



GUIDE

FOR THE DETECTION OF OPPORTUNITIES AND

SOLUTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANS AND/OR MEASURES FOR

THE RECONCILIATION OF FAMILY AND WORKING LIFE

IN THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

**Transnational “EU-Reconcicy: European Model of a City that
Reconciles”**

DP: “Woman in favour of Reconciliation”

*EQUAL National Project “Between Cronos and Ceres: Reconciling
time and space”*

Ayuntamiento de Arganda del Rey

Ayuntamiento de Getafe

Ayuntamiento de Fuenlabrada

Ayuntamiento de Parla

Ayuntamiento de Rivas-Vaciamadrid

Ayuntamiento de Torrejón de Ardoz

Ayuntamiento de Valdemoro



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief summary of policies for reconciliation of working and family life in Spain

"In Spain, the incorporation of women in paid working positions has brought about one of the most important social changes in the Twentieth Century. This has meant that a system has had to be created which considers the new relationships which have arisen and a new manner of cooperation and commitment between women and men, permitting the balanced distribution of responsibilities in both professional and private life." This text is an extract from *Law 39/1999, dated November the 5th (to promote the reconciliation of the private and professional lives of workers)*. It was the first state legislation which attempted to address this question in detail¹.

Under the auspices of this law the three governing authorities in the Spanish State (central government, regional governments and municipal or local authorities) began to regulate the reconciliation of citizens' working and family life by the introduction of Plans for Equality and other strategies.

The Law came about as a result of the aforementioned national changes (the mass incorporation of women in the job market) and an international context which favoured equal opportunities between men and women: the Fourth World Conference on Women (more commonly known as the 1995 Beijing Conference) and European Council Regulations 92/85/EEC, October 19 and 96/34/EC, June 3².

¹ "(...) the change from the traditional pattern where women stop working when they reach an age when most women have small children to a new model where they remain in the job market throughout their lifetimes (just like men) is very significant. The decade of the Thirties was especially significant in this sense: in 1981 less than one third of women between the ages of 35 and 39 were employed (28.2%). In 1999 this figure was more than two-thirds (64.0%) (Fernández Cordón). In just twenty years Spain changed from a family/working model where the dominant factor was gender-based division to a new model where both women and men directly participate in the workplace". TOBÍO SOLER, Constanza, "Conciliación o contradicción: cómo hacen las madres trabajadoras". In: Various Authors.- *Conciliar la Vida. Tiempo y servicios para la Igualdad*, Consejo de la Mujer de la Comunidad de Madrid, Madrid, 2002. p 15-45.

Thus, the law especially covers all characteristics of reconciliation related to the factor of time: time to be able to exercise one's right to work and time to exercise one's right to protect and care for the family (placing special emphasise on dependent persons).

The plans and strategies to facilitate reconciliation adopted by the three authorities from that time on have focused on the following points:

- Establishing labour-related measures: reduction of the working day; leave of absence granted for the care of dependent individuals; paternity and maternity leave (improved by law in 1999, etc.)
- Offering direct support services both in and outside the home.
- Providing direct economic support (e.g. child benefit payments, or indirect savings (Income Tax deductions).
- Continuous training and awareness raising activities relating to equal opportunities for men and women.
- Execution of studies to determine changes and new requirements relating to the question of reconciliation.

The current demands relating to reconciliation are an advance upon the ground covered in the seven years since the law was first passed and touch upon points which have still to be resolved or deal with new circumstances:

- The need for greater flexibility in working hours.
- The need for a new, fairer distribution of responsibilities and duties in the home.
- Analysis of the currently-existing resources for reconciliation and their subsequent adaptation to real demand.
- Higher level of commitment from men in all improvement processes for the reconciliation of working and family life.
- Improvement of current legislation relating to reconciliation and the improvement of attitudes from businesses in relation to reconciliation.

Some of the most important questions faced at present are: the low level of commitment shown by males in family life; reluctance of companies to hire women or

offer similar conditions to women in the reproductive age who intend to have children; and the lack of employment policies designed to encourage decent part-time contracts.² All of these points clearly illustrate that it is still women who are mainly responsible for bringing about reconciliation in Spain and that society as a whole places great emphasis on the value of work (thus overlooking or failing to value to the same degree the family/reproductive role, and especially the protection and care of dependent individuals).

As a result of this Spanish families have a lower birth rate and the population is ageing. Spain is currently one of the European Countries with the lowest fertility rate (1.3%) and with one of the highest rates of progressive ageing of the populace (the average age of the Spanish population is now 39.3 years of age)³. All told, the percentage of women in remunerated employment outside of the home is still one of the lowest in Europe.

Last March the Spanish Cabinet approved a draft project for the *Ley de Igualdad* (Equality Law), which is intended to improve the work situation of women and which will therefore introduce new or improved reconciliation measures in relation to companies and male participation in family life.

1.2 Methodology

The aim of this guide is to describe local actions relating to reconciliation in the 7 municipalities which are members of *DP Mujeres por la Conciliación*, which is, in turn, a member of the transnational program "EU-Reconcily": The description of said actions is designed to assist in the detection of opportunities and potential solutions for the reconciliation of family and working life at the local level. This has been done by using, as a model for analysis, the development experiences from the equal opportunity plans in the 7 municipalities making up the Madrid Greater Region: *Arganda del Rey, Getafe,*

² Another point to be taken into account, which directly affects reconciliation of family and working life, is the increase in the cost of housing. This greatly exceeds the purchasing power of families (especially young families or those in vulnerable situations).

³ Various Authors.- *Políticas públicas de conciliación de la vida familiar y laboral en la Comunidad de Madrid. Un análisis de las variables del PHOGUE* (A European Union survey of Family Budgets), Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2003. p. 25.



