pool of permanent care employees to act as stand-in (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).</li></ul>
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	<p>The Municipality of Avesta promoted a “full-time project” between 2011 and 2013, financed by the European Social Fund, and obtained good results with more than 90% of their employees now working full time. There is valuable learning from this initiative in terms of negotiating change, timetabling work, and managing increased demands on services. In 2011, the Municipality of Avesta started the project ‘100 procent stolt och kompetent’ (‘100% proud and competent’), and the administration decided to make all staff full-time employees by default. If necessary, workers had the option to notify the organisation each year if they needed to work part-time and indicate their desired percentage of leave. Suitable cover could then be arranged in advance thanks to a pool of stand-in workers. The project also introduced a new timetabling system whereby employees were given responsibility for their own schedules. This was helped by the adoption of IT-based software, which would</p>



allow each employee to indicate their desired timetable and negotiate this with their employer.

## The LaFemMe project in Italy for WLB and the participation of women in the labour market

<b>Logo</b>	
<b>Topic/ Area</b>	WORK LIFE BALANCE
<b>Title</b>	LaFemMe
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	Online Tools, Applications or Platform
<b>Date released</b>	2011-2017
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Italy's Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with support from the European Social Fund
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking measures to improve organisation, productivity, and flexibility within companies</li> <li>• Introducing corporate welfare measures to reduce the cost of care services and encouraging employers to offer welfare plans to staff</li> <li>• Improving maternity and paternity processes to help workers return to work</li> <li>• Encouraging company-level and territorial-level bargaining, improving industrial relations and supporting social partner participation</li> <li>• Disseminating know-how and best practice to raise awareness of work-life balance</li> <li>• Creating an online service portal to facilitate access to information and training (European Commission, 2019).</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To support employers and employees alike by considering the organisational needs of companies and the right to WLB of workers. The project held training courses and consultations for companies, social partners, and labour market operators (such as employment agencies) to help them support workers.



Focusing on the topic of WLB from a broader employee perspective, it is also interesting to reveal some country-specific survey results of the OECD Better Life Index and the 2022 European Life-Work Index of the Remote company. According to the OECD Better Life Index important aspects of WLB are related to the amount of time a person spends at work, and this working time determines the time devoted to leisure and personal care. The best scored countries of the OECD Better Life Index are Italy, Denmark and Norway. Italy performs well across most of the well-being dimensions and is in comparison to other OECD countries on the average in health, work-life balance, and civic engagement. The average number of hours per day spent on leisure and personal care is 16.5 hours. In Denmark and Norway, the average number of hours per day spent on leisure and personal care is 15.7 hours (OECD, 2022).

The 2022 European Life-Work Index of a global company Remote is an index analysis highlighting European countries offering employees the best WLB through statutory rights and workplace benefits which allows their employees to develop in their personal lives alongside their careers (Remote, 2022). The three countries that achieved the highest scores out of the 2022 European Life-Work Index are Luxembourg, Spain, and Norway. Luxembourg performs well particularly regarding statutory maternity leave (100% of individual wage for 20 weeks), statutory annual leave (37 days). Spain has a universal government-funded healthcare system, and a significant minimum wage (the equivalent of 10.72 EUR/hr). Norway has employment laws reflecting strong WLB regulations, and a collective agreement among nine key industries that covers 70% of workers. The results reflect that WLB in the broader sense is interrelated with many aspects, including regulations related to parental leave, paternity leave, carers leave, and flexible working arrangements. Additionally, WLB in European countries is impacted among others by the number of days of annual leave, the healthcare system, regulations on the minimum wage, and collective labour agreements.



## Greece

### Introduction to Work-Life Balance

For the project's needs, both field and desk research were conducted. In the field research, the responders were 4 women who worked from home during COVID-19. They talked about the situation in Greece and the policies but also about their mental health, burnout, and what is missing from the legislative system.

#### Desk Research

In general, Eurofound's research shows that Work-Life Balance indicators have decreased through the years. In 2011, 48% of respondents in Greece reported "difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities because of the amount of time spent at work at least several times a month", rising to 50% in 2016, while the level of those reporting "difficulties concentrating at work because of family responsibilities at least several times a month" increased from 20% in 2011 to 28% in 2016. (<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/country/greece#worklife-balance>)

Work-Life Balance in Greece is affected also by gender inequalities regarding housework, children and grandchildren care, and maternal/paternal leaves. More specifically, women are more involved in household activities, and on average they spend 13-14 hours per week more than men on children and grandchildren care and housework. ([https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef20059en.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20059en.pdf)) Additionally, the gap in the legislation system regarding childcare makes things even more difficult for them. The research mentioned above conducted between 2011 and 2016 shows the gender differences in Work-Life Balance. Although being "too tired from work to do some of the household jobs which need to be done" at least several times a month has decreased from 73% in 2011 to 67% in 2016, the proportion for women remain stable.

(<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/country/greece#worklife-balance>)

Regarding the Work-Life Balance during the COVID-19 pandemic, Greece increased levels of both long working hours and work intensity. Additionally, there is an increase in



unemployment rates and the economic instability of Greek people that were affected negatively by it, not only their life quality but also their mental health.

More specifically, Greece was one of the countries with the highest proportion of respondents who lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 18% of people inactive after that. Also, 15% of people responded that they were afraid of losing their job. Finally, regarding the resilience of workers, Greece was one of the highest proportions in Europe (20%), while it was also one of the most pessimistic countries with only 31% recording as optimistic

([https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef20059en.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20059en.pdf))

Another research conducted by EY Greece, Hellas EAP, and the Experimental Psychology Laboratory of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that there is an imbalance between personal and professional life. Specifically, 3 out of 10 participants said that they do not maintain a Work-Life Balance at all, while only 4 out of 10 said that they stop thinking about work after their working hours.

Regarding the support of employers, 39% of the participants stated that their organisations/companies support employees who face mental health problems while 45% referred to support programmes and actions about mental health and well-being. However, there are some differences between the private and public sectors; only 4 out of 10 of the private sector's employees and 1 out of 10 of the public sector's employees believe that their organisation supports them in terms of mental health and well-being. Finally, 34% of the private and 21% of the public sectors stated that their managers/employers do not contact them often to see how they feel.

