



How Can a Family-Friendly Company Help Women Achieve Top Positions?

The issue of coordination of personal and professional life is closely linked to the issue of gender equality. We cannot deal with one without the other. As soon as we start to look for options on **how to increase the percentage of women in leading positions and how to balance the gender structure of top leadership, we encounter a problem:** due to the fact that women do most of the care at home and housekeeping, they cannot stay at work late in the same manner as their male colleagues.

The first and the simplest step on how to increase the percentage of women in leading positions is to implement family-friendly policies that enable all employees to coordinate their professional and personal duties more easily. Among other things, this can be achieved through **more flexible forms of work, adjusted work schedules and by promoting and raising awareness of the importance** and the added value of the work environment offered by a family-friendly company.

Naturally, the organisational culture of an individual company plays an important role here. If the **organisational culture** is mature enough to **encourage employees to be as effective as possible at their job**, it will be easier for them to leave after the end of their working day. This works in reverse as well. If the organisational culture is such that **staying at the office for a long time is highly prized**, if employees also check and answer work e-mail in the evening, on weekends and on holidays, an environment where personal duties are primarily seen as an obstacle and not as a normal part of the life of every employee is being created.

Slovenia: The system rewards employers to be family-friendly

One of the ways companies choose to **systematically approach** the area of coordination of personal and professional life is the **Family-Friendly Company (DPP) certifying system**. The system was **implemented in Slovenia about ten years ago and originates in Germany**. Over a decade ago, in the framework of Equal project partnership, supported by the EU, project partners were looking for solutions on how to address the discrimination of young mothers in the labour market. Thus a German system has been introduced in Slovenia that **rewards employers for implementing family-friendly policies**.



Following the completion of the project, the entire control over the certification was taken over by a member of the partnership – the Ekvilib Institute, which still issues certificates in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. From the beginning to this day, the number of **certificate holders has increased considerably**. To this day, over 250 companies and organisations, employing **more than 80.000 people**, have entered the procedure. In addition to the increased recognition in Slovenia, the procedure is being implemented in Serbia and Estonia as well.

Family-friendly certificate measures

The main elements of the **DPP certificate are measures**, divided into **eight categories**, extending from work time, work organisation, communication with employees, leadership competencies and career development to family services and employee rewarding. The system is set in such a manner that each company or organisation is able to find something for itself or its employees in the wide range of available measures. This is why **the system can be implemented into each organisation**, regardless of industry, size or type of work processes. In addition to mandatory measures, which must be implemented by all companies, applicants can choose other measures to best suit the needs of their employees in the area of coordination of personal and professional life but that also reflect the capabilities of the company to realise those measures.



The most successful combination of measures addresses the most immediate needs of the employees, provides a long-term effect and affects the construction of a positive and inclusive organisational atmosphere. Despite the name “Family-Friendly Company”, it is important that **not only measures aimed at parents are implemented in the framework of the certificate**. Instead, a combination in which each and every employee can find something for himself or

herself must be sought after. Measures that improve the **organisational atmosphere and work place relationships** and **encourage informal socialising** among employees positively affect all employees. In this context, it is particularly important that **according to the surveys 72 percent of Slovenians frequently experience stress at the workplace, whereas the EU-27 average is 51 percent**.

In order to address gender inequality in top leading positions, the Equilib Institute worked with the Female Managers’ Section of the Managers’ Association of Slovenia in 2011. At that time, the section was preparing guidelines to increase the proportion of women in leading positions. The Equilib Institute was invited to join the working group responsible for preparing measures that would increase the proportion of women in leading positions. As a result of this cooperation, some of these measures have been included in the Catalogue of Measures available to all companies that enter the procedure.

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