Fuenlabrada, Parla, Rivas-Vaciamadrid, Torrejón de Ardoz and Valdemoro (all members of the aforementioned Development Partnership and implementers of the EQUAL Project – both its national version (*Between Cronos and Ceres: Reconciliation of Time and Space*) and its transnational version (*“EU-Reconcily: European Model of a City that Reconciles”*).

The methodology used in the creation of the guide was as follows: firstly, the actions and initiatives planned and carried out by the councils have been analysed (as well as any Equality Plans used). The work teams created in each of the participating councils went through internal documents relating to the question (as well as studies, plans, etc.). They then proceeded to elaborate reports which showed the councils' plans and actions in relation to reconciliation. In order to complete the information a “key-target-person” interview was carried out in each council (which in some cases was a personnel manager and in others an Inland Revenue official or even a specialist in Equal Opportunities, etc.). Secondly, the information provided by the councils was compared (paying special attention to indicators used for each activity in each area and any differences/similarities these might show). Lastly, after all of the documents had been duly analysed, a series of “lessons learned” were extracted and failings and opportunities identified (which allowed a series of indications and recommendations to be formulated). Said recommendations are the fundamental aim of this guide and we suggest that they be used as a tool which may, in turn, be utilised to define a common protocol. This protocol may then form part of future actions resulting from negotiation processes and political pressure, so as to promote the inclusion of reconciliation-related aspects as a kind of transcurricular fulcrum in local planning (especially in the *Local Agendas 21* program). This protocol will be created with the assistance of the analysis carried out for the elaboration of this guide. It will be the next product to be created in the framework of the “EU-Reconcily” Project.

1.3 The importance of monitoring and feedback

One of the fundamental aspects required so as to advance in questions relating to family/work reconciliation is to determine the effects that reconciliation planning and local actions (especially Equality Plans) have on the lives of citizens. For that reason

the evaluation of local actions and planning (and Equality Plans in particular) is essential as it allows failings and opportunities to be detected and thus allows us to advance in constructing the future steps to be taken for improving reconciliation.

Said evaluation was an attempt to determine what had been done, how had it been done, who had carried it out and what had been achieved. Thus, the evaluation shows the degree to which the planned actions were implemented (what was done), the processes that made this possible (how), the impact (achievements) and the degree of mainstreaming involved (who did what).

To carry out this type of evaluation, the basic tools used to determine social reality and the effectiveness of actions taken to improve society are *results achievement indicators* which are established during planning and used for local activities (especially in Equality Plans). The better these indicators are defined the greater our capacity for determining the nuances of social reality and we may thus implement more precise social actions.

The indicators may be both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative indicators help one to determine what the implementation processes for actions were and to understand the steps that were taken and how the management of the project helped the populace. Quantitative indicators allow one to determine the extent to which the actions were a success and the degree to which they were implemented.

There are two variables which are not always present in all of the indicators in the plans. Their use in the evaluation process could allow a better understanding of the population targeted by Equality plans. These two variables are gender and age. Indicators segmented by gender are currently being used in many equality plans. Nevertheless, age ranges are not used (which are essential in order to better understand the needs of the participants in an attempt to “understand the differences which exist between women (...) and different reconciliation problems which arise

throughout the different stages of their lives: youths, reproductive age, adults, old women, etc.”⁴. The same can also be said with regard to men.

Here are some of the most often used indicators:

QUALITATIVE	QUANTITATIVE
Efficiency	Observation of participant
Effectiveness	Observation of non-participant
Suitability	Focus Groups
Coverage	In-depth interview: structured, semi-structured, unstructured
Type	Life Stories
	Group dynamics
	Opinion scales

Some of the factors which often appear in Equality Plans which are used to determine the state of reconciliation between family and working life include:

- Responsibilities and domestic chores divided per gender
- Different choice of studies
- Obstacles in accessing the work market
- Reconciliation of working/family life
- Non-sexist school education
- Non-sexist family education
- Public resources for dependent individuals
- Adult training: fathers, mothers, teaching staff
- Business Training
- Company start up by women
- Raising of awareness

European indicators used as a guide to determining the extent of reconciliation between family and working life are:

⁴ LOPEZ MENDEZ, Irene.- “¿Qué puede aportarnos la UE en el impulso de la conciliación en España?.-Aspectos jurídicos y estratégicos de las propuestas de conciliación de la Unión Europea”, in Various Authors.- *Conciliar la Vida. Tiempo y servicios para la Igualdad*, Consejo de la Mujer de la Comunidad de Madrid, Madrid, 2002. pages 149-181.

- Percentage of working men and women who take parental leave (paid or non-paid) as per the 96/34/EC guideline.
- Male/Female distribution patterns for those taking parental leave.
- Percentage of children (up to the age of three) who are cared for by people who are not family members.
- Employment policies used to promote the compatibility of family/professional life.
- Proportion of men and women over the age of 75:
 - Dependent (cannot perform daily life tasks alone).
 - Living in specialised institutions.
 - Looked after exclusively by the family.
- Regular opening hours for public services (Council, post-office, crèches) during the week and on Saturdays.
- Regular opening hours for businesses during the week and on Saturdays.
- Time dedicated each day by each working father/mother (living as a couple with children under the age of 12 or responsible for a dependent person) to:
 - Remunerated work
 - Transport
 - The home
- Other time dedicated to the family (education and care of children and dependent adults)
- Time dedicated each day by single individuals with children under the age of 12 or responsible for a dependent person.