Regarding gender differences, the research shows that in general women employees were the most affected in terms of mental health and Work-Life Balance. Specifically, women show higher proportions of anxiety, depression, and somatisation than men, while having a lower quality of life; 51% of women and 38% of men start their day feeling tired.



(Ερευνα για την ψυχική υγεία και ευεξία των εργαζόμενων στην Ελλάδα 2021)

## Field Research

The field research shows that all of the participants felt loneliness, fear about their future, stress, and insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The working conditions changed while communication and cooperation with colleagues were more difficult. House – which used to be a personal space for personal and family time – was not anymore, a separate space from work and became a “stifling” place.

Due to the economic crisis that followed the COVID-19 pandemic, employers did not hire new people and employees were forced to work more intensively and more hours without being paid extra. Also, there was the fear of unemployment.

Additionally, only one of the three participants who worked in Greece was provided with the equipment to work from home and access to necessary platforms and files. Lack of equipment and training regarding remote education/work caused extra mental health problems for employers. The most important result was that there was not any support from the employers and managers in terms of mental health. Psychosocial support existed only on a personal level through colleagues but not from the Greek system or the employers. One of the participants mentioned that in general there is not mental health-sensitive perspective in the workplace. Another participant used to work in Belgium, and it is important to mention that even though the welfare system was supportive regarding burnout (e.g., the right to long leaves), employers and management do not listen to the employees’ requests (experience of those who have suffered burnout).

## Policies / Research on the effects of WLB

Greece has implemented several European Community Directives regarding maternity leave, parental child-rearing leave, family medical leave of absence for dependent family members, and single-parent leave. Also, the legal framework includes provisions for all-day schools and pre-primary schools, children’s creative activity centres (KDAP), day centres/cares, and



citizens' service centre (KEP) which support and help employees to find a balance between their personal and professional life. Finally, there were three more strategic policies that supported Work-Life Balance but they are not implemented anymore: a) the "Help at Home" programme which provided free services at home, b) the elderly day care centres (KIFI), and c) the project "Work-Life Balance" from the National Strategic Framework (ESPA) that provided funding to children care centres.

The most important legal framework is the Greek employment **L. 4808/2021** which contains a whole part (III) regarding "Balance of work and family life" and it incorporates EU Directive 2019/1158 which includes provisions applicable to all employees of the private and public sector who are parents or caretakers. The specific law refers to **maternity leave** (9 weeks), **paternity leave** (14 working), **parent leave** (4 months with extra financial support), **caretaker leave** (5 working days), **leave for reasons of force majeure or medical reasons**, **flexible employment rules** such as remote working, flexible work-schedule or part-time employment, **childcare**, and **school leave with special conditions regarding disabilities, health and hospitalisation, wedding leave**, and **single parent's leave**. What is missing from this law, is that it refers only to parents without considering the rest of the employees that need personal time by themselves, their friends, and/or family.

From the employers' side, there is also a law in the Greek legal system which promotes Work-Life Balance. **L. 3850/2010** refers to the employers' responsibilities regarding psychological risks and introduces the term occupational doctor, a doctor who is responsible for providing counselling services to the employers and employees and preventing health – and mental health – issues that are related to work. Employers must conduct a written risk assessment which refers to the psychological risks arising from work. They include work organisation (intensification, monotony, shift work), psychological factors (atypical work, mobbing), ergonomic factors (non-ergonomic workstations), and difficult working conditions (work with unsuitable equipment, work in adverse climatic conditions). It is useful not only for the employees but also for the self-control of the employers and the health and safety



committees on keeping their rules at the workplace. There is no gender perspective in this law.

Except for specific Laws, there is also the Greek Ministry of Labour and Social Security and its agencies which are responsible for gender equality and equal opportunities, employment services, social integration of foreign workers, social protection and rehabilitation of special workers' categories, helping people with disabilities, vocational training, prevention of occupational accidents and diseases, the management of HR funds and the representation of Greece in the International Labour Organisation (ILO). However, it does not refer to Work-Life Balance or mental health support exclusively.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were some amendments to labour legislation regarding working hours and flexibility, remote working, and preventing violence and harassment in the workplace. Additionally, the statutory minimum wage update was completed in 2021 with a 2% increase (from €650 to €663 per month?).

## Initiatives

### “Neighbourhood Nannies” Project

<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Childcare Services
<b>Title</b>	Neighbourhood Nannies
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	Services
<b>Date released</b>	2020
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Greek Government
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	Piloting included: financial support for parents and working opportunities for unemployed childcare professionals. It also includes a specialised platform to ensure the safety of the children.





**Purpose/Aim** Certified nurses provide childcare services for children up to 2.5 years old with the prospect of universal implementation throughout the country between 2021-2027.

**Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)** Not yet available

**Web link** <https://ntantades.gov.gr/>

### Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)

**Logo**



**Topic/ Area** Support of employers and employees  
**Title** Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)

**Type of Initiative** Crisis Management Services

**Date released** 2005

**Partners/ network** European Union

**Description of the methods/ approach** An interactive tool for guidance, counselling, and support to all employees with 24/7 Support & Crisis Line, Face to Face Counselling Sessions, Leadership & Management consultation, and on-site counselling.

**Purpose/Aim** Workplace Culture Optimisation

**Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)** Not yet available

**Web link** <https://www.hellaseap.gr/en/our-services/>

**References/ online sources** [https://www.hellaseap.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/mental\\_health\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://www.hellaseap.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/mental_health_report_2021.pdf)



## The Children's Home Foundation

### Logo



### Topic/ Area

Care Services

### Title

The Children's Home Foundation (PAIDIKI STEGI)

### Type of Initiative

Day nurseries

### Date released

1931

### Partners/ network

### Description of the methods/ approach

- Operation of four day-nurseries: "Argentios", Kynosargos, "Papastrateios Athens", "Papastrateios Piraeus".
- Cultural training of children with theatrical play, dance, visual interventions and constructions, visits to museums.
- Medical care and treatment of children with speech therapy, dentist visit, expanded pediatrician presence. Support and information in cases of widespread viruses.
- Gymnastics and specialised movement for preschool children
- The three daily meals are consistently controlled by a nutritionist



- Psychological support for children, parents and staff for specific issues and search for solutions for daily and current problems, quarterly information for parents.
- Integration of the children of immigrants into Greek society.
- Supporting single-parent families and contributing to solving intra-family problems.
- Cooperation with the University of Athens in the context of the development of intercultural education and the offer of internships to students
- Employment of personnel with special skills

**Purpose/Aim**

The purpose of the foundation is the care and creative employment of preschool children from two months to five years and its goal is to serve and support the working mother with limited financial resources.

**Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)**

Every year it provides care to almost 500 children.

**Web link**

<http://www.paidikesteges.gr/>

Finally, there are some good practices from private companies that provide their employees with psychosocial support and counselling to increase and promote their Work-Life Balance:

<https://www.greatplacetowork.gr/arthra/15-tropoi-gia-tin-epiteyxi-enos-exairetikoy-ergasiakoy-perivallontos-yperoches-praktikes-apo-ellinikes-epicheiriseis/>



## Finland

### Introduction to Work-Life Balance

#### **Family leave reform promotes gender equality in working life**

In Finland work-life balance falls mostly within the mandate of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, but also for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The Work-life Balance Directive will be implemented alongside the family leave reform. The family leave reform entered into force on 1 August 2022. It aims to increase gender equality both in the daily lives of families and in working life. The position of women in the labour market will improve when family leave is divided more equally between the two parents. This will affect attitudes, which in turn can reduce discrimination against women in working life.

#### **Flexible working hours and protection for employees returning from family leave under review**

The national working group has reviewed the legislation regarding:

- flexibility in working hours to support work-life balance and coping at work
- protection against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy for temporary employees
- protection against unjustified termination for employees returning from family leave.

The working group stated that part-time work is already possible under the current Finnish labour legislation. The implementation of the family leave reform and the Work-life Balance Directive will further improve the opportunities to part-time work for parents with small children.

The current Employment Contracts Act already offers stronger protection for pregnant employees and employees taking family leave. Stronger protection applies even to employees who return to work from family leave. The Act on Equality between Women and Men bans gender-based discrimination and prohibits treating employees less favourably than others on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth or parenthood.



Some issues are at the moment under discussion in the Finnish context. The national working group had differing views on whether provisions banning discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and family leave should be included in the Employment Contracts Act. However, it did not propose any such amendments to the Act. Discrimination can be best prevented by changing attitudes and practices at work. The needs to amend the Act on Equality between Women and Men will be reviewed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. (Finnish Government 2021).

## Policies / Research on the effects of WLB

From the very beginning of the pandemic the effects of the pandemic were under research by different bodies, such as The Finnish institute for health and welfare, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (e.g. Finnish Government 2020).

Kestilä et al. (2021) noted that “the coronavirus epidemic changed the daily lives of almost all Finns in some way. The use of e-services and telework have increased. Many restrictive measures and recommendations sought to reduce face-to-face contact between people, which reduced social interaction and had been reflected, in particular, in a reduction in communication with friends and relatives and an increase in loneliness.”

The pandemic had extensive effects to schools and teachers’ work. According to Lavonen & Salmela-Aro (2022) the switch to distance teaching and learning was organized effectively in Finland, but the distance-learning period weakened the equality of teaching and the conditions for learning. They identified decreased engagement of students during the pandemic. At the teacher and principal levels, they identified not only decreased engagement but also increased stress and even burnout. Principals suffered from teachers’ stress, whereas teachers suffered from families’ inequality in coping with distance learning.


Also, workplaces and trade union have been active to find out how the pandemic has effected workers. They are constantly conducting surveys on working circumstances. Now special emphasis has been put on the effects of the pandemic. E.g. Trade Union of Educators (OAJ) is in their current



survey concentrating on the stress at work and the effects of distance work and the pandemic. The survey is in cooperation with the University of Turku, Occupational Health (contact Prof. Tuula Putus, Tuula.putus@utu.fi).

## Initiatives

### “Work to belong”- activities by a non-governmental organisation

<b>Logo</b>	
<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Loneliness at work
<b>Title</b>	Work to belong – certificate for reducing loneliness at work
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	Certificate for workplaces Webinars “Loneliness at work” Barometer
<b>Date released</b>	2022
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Alko Inc - The national alcoholic beverage retailing monopoly Sanoma Corporation - Finland's largest media group OP Financial Group (Uusimaa region)
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	<p>Work to Belong -certificate is given for a company/organisation, which is engaged to minimize and prevent loneliness in the working community. The organisation shall use the tools, the methods and the assessment required to reduce loneliness in all levels of the organisation. Certificate shows to workers and all stakeholders, that the company is taking care of the well-being of all workers in a genuine manner.</p> <p>The certification process is paid (not free of charge).</p>
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To reduce loneliness at work

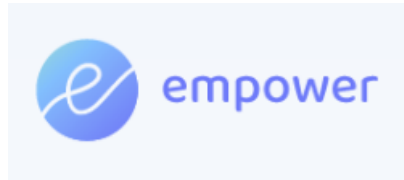


Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable) Not yet available

Web link <https://www.helsinki.fi/worktobelong/> (In Finnish)

## EMPOWER (EU-project)

Logo



Topic/ Area

Title Wellbeing and mental health problems at work  
The European Platform to Promote Wellbeing and Health in the workplace (EMPOWER)

Type of Initiative

- EU project
- Online Tools, Applications or Platform

Date released

Project is ongoing

Partners/ network

<https://empower-project.eu/our-team/>

- a) Hospital Sant Joan de Déu Barcelona
- b) Spain
- a) University of Canberra
- b) Australia
- a) Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management
- b) The Netherlands
- a) Fondazione ADAPT
- b) Italy
- a) Fondazione IRCCS I Istituto Neurologico Carlo Besta
- b) Italy
- a) Nofer Institute Of Occupational Medicine
- b) Poland
- a) OMADA
- b) Spain
- a) Swiss Paraplegic Research (SPF)
- b) Switzerland
- a) Turku Centre for Occupational Health
- b) Finland
- a) The University of York
- b) UK



## Description of the methods/ approach

a) Universidad Autonoma de Madrid

b) Spain

a) Vrije Universiteit Brussel

b) Belgium

EMPOWER will develop and test a platform to reduce the impact of mental health in the workplace. The overall work plan can be divided into three phases; The development of the platform (WP1 and 2), The evaluation (WP3 and 4) and the dissemination and policy recommendations. The project will have a 4-year duration to allow for the proper completion of all the tasks.