2 MUNICIPAL POLITICS AND RECONCILIATION OF FAMILY AND WORKING LIFE

2.1 The reconciliation of family and working life in the council and in the lives of citizens in the municipality

2.1.1 Reconciliation in the council:-

The processes involved in assuming a gender perspective in the public and private life of a municipality are slow. They require training, the raising of awareness and will-power in order to overcome individual and collective resistance. These are changes in behaviour which touch the “roots” of each person and the structures in which they are immersed: family, work, educational and social structures.

The work undertaken by municipal public policies is fundamental for the promotion of a specific type of culture. The changes introduced by Equal Opportunities Plans that Spanish municipalities began to initiate in the Nineties started in the town councils. This was the first space where the question of gender was tackled and then later transferred to society as a whole (the town council thus performing the role of a type of “two-way gateway”).

The interviews demonstrate that to a greater or lesser extent, the acceptance of the need to face the problem of the reconciliation of working and family life for men and women is nowadays a fact in Spanish councils. It is important that this be stressed as it means that these public bodies are assuming two basic points: firstly that a problem exists in relation to the reconciliation of working and family life; and secondly (and of equal importance) that this problem affects both men and women (not just women alone).

In relation to the comprehension of this problem the following approaches were used (information from achievements/opportunities realised/offered by councils over the last few years, individuals that were interviewed, and the analysis of planning and actions):

- Collective agreements.- used as a fundamental tool to improve reconciliation via the improvement of working conditions.
- Paternity leave.- often used in some councils.
- Flexible working hours.-
- Mainstreaming.- trying to ensure that actions are not just initiated by the *Department for Women* in each council, but are a result of a coordinated approach involving various departments, each one assuming a gender-related approach to their own activities, thus creating integral policies and promoting better results.
- Gender workshops.- training which is available to all of the members of the council's staff.

Difficulties found refer to:

- Advances in collective agreements.- not as many nor as wide in their scope as hoped for (from a reconciliation perspective).
- Avoid a radical differentiation between the public local environment and the private local environment.
- Real synergies between council departments.- make reference to the communal implementation of reconciliation activities amongst the different departments. Some indicate that the situation is a result of difficulties in sharing and coordinating the *Departments for Women* and offers refer to the difficulty that other departments have in accepting mainstreaming.
- How to make gender issues really function.- there is still a long way to go before municipal structures fully incorporate the concepts of equality and gender over the long term.
- How to make gender issues function with more reticent councillors.- as in the case of any sensitive subject it is difficult that all workers implement gender-related activities and questions (from both a technical and political perspective). Training, debate and the raising of awareness are fundamental in overcoming resistance.

These advances in town councils form part of the advances made in relation to questions of equality and reconciliation in other administrative authorities at a regional,

provincial and central level. The positive effect of this is that it opens a public debate between local citizens and companies relating to the need to create conditions to improve the reconciliation of professional and family life.

2.1.2 Reconciliation in the lives of citizens in municipalities

Municipalities attempt to assist in the reconciliation of the professional and family lives of their citizens by diverse means (summarized as follows):

- Development of legislation favouring the reconciliation of professional and family life.
- The establishment of new (or support for existing) support services both within and outside the home.
- Design and application of awareness raising activities relating to reconciliation.
- Research and analysis relating to the current state of reconciliation and future projects.

The measures promoted on a political level to favour reconciliation are orientated towards the drafting of laws designed to reconcile professional and family life. The most outstanding measures promoted by this strategy include: reconciliatory actions in work legislation (flexible working hours, telework, parental leave, etc.); and fiscal measures designed to reduce the burden on families with dependent individuals⁵ (economic assistance, tax exemption, etc.).

The creation of care services for dependent individuals and free-time related to reconciliation (included in the so called “proximity services”) is another of the municipal strategies. These services consist in:

- Children.- crèches and infant schools; toy libraries; school dinners; home help (specialised babysitters); transport, etc.

⁵ The concept of “dependent individual” is, according to Equality Plans, children and elderly people who cannot look after themselves.

- The elderly.- day centres; home help (specialised care, medical attention, psychology, etc.).

As for raising awareness and training, various activities are promoted by the council, including:

- Equality and gender workshops for infants, adolescents and adults, especially in the school environment (co-education for young children and youths; “parent schools”; workshops for staff) and in the work environment (for both sexes) and associated environments.
- Advertising/information campaigns.
- Meetings, exhibitions, awards for good educational/business practices, etc.

Lastly, councils also carry out research activities in order to determine what advances have been made related to reconciliation in the municipality, existing needs and possible future measures to be taken in each sphere.

2.1.3 Budgeting, mainstreaming and positive measures

The principle of equality of treatment for both men and women is legally recognised (from a strictly judicial perspective). Nevertheless, experience shows that judicial regulations which establish equality are not, in themselves, enough in order to eliminate inequality in the professional and social life of women. The resistance which is encountered is not so much legal, but rather relates to the traditional concept of the division of roles between men and women in society. Spending on gender-related issues, mainstreaming policies and positive actions are all tools used to promote equality by dealing with this social and cultural resistance.

Promotion of improved equal opportunities, and improved conditions for reconciliation, are dependent on budget spending. In this sense the aid received from the European Social Fund for the EQUAL initiative has permitted councils to implement reconciliatory measures with appropriate funds and technical support. This is markedly different to the private sphere as we will later see.

In addition, over the last fifteen years of Equality Plan initiatives, the evolution of gender theory has remained in step with experience. This is the case of the concept of “mainstreaming” (often translated as “*transversalidad*” in Spanish) which currently figures in all of the Equality plans revised by this guide. This concept addresses two questions: the inclusion of a gender-related approach in municipal policies (still in the embryonic stage), outside the *Department for Women* and using criteria which are not just technical, but also political⁶.