WP1: Design of an eHealth platform to reduce the

large impact of mental health problems in the workplace

WP2: Development of the online and eHealth platform tools and pilot study.

WP3: Field trials in SMEs and public agencies

WP4: Quantitative and qualitative assessment of

the EMPOWER platform.

## Purpose/Aim

Aim 1:

Develop, in collaboration with all stakeholder groups, a modular, culturally- and gender-sensitive multi-modal and integrative eHealth platform compiling the most feasible, brief and cost-effective interventions currently available in Europe to promote health and wellbeing, prevent common mental disorders and reduce the impact of mental health problems in the workplace, taking into account both contextual and individual factors, including co-morbidities.

Aim 2:

Pilot the implementation of this eHealth platform by means of a randomized controlled trial directed to





employees and employers of SMEs and public agencies, including workplaces with new working trends, such as remote jobs, from three European countries representing different cultural settings.

**Aim 3:**

Evaluate the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit and potential societal impact of the eHealth platform and its components as well as the factors influencing a favourable uptake of the eHealth platform in practice.

**Aim 4:**

Ensure, in collaboration with the External Ethics Committee, that every action and output carried out within the EMPOWER project complies with any legal and ethical requirements and analyse work-related legislation and directives for mental health and wellbeing that could facilitate the implementation of the EMPOWER platform.

**Aim 5:**

Investigate the most effective implementation strategies for the successful uptake of the eHealth platform and determine, supported by input from collaborating stakeholders, the most appropriate strategy for the program.

**Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)** Project is ongoing.

**Web link**

<https://empower-project.eu/>

**References/ online sources**

**Project videos:**

<https://empower-project.eu/videos/>



## Ireland

### Introduction to Work-Life Balance

According to the OECD Better Life Index in Ireland (OECD, n.d.), some 5% of employees work very long hours in paid work, much less than the OECD average of 10%. In Ireland, full-time workers devote 61% of their day on average, or 14.5 hours, to personal care (eating, sleeping, etc.) and leisure (socialising with friends and family, hobbies, games, computer, and television use, etc.) – less than the OECD average of 15 hours.

In Ireland, the average working week must not exceed a maximum of 48 hours for many employees, in accordance with the European Working Time Directive. Employees are also entitled to a 15-minute break after 4 hour's work and a further 15-minute break after a 6-hour work period. These breaks are unpaid. Increasingly over the last 10 years, more employers in Ireland started to address the issue of work life balance, to bring benefits (Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission , n.d.) for themselves and their workforce. Companies sought to attract and retain employees by introducing policies that address work-life balance. The main work-life balance policies in Ireland are annual leave, maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, adoptive leave, carer leave, flexible working hours (Citizens Information, n.d.) and so on. As of October 2022, the Irish government has brought the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022 (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2022) to the second stage which will see some of these measures extended further to improve family friendly work practices and support women in the workplace.

Post Covid-19, in 2021 the Central Statistics Office in Ireland (CSO , 2022) conducted a Personal and Work-Life Balance Survey which showed a shift in work-life balance following the increase in remote working. Workers who were working mostly from home with a mix of office, hub or travel were most satisfied at 94.2% with both their job and life as a whole. The creation of virtual teams or working from home are new ways of work-life balancing.



## Policies / Research on the effects of WLB

### **The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022**

The Irish government are in the process of approving The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022, (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2022). It proposes several legislative changes which are designed to allow for a better work life balance for parents and carers, to encourage more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women and ultimately to try and improve the representation of women in the labour market. Some of the key proposals under the Bill include:

- Right to request flexible working
- Leave for medical care purposes
- Extension of the period during which time can be taken out from work to breastfeed
- Extension of maternity leave entitlements to transgender men

Once implemented employers will need to review and amend their family and caring leave policies to ensure they are compliant with the new legislation. As with the right to request remote work, the government will seek to issue guidance to employers on how to handle requests for flexible working arrangements and that policies will be required or recommended. (Hynes, 2022)

### **The Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2021**

In January 2022, the Irish government published details of a new law giving workers the right to request remote working. During the pandemic, many workers had to work from home, and they had no choice on the matter. Following the lifting of restrictions, the government sought to clarify the position for employees and employers. The Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2021 (Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, 2022) provides a legal framework around terms for requesting, approving or refusing a request for remote work can be based.



All workplaces must have a written statement which sets out the company's Remote Working Policy, specifying the way remote working requests are managed and the conditions which will apply to remote working within the organisation. Where the employer has completed the assessment process and any appeal is heard, the employee will have to wait a period of 12 months to submit another request, provided they are in the same role. If an employee moves to a new role within the company, they may submit a fresh request.

The new law provides for a time-limit for an employer to return a decision in relation to a request from an employee. The employer can set out their own specific time limit, but it must not be more than 12 weeks. An employee will be eligible to submit a request once they have worked for their employer for a period of six months. However, an employer is free to offer remote work from day one if desired. There is a right of appeal to the Workplace Relations Commission where an employer has failed to respond to a request or to provide any reasonable grounds for refusal of a request for remote working and protections for employees from penalisation for having exercised their entitlement to request remote working.

### **Code of Practice on Right to Disconnect**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, all Irish employees were officially granted the Right to Disconnect (gov.ie, 2021) from work and have a better work-life balance, after the government brought in a new Code of Practice for the right to disconnect. Part of the rationale for this commitment is to create more flexible family-friendly working arrangements, including working from home and working more flexible hours.

The Right to Disconnect gives employees the right to switch off from work outside of normal working hours, including the right to not respond immediately to emails, telephone calls or other messages. There are three rights enshrined in the Code

- the right of an employee to not have to routinely perform work outside their normal working hours



- the right not to be penalised for refusing to attend to work matters outside of normal working hours
- the duty to respect another person’s right to disconnect (for example: by not routinely emailing or calling outside normal working hours)

However, there is **no formal Right to Disconnect** under Irish or European law. This Code of Practice provides practical guidance for employers and employees to assist in meeting existing obligations under existing legislation. The full code is available to view here: [code-of-practice-for-employers-and-employees-on-the-right-to-disconnect.pdf \(workplacerelations.ie\)](https://www.workplacerelations.ie/code-of-practice-for-employers-and-employees-on-the-right-to-disconnect.pdf)

## Initiatives

### The Changemakers Programme

[Place the logo of the project/ initiative or other image of the best practice]

Topic/ Area  
Title



Supporting remote worker engagement and social impact

#### The Changemakers Programme

- Training Programme  
The Changemakers programme supports 3 levels of engagement for achieving Grow Remote’s social mission of making remote employment visible and accessible. Changemakers are invited to get involved in Grow Remote as either Remote Advocates, Experts or Chapter Leads.

Type of Initiative

Remote Advocates are individuals who wish to fly the flag for remote work in their own unique way, using their individual talent and giving as much or as little time as they see fit. This impact may take the form of a simple conversation with a friend, a series of school talks, or a one-off jobs fair for remote workers.

Chapter Leads are individuals with a deep investment in their local area and a drive to make sustainable grassroots change through remote employment. Grow Remote offers funding (up to €1,000 per chapter), one-to-one support and the opportunity to change their locality for good.



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Experts are people with an established expertise in the remote ecosystem or the future of work who wish to contribute their time towards Grow Remote’s mission. This may involve representing Grow Remote at an international conference, all expenses paid.

<b>Date released</b>	October 2022
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Grow Remote
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	A Grow Remote changemaker is an individual with a shared passion for Grow Remote’s social mission to make remote employment local and volunteers their time, energy or talent towards achieving it.
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To promote remote working regionally in Ireland.
<b>Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)</b>	This programme has just launched so there are no results to evaluate yet.
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="#">Launching the Changemakers programme - Grow Remote</a>
<b>References/ online sources</b>	<a href="#">(2) Post   LinkedIn</a>
<b>Additional notes</b>	Playbook available to download here: <a href="#">Changemakers - Grow Remote</a>

## Distilled

[Place the logo of the project/ initiative or other image of the best practice]



<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Online classified specialist company who offer a wide range of employee benefits for work-life balance and well-being.
<b>Title</b>	Distilled
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	Benefits include fully paid parental leave, wellness programmes, workplace flexibility, tuition support and competitive compensation. Company makes itself attractive to employees with the range of benefits.
<b>Date released</b>	Continuous
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Employees
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility to work from home or hybrid.</li> <li>• Employees given every Friday in August as leave to relax.</li> <li>• Social activities, get togethers, hiking, birthday gifts, breakfast</li> </ul>



- Access to employee & family to doctor. Calm app.
- Employee Assistance programme & wellness survey.
- Paid leave for parents, flexible working arrangements.
- Additional time off for special moments: wedding, buying house, child's first day of school etc..

<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To attract and retain employees in a competitive marketplace.
<b>Evaluation (results) of effectiveness (if applicable)</b>	Employee testimonials and profile interviews: <a href="#">Meet Our Distiller: Katerina Rygolova! - Distilled - Medium</a>
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="#">Our Benefits (distilled.ie)</a>
<b>References/ online sources</b>	<a href="#">Life at Distilled - YouTube</a>

## HR Policies at an Irish University, UCC

[Place the logo of the project/ initiative or other image of the best practice]



<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Supporting employees with well being and family friendly policies.
<b>Title</b>	HR Policies at an Irish university, UCC
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	A broad range of benefits for employees with a focus on wellbeing; including study leave, recognition awards, concessions, a staff well being plan. Other benefits are family friendly, including a returners scheme for women returning after maternity leave, parental leave, carer's leave etc.
<b>Date released</b>	Continue to be added to.
<b>Partners/ network</b>	UCC employees only
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	A full range of benefits for staff
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To encourage staff retention.
<b>Evaluation (results) of effectiveness (if applicable)</b>	Not available but it may be possible to ask UCC HR for further information on the policies and their uptake.
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="#">Policies   University College Cork (ucc.ie)</a>

## My family Care: solutions to make family & work for business and people



[Place the logo of the project/ initiative or other image of the best practice]

**MY FAMILY CARE+**

**Topic/ Area**

Employee benefits for work-life balance and well-being  
My Family Care: solutions to make family + work for business and people.

**Title**

**Type of Initiative**

Private company supplying 'back up care' to large corporate clients (employers) to support work-life balance and wellbeing in their workplaces.

Back up care includes a wide range of supports e.g., Parental Leave Toolkit for employees & employers.

**Date released**

Ongoing

**Partners/ network**

Employers such as: Sky, IBM, Deloitte, P&G etc..

**Description of the methods/ approach**

Case studies of success stories available to free download.  
Toolkits

**Purpose/Aim**

Resources for employees and employers

Employee satisfaction, employee wellbeing, and retention based on a pricing model for employers.

**Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)**

Testimonials on website

**Web link**

[My Family Care | Work+Family Solutions for Employers](#)



## Estonia

### Introduction to Work-Life Balance

In 2019, the employment rate on the Estonian labour market rose to the first among the countries of the European Union, but still several structural challenges need to be solved by the state. Work-life balance under the competence of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the institutions managed by it, such as the Social Insurance Board, the Health Board, the Labour Inspectorate of Estonia and the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund are regulated by several legislations and need to be discussed at national level in the changed circumstances after the Covid-19 pandemic. (Good to know - guide for employers, 2020)

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, the perception of the workplace, remote work and reconciliation of work and family life has changed and has challenged employers, forcing them to rethink values and work principles. Among other things, this has meant the introduction of various digital solutions, raising the digital competences of employees, enabling remote work, supporting the balance of work and family life, etc. The Covid-19 crisis has also highlighted social inequalities and made the situation of people with socio-economic difficulties even more difficult. The socio-economic situation of women and men is not equal, gender gaps persist in many areas of life, and it is expected that gender inequality will increase during times of crisis and emergency situations. The pandemic has set back equality between women and men and reversed previous achievements in the field of gender equality. Family members who have family-related care responsibilities are in the most vulnerable position when it comes to balancing work and family life. (Haugas & Sepper, COVID-19 pandeemia sotsiaal-majanduslik mõju soolisele võrdõiguslikkusele, 2021)