On the other hand, the concept has allowed policy makers to understand that for equality to exist two parties are involved (it is not just a question for women alone, but rather involves men too and the social construction of gender roles for all citizens).

Some theorists see mainstreaming as being at odds with positive actions which are aimed exclusively at women. Mainstreaming is normally seen as having the risk of: making the inequality of power distribution between men and women invisible; annulling positive actions; having little impact on women (low gender impact).

All told, mainstreaming appears to be used in the plans with a high degree of common sense, never to the detriment of positive actions, which are used when considered necessary⁷.

⁶ The concept of gender mainstreaming refers to the improvement, development and evaluation of political processes via the incorporation of a gender-related approach in all policies, and at all levels and stages (also for the “actors” who make political decisions).

⁷ Positive actions are an attempt to complement legislation relating to inequality and involve all measures which help to eliminate inequality in practice. The European Council's Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men defines it as “a strategy designed to establish equal opportunities using measures to counterbalance or correct discrimination which is a result of social systems or practices”. These are measures which go beyond the monitoring of the application of equality laws. Their objective is to implement specific programs designed to give women specific advantages. Positive actions in both the public and the private sector must “eliminate or compensate the detrimental effects for women who are either working or looking for work which are a result of attitudes, behaviour and structures based upon the idea of the traditional gender roles for men and women in society”. They must also “encourage the participation of women in professions where they are under-represented and their participation in managerial roles, in order for human resources to be thus better used”.

3 CASE STUDIES: ANALYSIS OF MEASURES ADOPTED IN THE MADRID MUNICIPALITIES OF *GETAFE, PARLA, RIVAS, TORREJÓN, ARGANDA, FUENLABRADA AND VALDEMORO* – OPPORTUNITIES AND DIFFICULTIES

3.1 General Context

The geographical area covered by this guide is formed by the municipal regions of *Arganda del Rey, Fuenlabrada, Getafe, Parla, Rivas, Torrejón* and *Valdemoro*.

These municipalities are between 20 to 390 kilometres from Madrid (to the south and east of the city), and form a significant geographical sample:

- Fuenlabrada, is a large municipality which has experienced rapid growth over the last few years with a population of 197,102 inhabitants (October 5, 2004). It is a very young municipality – 44.01% of the population being under the age of 30. During the Eighties a migratory process was witnessed, with many young people going to live in Fuenlabrada as it was one of the areas with accessible house prices. A second, less intense migratory process began from the year 2000 onwards, due to the lack of housing in the city of Madrid and the towns in the inner “belt”. Fuenlabrada changed from a small, agricultural town in the Sixties to an industrial city by the end of the Twentieth Century.
- Getafe, to the south of Madrid, has a population of 158,363 inhabitants (79,514 women and 78,849 men).
- Torrejón de Ardoz is a town located to the east of Madrid in the so-called “*Corredor del Henares*”. It has a population of 109,483 inhabitants (information dated January 1, 2005) who are very young (30% of the population is between the ages of 20 to 25 years old) of whom 54,224 are males and 55,259 females.
- The town of Parla is located to the south of Madrid and forms part of the “*Corona Metropolitana Sur* (Southern metropolitan belt)”. It has a population according to the municipal register (December 31, 2004) of 91,269 inhabitants (46,679 males and 44,590 females).

- Rivas-Vaciamadrid, to the south-east of Madrid, has a population of more than 50 thousand inhabitants (27,346 males and 26,997 females), (March 2006).
- The town of Valdemoro has a population of 40,030 inhabitants (October 2003) and is located to the south of Madrid. Considerable development began in the Eighties of both the town's infrastructure and industry, which caused an important increase in the population.
- Arganda del Rey is a medium-sized town which, during the Nineties, experienced important growth in its population (an almost 20% increase to 31,096 inhabitants by the year 2000).

The seven municipalities have carried out actions in favour of equality over the last ten to fifteen years (especially in questions of reconciliation, as will be seen further on).

Current legislation relating to reconciliation for the Madrid Greater Region is reflected in various action plans and programs (included in the Equality Plans developed for the autonomous region). The remaining legislation basically consists in aid and subsidies for child and elderly care⁸.

The *IV Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades entre Mujeres y Hombres de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid (2002-2005)*, dedicates section 2 to the reconciliation of professional and family life, with the following general objective: "To reduce the family-related responsibilities shouldered by women, favouring an equal distribution which allows family life to be compatible with personal and professional development". It also includes the following specific objectives:

⁸ Spain: Law 13/2002, December 20 concerning fiscal and administrative measures, regulating economic and fiscal aid in the cases of birth and adoption.

Spain: Order 762/2002, March 7, subsidies for crèches in the Madrid Greater Region for 2002; an attempt to collaborate in the financing of infant education centres and to help them adopt the guidelines/requirements of LOGSE (general law governing the Spanish educational system)

Spain: order 3256/2002, July 5, individual aid for infant school students in the year 2002/2003 (granting of economic aid to children under the age of 3 in authorised, private centres in the Madrid Region).

Spain: Order 1907/2002, December 23, subsidising short-term stays for individuals in old people's homes (during vacation time for those people who normally look after them).

- To educate individuals about equality and raise awareness of all of society about the need to share responsibilities in family and professional life.
- To favour the reconciliation of professional and family life via a series of actions, including: the study and analysis of families' needs; an increase in the number of places in educational centres; the creation of new care centres; actions implemented with companies; collective negotiation; and training and awareness campaigns aimed at different groups.

References to the reconciliation of family and professional life in the Madrid Greater Region can also be found in Axis 6 of the 2000-2006 Operative Program (financed by the European Social Fund), which is based on European objective no.3, supporting regional structural actions in Spain. The specific objective in Axis 6 relating to women's participation in the job market is "to ensure equivalence between genders in the job market". Other measures are also applied via a series of actions, including: research designed to detect and analyse the difficulties faced by women in finding jobs; reconciliation of studies with family responsibilities by making the training processes more flexible, etc.