## Policies / Research on the effects of WLB

### Equal treatment regulations in Estonia and the European Union

In Estonia, it is assumed that an employee works 40 hours a week, 8 hours a day, and the total working time cannot exceed an average of 48 hours per seven-day period up to a four-month accounting period. A 30-minute intraday break must be provided for a 6-hour working time. The employer and employee may agree on longer working hours if the total working time does not exceed an average of 52 hours per seven-day period during the four-month accounting period and the agreement is not unreasonably detrimental to the employee. The employer's obligation is to compensate overtime with free time in an amount equal to the overtime time or in money. When compensating overtime in money, the employer must pay the employee 1.5 times the salary. (Employment Contracts Act, 2008)

From the analysis of the data of the 2015 ISSP Estonia survey, it can be concluded that in Estonia, flexibility in the amount and time of work is considered important when combining work and family life. The implementation of working time flexibility depends on preferences on the one hand and opportunities on the other, and the possibility of the two working together. Previous studies (Täht & Mills, 2016) have shown that the positive effect of working time flexibility on reconciling work and family life depends on the one hand to a very large extent on the general institutional framework - whether and to what extent flexibility is encouraged and enabled at the level of laws and legislation - and on the other hand, about the extent to which this work and family life arrangement is the choice and preference of the households themselves. (Täht K. , 2016)

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union have made it a priority to improve the possibilities of reconciling work and private life and emphasized the need to enable parents in all European countries to reconcile their paid and unpaid work. In Estonia, the employer's obligations and the employee's rights to equal treatment and reconciliation of work and family life are regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the Equal Treatment Act, the Gender Equality Act, the Employment Act. (Good to know - guide for employers, 2020)



In the European Union, the employer's obligations and the employee's rights to equal treatment and reconciliation of work and family life are regulated by Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council, 20 June 2019, Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, 5 July 2006, European the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union and the European Pillar of Social Rights. Article 33 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that the family is under legal, economic and social protection, and in order to be able to reconcile family and working life, everyone has the right to protection against dismissal due to pregnancy and childbirth, the right to paid maternity leave and parental leave after the birth or adoption of a child. (Charter of Fundamental Rights, 2010) Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council, 20 June 2019 (2) sets the minimum requirements for paternity, parental and carer's leave and flexible work arrangements for working parents and carers. The minimum requirements aim to achieve equality between men and women in terms of labour market opportunities and treatment at work, making it easier for working parents or carers to reconcile work and family life. (Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU, 2019)

The European Parliament, Directorate- General for Communication commissioned a new Flash Eurobarometer survey in 2022 to gather women's opinions on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on violence against women, mental health and women's working lives. As a result of the survey, it was found that about three-quarters (77%) of women across the EU think that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase in physical and emotional violence against women in their country. In 25 out of 27 Member States, a majority of women think that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase in physical and emotional violence against women in their country. In four countries, about a quarter of respondents know of women in their circle of friends and family who have experienced domestic violence or abuse since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. (Maggio, et al., 2022)



## Studies during the Covid-19 pandemic

In Estonia, during the pandemic, various institutions studied the impact of the crisis on work and family life from different aspects. The Political Research Center Praxis, the Estonian Applied Research Center CentAR and the University of Tartu studied the impact of the crisis on the economy regionally (Laurimäe & Koppel, Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19: The Regional Impact of the Pandemic, 2022), the socio-economic impact on young people (Haugas, Allemann, & Anniste, The socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, 2021), on the elderly and gender equality, and the impact of the crisis on people with disabilities (Sepper & Anniste, 2022) and parents of disabled children. (Laurimäe & Koppel, Socio-economic impact of COVID-19: Measures to support the unemployed and prevent poverty, 2021)

The non-profit organization Peasjad (NGO Head Matters) has studied the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on mental health in order to raise low awareness of the impact of remote work on the human psyche. When doing remote work, more attention must be paid to psychosocial risk factors, the occurrence of which can increase work stress. In a new and stressful situation, where the work demands exceed the employee's ability to cope with them and the person perceives a contradiction between the challenges presented by the work environment and their coping options, severe mental and physical health problems may manifest, such as burnout and depression, difficulty concentrating, problems at home, drug and alcohol abuse, poor physical health, cardiovascular diseases and musculoskeletal problems. (The Labour Inspectorate of Estonia, 2022)

Many of the mental health problems are preventable and treatable — with help, people can fully recover or successfully cope with their condition, live as full a life as possible and contribute to the functioning of society. In order to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on mental health, the NGO Peasjad has prepared guidelines for employees and employers to mitigate psychosocial risk factors. The Ministry of Social Affairs, the Estonian Employers' Union, the Health Development Institute, the Labour Inspectorate, the Employment Fund and the Estonian Personnel Management Association PARE contributed to the completion of the mental health electronic first



aid cabinet coordinated by the NGO Peasjad. The creation of a first aid kit designed to support the team and yourself was supported by the European Social Fund. (Mental health first aid kit, 2022)

## **Changes in legislation - more flexible work arrangements**

### **Parents have more flexibility and independence in using child leave**

With the new amendment to the Family Benefits Act adopted in 2016, from April 1, 2022, parental leave will be granted to both parents in an employment relationship separately and considering each child. The change in the law allows parents more flexibility and individuality when using child leave and gives parents the opportunity to plan child leave together at the same time. Single families now have the opportunity to plan vacations more flexibly - in the case of both parental leave and parental leave of a disabled child, the biological parent can give up his or her vacation days in favour of the other parent's spouse or registered life partner. (Social Insurance Board, 2022)

### **Responsibility when working remotely**

According to Statistics Estonia, every fourth employee works remotely. (Rõtov, 2022) Wanting to implement in Estonia the framework agreement on remote work concluded by social partners at the European Union level on 16.07.2002, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation and the Estonian Employers' Confederation concluded the recommended principles for remote work. Finding that remote work in Estonia allows for the modernisation of work organisation, helps to increase the productivity and competitiveness of companies, by enabling a better reconciliation of the work and family life of employees, motivates employees to work better, increases the opportunities of people living in rural areas on the labour market, helps to save on transport costs and expands the opportunities of people with reduced working capacity to be busy with work, contributed Amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act will enter into force on November 19, 2022 and will more clearly divide the



responsibility of the employer and the employee when performing remote work. For example, the remote work workplace is an agreement between the employee and the employer, and the employee is obliged to design a safe workplace and working conditions for remote work based on the instructions given by the employer. (There will be new requirements for organising remote work, 2022)