Another initiative currently being applied in the Madrid Region is EQUAL (in all of its phases) via the running of diverse projects related to the reconciliation of professional and family life.

3.1.1 Equal Opportunities Plans in the municipalities

The Equal Opportunities Plans in the municipalities include reconciliation measures. These are mainly aimed at:

- raising awareness and changing attitudes regarding the sharing of domestic chores
- extending both public and private services and improving care for the elderly.



In the local policies for the seven municipalities referred to in this guide the various programs aimed at women and carried out by the councils themselves, different social organisations and NGOs are also worthy of note.

Thus, the councils' activities, organised by the *Departments for Women*, cover all relevant questions: employment; safety; anti-abuse; plans to improve quality of life; active participation; and shared family responsibilities, etc. Those responsible for the implementation of these actions stress the need to implement measures which provide women with tools which they can use to: face new situations; develop abilities which increase their autonomy; increase their self-confidence; and increase their participation in the community at large.

The Equal opportunity plans and actions for each of the seven towns are, at present:

Fuenlabrada.-

- *IV Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades entre hombres y mujeres 2005-2008 (IV Equal Opportunities Plan for Men and Women 2005-2008)*

Parla.-

- *III Plan Acción Municipal para la Igualdad de Oportunidades entre Mujeres y Hombres de Parla 2004-2007. Objective 2, relating to reconciliation: "To ensure that possibilities increase for women and men to reconcile their work, family and personal lives".*

Valdemoro.-

- *II Equality Plan, passed and started in March 2006. Mainstreaming objective. Objective 3: to ensure a greater sharing of responsibilities between women and men in the private and reproductive spheres.*

Rivas-Vaciamadrid.-



- *II Plan de Igualdad de oportunidades entre mujeres y hombres.* Specific objective relating to reconciliation: to continue promoting services and resources which allow the domestic, private and public spheres to be reconciled.

Torrejón.-

- *IV Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades entre hombres y mujeres.*

Arganda.-

- *III Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades,* passed on March 1, 2006, still to be implemented.

Getafe.-

- *II Plan Integral de la Mujer* and also being prepared at this time the *III Plan Integral de la Mujer.* Area 3.- reconciliation of family, social and professional life for women, with the following general objective: to ensure the equal distribution of work and employment between men and women (without violating the personal rights of either gender).

3.2 Opportunities and difficulties for the municipalities in relation to reconciliation and work

The workplace (employment) is a fundamental element in the reconciliation of professional and family life. It is where workers and consultants, companies, unions and the authorities all “meet”.

Local planning and related measures (and especially municipal Equal Opportunities Plans) mainly concentrate on women and companies (in order to ensure that reconciliation is considered in this environment).

One of the actions which is normally aimed at women is training and job seeking support for women who are currently unemployed. Some plans also support business women in the setting up of new companies, by means of agreements with banks in order to obtain low interest-rate loans or microcredit loans. Another common measure is studies realised of business and employment opportunities in the area. At least two of the plans analysed also try to ensure the incorporation of women in employment sectors where women are under-represented⁹ (an attempt, amongst other things, to overcome stereotypes).

As far as companies are concerned, local planning and actions (and especially municipal Equality Plans) concentrate on raising awareness and training for these entities and the negotiation of agreements.

The councils act as intermediaries between women seeking employment and companies. They also promote agreements so that companies employing few women and/or traditionally masculine sectors take on women workers.

Workshops and informative campaigns are used in order to raise awareness. In addition, one of the activities carried out to raise awareness in many of the municipalities is to reward private companies which carry out positive actions for the reconciliation of workers' family and professional lives. The council studies the good practices carried out in local companies and issues a seal of "social responsibility" for the award-winning companies. The company receives positive local publicity in exchange. Good practices include: improving flexibility of working hours; paternity leave; part-time or full-time teleworking; and crèches supported by the company, etc.

According to the interviews carried out in the sample municipalities, companies are normally quite adaptable to the idea of flexible working hours or requests to recuperate time lost later on.

⁹ In Rivas, after obtaining heavy-goods driving licences, women trained in transport related fields are working as drivers in the Rivas-Madrid transport company, in vehicle registration, with television companies or as taxi-drivers. A similar experience has been seen in the construction sector in Fuenlabrada.

However, the individuals interviewed all agreed that the process for reconciliation in companies will be long and slow. They suggest that many companies feel that reconciliation is an exclusively women-related theme and that existing support mechanisms are sufficient. Nor does it help that women's wages are considerably lower than men's for similar positions¹⁰. This difference in salaries means that heterosexual couples responsible for dependent individuals create family survival strategies which promote the professional development of the male, thus reducing equality in relation to women's working conditions and men's responsibility for the reproductive life of the family.

On the other hand, several of the people interviewed mentioned the fundamental importance of collective negotiation for the establishment of reconciliation standards in companies. This requires the greater involvement of unions. They also indicated that this type of authority exceeds the municipal scope and as such is only possible on a national or regional level.

In this sense, the advances in reconciliation in collective agreements with public entities serve as useful examples to be applied to the private sphere¹¹.

Lastly, in the case of dependent individuals in the family environment (either children or adults), the combination of the implementation of an Equality Plan plus effective company policies are elements which are fundamental for the successful reconciliation of working and family life.

3.2.1 Fuenlabrada.-

Actions for/with women: job search workshops and job placement schemes in companies and sectors with an under-representation of females.

¹⁰ Information from *El País* (national newspaper) quoting sources from the *Comisiones Obreras* union, which stated that in 2006 women's salaries were on average 40% lower than those for men in similar positions. The same source also indicated that three times as many women as men have temporary contracts.

¹¹ Such is the case of the recent extension of paternity leave for civil servants to 10 days (the *Estatuto de los Trabajadores* (*workers statute*) only makes provision for 2 days leave); or the possibility of increasing lactation periods for working mothers to four weeks.

<p>Actions with entities skilled in employment questions in order to establish and publicise a negotiated contract model which seeks compatibility between family and professional life.</p>
<p>Actions with companies: raising awareness; agreements with companies which promote inclusion of women in jobs in sectors where they are under-represented; support for social clauses referring to equality in companies and social agents; technical consultancy for companies in relation to positive actions and reconciliation; “socially responsible” company certificates; research relating to good company practices in the municipality; job contracts for women in the construction industry, traditionally occupied by men (labour mediation project).</p> <p>Agreements with financial entities for the creation of companies by women, studying formulas for flexible financing: credit loans, microcredit.</p>
<p>Municipal actions.- Protocol between the various municipal services which have actions related to the finding of jobs for women belonging to vulnerable groups (adapting their entry into the job market to personal and family-related difficulties).</p>
<p>Participation in EQUAL projects:</p> <p>Reconciliation as a precondition for Equality</p> <p>Between Cronos and Ceres, Reconciliation in time and space</p>

3.2.2 Parla.-

<p>Actions: study of business and employment opportunities.</p>
<p>Labour mediation between management and women seeking employment</p>
<p>Workshops for the creation of companies by enterprising women</p>
<p>Study relating to financing formulas for companies started by women (agreements with banks, microcredits).</p>
<p>Creation of quality certificates for companies which enforce gender criteria</p>
<p>Participation in EQUAL Axis 4 projects: equal opportunities</p>
<p>Revision of collective agreement reconciliation measures for council workers</p>

3.2.3 Valdemoro

<p>Creation of companies by unemployed women</p>
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Study relating to company actions (in order to find and reward good practices).
Training courses for women
EQUAL Project "Between Cronos and Ceres"

3.2.4 Rivas-Vaciamadrid

Training and job finding workshops; promotion of women in professions with low female representation
Company awareness workshops
Publicising the image of successful business women by means of courses.
EQUAL Project "Between Cronos and Ceres: Reconciliation in time and space"

3.2.5 Getafe

Urging pertinent institutions to publicise part-time contracts as a type of non-discriminatory contract and not as an imposition or as the consolidation of subsidiary labour (arguing that it is a personal choice aimed at reconciling family and professional life).
Promoting individual (and reversible) leave, exemptions and reductions in the working day in order to attend to dependent individuals or improve qualifications; raising the awareness of the male population so that they are more receptive to these types of actions in the sphere of local government and companies in the area.
Performing studies concerning new models of work and ways of substituting those which are based on the gender orientated division of work in order to reconcile the professional and family lives of men and women in the area.
Approval of the 2004/2007 collective agreement for all council staff, which includes measures such as: flexible working hours; and leave required to look after dependent individuals, etc.
EQUAL Project "Between Cronos and Ceres: reconciliation in time and space"
EQUAL "Adriana" project

3.2.6 Arganda del Rey

Employment advice workshops



Management awareness campaigns in relation to the hiring women. Company and female entrepreneur consultancy.
Consultancy and promotion of female craftswomen and participation in fairs and meetings.
EQUAL Project "Between Cronos and Ceres"

3.2.7 Torrejón de Ardoz

EQUAL "Alborada" project: new opportunities for the reconciliation of professional and family life".
EQUAL Project "Between Cronos and Ceres: Reconciliation in time and space"

3.3 Opportunities and difficulties for the municipalities in relation to reconciliation in the home and society

The evolution of the time and space which men and women dedicate to the home and personal or family leisure time is not the same as it was twenty years ago. The *en masse* incorporation of women in the workplace, working hours, changes in the family model (now more "nuclear" than before), and a different appreciation of leisure and reproduction mean that we are currently facing a whole new set of challenges.

Nevertheless, society's response structures to these new problems are often the same as those that existed twenty years ago. The opening hours of public services and businesses do not match this new reality. The dramatic fall in the birth rate in Spain over the last twenty years and the delay in the birth of the first child are at odds with a lack of public services for the care and education of infants under the age of 4. Similarly, the invisibility of reproductive tasks causes difficulties for the care of children by society (the failure to offer solutions to cover the absence of parental figures in the home during a large part of the day). This is all compounded by changes in the family model and social relations. Nowadays, society is much more individualistic than twenty years ago. The nuclear family model predominates and there is a real absence of networks formed by relatives, families and neighbours in the reproductive sphere.

Reconciliation actions in local planning and strategies are designed to alleviate these circumstances, with local changes being the first step towards a change in social structures to structures more suited to the requirements of modern times.

The fundamental characteristics of these actions are:

- That they cover the reconciliation requirements of both women and men.
- That they include the care/attention/protective requirements of dependent individuals.
- That they offer the collaboration of municipal public services with working/opening hours and services which respond to the needs of citizens.

Actions which are normally implemented in relation to the reproductive sphere and the care of dependent individuals focus on:

- Financing/creation of infant schools for children up to the age of three.
- Financing/creation of out-of-school activities for children from 3 to 12 years of age (mainly in schools and municipal sports centres).
- Care services for elderly dependent individuals (home help or in centres) with the extension of working/opening hours so that they match reconciliation requirements.
- Creation of programs and systems such as the *Programa Banco del Tiempo (Time Bank Project)* or *sistema de cheque-servicio (cheque-service system)*. The *Time Bank* project is an attempt to recuperate social networks. People who can help others with their time/skills are put in contact with others and they receive the same support in return. Cheque-service projects assist in the creation of companies which offer care and leisure/free-time services (crèches, toy libraries, care services for dependent people, urban camps, etc.). By means of cheque-service projects the council pays part of the cost of said services¹².