### The employee's independent decision-making competence in working time management

The Parliament of Estonia adopted the Law on Amendments to the Employment Contracts Act and other related laws, which enter into force on August 1, 2022, and which transposes the European Union directive on transparent and predictable working conditions. The changes mainly concern the Employment Contract and the Public Service Act, specifying the protection against unfavourable treatment, stipulating the employee's right to suitable working conditions and the obligation to ensure that working or providing services for another employer does not endanger his or her own or others' life and health. (Riigi Teataja, 2022)

## Initiatives

### “Mental Health Vitamins” – Activities by a NGO Peaasjad

**Logo**



NGO Peaasjad

**Topic/ Area**

Balancing mental health in the workplace

**Title**

Mental health vitamins

**Type of Initiative**

- Training Programme
- Games
- Handbook/ Guidelines
- Posters



<b>Date released</b>	2022
<b>Partners/ network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online test</li> <li>• The Ministry of Social Affairs (Estonia)</li> <li>• the Estonian Employers' Union,</li> <li>• the Health Development Institute (Estonia)</li> <li>• the Labour Inspectorate (Estonia)</li> <li>• the Employment Fund (Estonia)</li> <li>• the Estonian Personnel Management Association PARE</li> </ul>
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	Peaasi.ee is a mental health vitamin course consisting of five themed weeks, which can be undertaken by yourself, with family, friends or a team at any time at your own pace. It is possible to familiarise yourself with the introduction of mental health vitamins, tips and advice and choose at least 1 trick to add to your daily life every week. In order not to forget your favourite tricks, you can write them on the computer or on a printed worksheet.
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	Raising awareness of the impact of remote work on human mental health.
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="https://peaasi.ee/en/mental-health-vitamins/#1634149877171-1ee7fbf4-044a">https://peaasi.ee/en/mental-health-vitamins/#1634149877171-1ee7fbf4-044a</a>
<b>References/ sources</b>	online Mental health vitamin test : <a href="https://peaasi.ee/vitamiinitest/en/">https://peaasi.ee/vitamiinitest/en/</a>
<b>Additional notes</b>	The creation of a first aid kit designed to support the team and yourself was supported by the European Social Fund

### “Manual Covid-19 for Organisations”

<b>Logo</b>	
<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Estonian Human Rights Center, Aga Khan Foundation (Portugal) and Equality Strategies (Ireland)
<b>Title</b>	Diversity and Inclusion in times of global crisis
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	Manual Covid-19 for Organisations
<b>Partners/ network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handbook/ Guidelines</li> <li>• Aga Khan Foundation Portugal</li> <li>• Equality Strategies (Ireland)</li> </ul>



<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	The smart combination of remote work and office work, unique to each organisation, will be key to foster flexible work environments in the future.
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	The manual on managing diversity in times of crisis is intended as a tool for employers who want to support their collective and are looking for solutions to better prepare themselves for future crises. The guidance material is useful both for those who want to implement important strategic changes and for employers who want to gain additional knowledge, inspiration and tools to more skillfully manage diversity in their organization.
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="https://humanrights.ee/app/uploads/2021/08/DI-in-times-of-crisis-guide.pdf">https://humanrights.ee/app/uploads/2021/08/DI-in-times-of-crisis-guide.pdf</a>
<b>References/ sources</b>	<b>online</b> <a href="https://www.tooelu.ee/et/uudised/216/valminud-juhend-toandjatele-mitmekesisuse-juhtimisest-kriisiajal">https://www.tooelu.ee/et/uudised/216/valminud-juhend-toandjatele-mitmekesisuse-juhtimisest-kriisiajal</a>

### “Good to know – guide for employers”

<b>Logo</b>	
<b>Topic/ Area</b>	The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner
<b>Title</b>	Important legislation for the employer
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	Good to know - guide for employers
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Handbook/ Guidelines
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	European Commission project Parents@Work
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	Overview of legislation governing equal treatment
<b>Web link</b>	The purpose of the guide is to provide a concise overview of the important laws regulating equal treatment for the employer.
	<a href="https://volinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/checklist.pdf">https://volinik.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/checklist.pdf</a>



## Denmark

### Introduction to Work-Life Balance

According to the OECD Better Life report only 2% of employees in Denmark regularly work long hours, which is highly efficient when compared to the average of 13% across Europe. Denmark has long been held up as one of the countries with the most effective work-life balance, and this is often attributed to the highly educated and skilled population, with over 80% of adults aged 25-64 having completed post-secondary education and they exceed the OECD average.

The OECD ranking is based on these key variables:

- Percentage of employees working very long hours (more than 50 hours a week)
- The time spent on "leisure and personal care" (including sleeping and eating)

As stated above only 2% of the Danish population work "very long hours" as defined by the OECD and on average Danes spend the majority of their day, approximately 15.7 hours on personal care and leisure

By prioritising flexibility and balance Danes remain one of the happiest nations in the world. Danes prioritise life over work and utilise a flexible approach to both working hours and their place of work. It is also standard within Denmark that all workers receive a minimum of 5 weeks of paid holiday leave throughout the year, ensuring time for hobbies, family, and rest to prevent burnout.

Research on why Denmark is so effective in work-life balance varies, but there are key economic and cultural factors, such as the high taxes that all Danes pay, as well as the fact that the majority of both men and women in Denmark work, which lead to both an ability to achieve a work-life balance, through the statutory supports and government-led schemes and



also a desire to ensure a work-life balance to keep workers happy and fulfilled within their roles in the longer term.