¹² "cheque-service" was a tool created for the EQUAL I project "Reconciliation as a precondition for equality" in order to support the process of company start-up (implemented in the councils of Parla and Valdamoro). In Valdamoro they created: a family "break" program aimed at people who look after elderly dependent people; a toy library; an infant school; and a home help service for dependent individuals. In Parla they created: infant workshops; urban camps; a toy library; educational/cultural activities. The cheque-service project arose from the idea of services offered by companies created by the project itself.



Actions related to the reproductive sphere and the sphere of family/personal leisure time were also considered. This is the case with the extension of business/opening hours for public services such as the post office and other relaxation-related activities in cultural and sports centres (exhibitions, workshops, swimming, gymnastics, etc.).

Actions designed to improve reconciliation also place great emphasis upon reaching those people in the most vulnerable strata of society. Said people are normally women, and current planning and local council strategies in relation to reconciliation are thus somewhat worrying as the access criteria favour those women who are in a difficult social situation. This gives one an idea of the level of demand for these services that currently exists.

Lastly, another of the basic measures taken by councils is the raising of awareness and the use of information campaigns to highlight the need for the equal distribution of domestic chores and responsibilities. As was mentioned before, they try to heighten citizens' awareness and involve not just women, but also men, so that they too recognise the need for reconciliation. This is one of the fundamental objectives and cornerstones of the EQUAL "Between Cronos and Ceres" project, which is currently being implemented by *AD Mujeres por la conciliación*, and which is also reflected in the transnational project (this guide being the first product of said project) "EU-Reconcily: European Model of a City that Reconciles".

3.3.1 Fuenlabrada

Promotes non-sexist language in municipal documentation
Adaptation of working hours of municipal services to the needs of residents in order to favour reconciliation.
Requesting of data concerning reconciliation and the percentages of men and women hired by public institutions.
Courses/workshops for men and women about reconciliation



Awareness campaigns concerning the equal distribution of family and domestic responsibilities.
Inclusion of public selection criteria which favour women in vulnerable situations.
Awarding of prizes and the holding of competitions relating to reconciliation.

3.3.2 Parla

Actions: integrated service for the care of children during the use of public resources by families in the municipal area.
Creation of a crèche for children up to the age of three
After-school activities for children from 3 to 12 years of age
Inclusion of public criteria which favour women in vulnerable situations
Courses/workshops for men and women concerning reconciliation
Information campaign for the equal distribution of domestic chores and responsibilities
Family mediation service and family meeting point

3.3.3 Valdemoro

Raising citizens' awareness about reconciliation
Creation of reconciliation services (involving public and private initiatives).
Creation of crèches, toy libraries, and home help service by means of participation in the European Community EQUAL project (phase 1): "pilot" actions of cheque-service
Gender workshops in the Council
Inclusion of "gender" in the local agenda
Analysis of actions by the media and public entities in order to find and reward good practices

3.3.4 Rivas-Vaciamadrid

Study of requirements for crèches and the restructuring of access criteria to favour women in difficult social situations.
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Study of the need for home help in order to assist in the care of dependent individuals.
Educative and games-related services for children in sports centres and work training centres.
Municipal working hours adapted to the needs for joint responsibility between both partners in couples.
Decentralisation and extension of hours for resources intended for the care of dependent individuals.
Promotion of similar measures via: the Time Bank program; and the creation of a cheque-service system.
Creation of programs for home helpers
Carrying out of activities designed to help men care for their children

3.3.5 Getafe

Collaboration with social services and the Education Department in increasing the following networks and making opening times/working hours more flexible: home help; crèches; and day services. This facilitates access to, and the time spent in, training processes, the workplace and allows family and work life to be reconciled.
A more equal distribution between men and women of work and family responsibilities. Promotion of changes in social attitudes via educational campaigns in associations, AMPAS, social media, etc.
Organisation of awareness campaigns aimed at women themselves so that they do not feel that they are primarily responsible for caring for their families and that they do not feel guilty when they share tasks with other family members in the home.
Promotion of the concept of non-remunerated work via educational campaigns. Said work occurs in the home, has a recognised social/economic value and is a source of great personal satisfaction.
Raising of social awareness to overcome the idea of women being subsidiary to men in the home.
Awareness campaigns in companies and the media: a study of how the question of reconciliation is treated by the local media.
Toy libraries associated with public acts performed by the council.

Family support plan: intended to help coordinate resources and includes citizens' responses in their design.

Advice offered to businessmen, union requests and the promoting of agreements with companies relating to the implementation of new ways of organising working hours.

3.3.6 Arganda del Rey

Workshops on sharing family responsibilities.

"Parent schools" for non-sexist values and the sharing of responsibilities.

Annual reconciliation awards for: companies, associations and the media.

3.3.7 Torrejón de Ardoz

Workshops on sharing family responsibilities.

Theatre plays based on topics related to the sharing of responsibilities.

Reconciliation awards for companies.

Awareness campaigns about: joint responsibility, reconciliation, time, non-sexist education, equal education in families.

Awareness interviews in companies. Field study concerning the introduction of reconciliation measures in companies.

Child leisure centre: to assist in family reconciliation (especially one-parent families).

"Have a go at housework" workshops: related to domestic skills and reflections on masculinity.

3.4 Opportunities and difficulties for the municipalities in relation to reconciliation and education and training

Education is a fundamental element for the conveyance of values and skills. For this reason local planning and related measures (and especially Equality Plans) place great emphasis on this point, which is essential for the creation of a fairer, more tolerant, society.