## Policies / Research on the effects of WLB

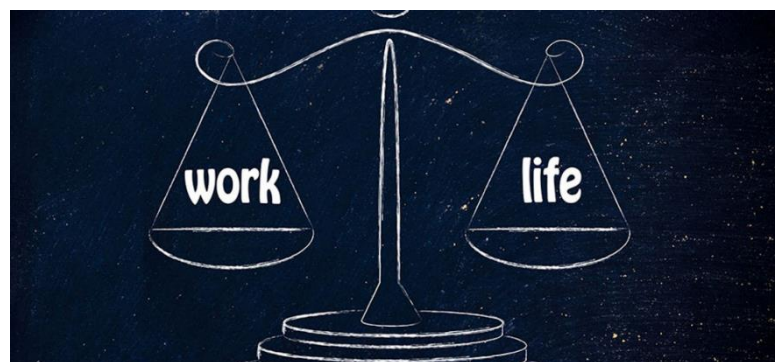
As with most European countries throughout the duration of the pandemic Denmark was locked down for an extended period of time. This hastened the shift to remote work for those that did not already utilise this within their workspace and increased time within the home for those that already had flexible working arrangements. As we know Denmark is advanced in its implementation of a healthy work -life balance and therefore there were no major overhauls, as we have witnessed in other European countries post-Covid, however, some changes have come into force since June 2022.

Within Denmark there are policies in place to ensure the health and wellbeing of those working from home and covering flexible working environments. The new requirements upon an employer, such as providing adequate equipment for staff working from home now only take effect if the staff member works from home more than 2 days a week on average.

**“Employers should provide employees working from home equipment, such as a computer, cell phone and internet connection. The company must ensure that employees have a place to work from home and do not have any additional expenses due to their work from home.”**

## Initiatives

### Work Life Balance Centre



Work-Life Balance  
Work-Life Balance Centre

Topic/ Area  
Title



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

The content of this publication represents the views of the author only. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

**Type of Initiative**

Online Platform

**Date released**

2020- ongoing

**Partners/ network**

Work Life Balance centre.org

**Description of the methods/ approach**

More than just an online repository of tips, the Work-Life Balance centre serves as a partner in building a **more rewarding and fulfilling life, while still attaining the personal and professional goals** that you have set for yourself. With the help of the detailed information we provide, you may be able to achieve that elusive goal of work-life balance.

**Purpose/Aim**

An innovative website that aims to help you achieve an optimal balance between work and your personal life.

**Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)**

Experienced in helping people maintain a proper work life balance when working from home the Centre helps people to navigate the most challenging trials and obstacles.

**Web link**

<https://worklifebalancecentre.org/>

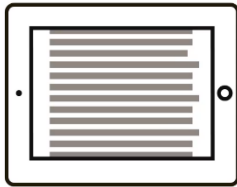
**References/ online sources**

<https://worklifebalancecentre.org/25-tips-and-tools-for-anyone-working-from-home/>  
<https://worklifebalancecentre.org/striking-a-balance-managing-fatherhood-and-a-career/>  
<https://worklifebalancecentre.org/15-work-life-balance-suggestions-for-creating-the-lifestyle-youve-always-wanted/>



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Instapaper



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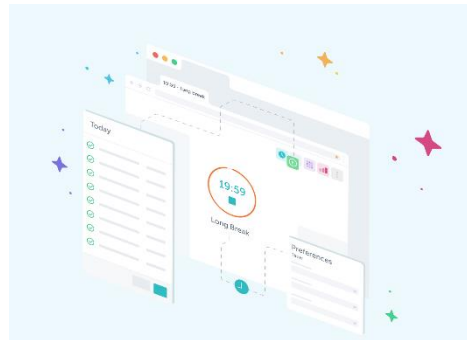
<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Bookmarking tool
<b>Title</b>	Instapaper
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	Online Tools, Applications or Platform
<b>Date released</b>	2008
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Founded by Marco Arment in the US and was acquired by Pintered in 2016
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	A simple bookmarking tool which allows you to view and save content to “read later” in a stripped down text view to help the user avoid distractions.
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	Save down your essential reading materials and data, away from the distractions that exist on the internet. You can save articles, images, video content or highlight the quotes you come across online using the browser extension to view and use later.  The app helps you give undivided attention to the tasks at hand and finish work on time!
<b>Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)</b>	A free resource that can be used on your desktop or mobile device
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="https://www.instapaper.com/">https://www.instapaper.com/</a>



References/ online sources

<https://blog.instapaper.com/post/673906371094364160>

FOCUS BOOSTER



**Topic/ Area**  
**Title**

FOCUS AND ACHIEVE BETTER WORK LIFE BALANCE  
FOCUS BOOSTER

**Type of Initiative**

Online Tools, Applications or Platform

**Date released**

2009

**Partners/ network**

This idea and subsequent app was developed in Adelaide, Australia

**Description of the methods/ approach**

A simple idea- a timer that enables a worker to focus and utilise the pomodoro method - The Pomodoro Technique is a time management system that encourages people to work with the time they have—rather than against it. Using this method, you break your workday into 25-minute chunks separated by five-minute breaks. These intervals are referred to as pomodoros.

The App allows you to remain on track by tracking progress and enabling regular breaks

**Purpose/Aim**

Focus booster is more than just your average pomodoro timer, it takes the pomodoro technique to a whole other level.

Focus booster is for people who want to gain further insight into how they are using their time, achieve more in a day and visualise their progress all while boosting their productivity.



The app helps to empower people to take control of their time, reduce distractions and finish their day on a win. By using the app to improve focus on the task at hand and measure progress with insightful reporting.

**Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)**

**Web link**

**References/ online sources**

Since 2009 focus booster has empowered 240,000+ people!

<https://www.focusboosterapp.com/>

<https://www.focusboosterapp.com/the-pomodoro-technique>



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### **Further Research Links:**

Irish government's remote working strategy: [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) - [Making Remote Work: National Remote Work Strategy \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

Working from home experiences: [Macra members share their experiences of working from home – Macra na Feirme](http://www.macra.ie)

Family friendly policies: [The key to a good work-life balance: family-friendly policies \(rte.ie\)](http://www.rte.ie)

Future of Work report: [The Future of Work Beyond the Pandemic: Takeaways from our Global Workforce of the Future Report \(adecgroup.com\)](http://www.adecgroup.com)



EC Directive on work-life balance: [Work-Life balance directive - Inclusion Europe \(inclusion-europe.eu\)](#) Legislation: [EUR-Lex - 32019L1158 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

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