Educational actions cover all age groups (infancy, adolescence and adulthood). Activities for children and adolescents are called “educational”, whilst those aimed at adults are called “training” activities or “studies for skills”.

Local planning for equality (in the sphere of coeducation) includes actions in schools and colleges aimed at provoking thought and raising awareness in young people in relation to gender roles. One area covered is the topic of reconciliation. Besides these actions, workshops activities are also carried out in order to evaluate changes which the new training causes in the boys’ and girls’ choices. This is the case in the town of Parla, which raises student awareness in its Annual Student Fair about the impact of gender when choosing a career.

This “New training” is only possible with the help of teaching staff and parents. Thus the plans also consider training for teachers in gender questions as well as for the parents or guardians of the children.

As well as this training for parents, the councils also offer training for men and women with no children. Many of those interviewed stressed the need for this training in educational plans from primary school onwards, in order to establish the concept of equality from the beginning of a person’s lifetime.

3.4.1 Fuenlabrada

Actions relating to coeducation in the programs for municipal educational centres and informal educational programs:
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- adult/adolescent workshops about gender roles and the stereotypical distribution of family tasks and responsibilities.
- Participative initiatives which promote equal education (workshops; competitions).
- Organisation of courses for education professionals which cover the importance of coeducation in-depth.
- Coeducation workshops in secondary schools and the raising of awareness in young people about the importance of equal opportunities for both men and women.
- Creation and issue of specific material about education and gender.

3.4.2 Parla

Activities relating to gender impact when choosing a career in the Annual Student Fair.

Workshops for Secondary school teachers.

3.4.3 Valdemoro

Actions aimed at secondary school students for fairer, more egalitarian, education (not based on stereotypical notions concerning the roles of men and women).

Training actions relating to personal autonomy in secondary and primary school groups.

Actions for infants and primary school students using a didactic / participative / play-orientated methodology based on a gender approach.

Autonomy Workshops aimed at teachers, directors of studies, AMPA and Women's Associations.

3.4.4 Rivas-Vaciamadrid

Coeducational Workshops for teachers and children.

Adult training workshops



3.4.5 Getafe

Collaboration with educational centres in order to promote the concept of coeducation (equal rights and opportunities for all children, without gender-based discrimination or exclusion).
Local educational out-of-school hours activities plan, with the participation of the Sports Department, the Education and Infant Education Departments and AMPAS: creative workshops for infants and primary school students; toy libraries for children from 2 to 5 years of age; workshops; educational support; weekend activities.
Opening of school playgrounds over holidays and weekends.
Awareness raising workshops concerning equality and reconciliation aimed at schools and adult educational groups.

3.4.6 Arganda del Rey

Teacher training in coeducation via the <i>Centro de Profesores</i> (Teachers' Centre).
" <i>A Partes Iguales</i> (equal shares)" and " <i>Por Igual</i> (equally)" program, in collaboration with the <i>Department for Women</i> , about reconciliation and aimed at all of the educational community: staff, students and parents.

3.4.7 Torrejón de Ardoz

Coeducational workshops for primary students, secondary students and adults.
Issuing of special didactic material about reconciliation and coeducation.
Training/awareness activities aimed at human resource managers.
Training/awareness activities aimed at associations in the municipality.
Training/awareness activities aimed at AMPAS (Students' parents Associations) in the area
Training/awareness activities aimed at teaching staff via CAP (Pedagogical Aptitude Centre).

3.5 Lessons Learned: advancing to a new phase

3.5.1 Regarding available resource networks

- There is a lack of public crèches in comparison to current demand.
- Some (normally large) companies offer crèche services and subsidies for payment of crèche services to their employees, thus contributing to the reconciliation of their working and family lives.
- The cost of private crèches is very high in relation to average family income.
- There is a lack of public services for the elderly in need of daily social/health care. Private services are very costly in relation to average family income.
- The following municipal services have greatly improved their hours of attention to the public and have been considerably expanded: out-of-school activities for children; spaces for child care during acts, events and training organised by the council.
- Useful (interchangeable) activities such as the Time Bank and Check-Service programs have been implemented.
- Training activities for female entrepreneurs continue to be given.
- Training is carried out in order to raise awareness in management and human resource departments in companies.
- Limited social networks: invisibility and social devaluation of reproductive space and the incorporation of women in the job market.

3.5.2 Regarding flexible work options

- Advances have been made in companies with regard to some aspects concerning flexible working practices: clock-in/clock out times; and requests for leave of absence.
- Only a few companies have managed to offer greater options for flexible working practices to their employees: telework; promoting good part-time contracts; increasing paternal/maternal leave via collective agreements, etc. They do not implement reconciliation support measures which go beyond those established under legislation.

3.5.3 Regarding promotion of the equal distribution of responsibilities in the home

- They continue to perform coeducational activities in favour of equal treatment for men and women aimed at children and adolescents.
- They promote awareness raising workshops for the equal distribution of home tasks for adults (placing special emphasis on the role of the male).

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Positive Conclusions

- There is official political recognition in all of the town councils studied of the need to reconcile professional and family life, using the specific tools proffered by equality legislation and legislation concerning dependent individuals to apply real measures designed to promote reconciliation. The scope of these measures varies from one municipality to another, basically because the resources and budgets assigned to each are different for each council. There are also differences relating to the time that each council has spent implementing equality and reconciliation policies. Therefore, while some of the councils are already executing their Fourth Equal Opportunities Plan others are still implementing their second plan.
- A progressive increase of awareness in the local media (and in the regional and national media as well) with regard to questions of reconciliation can be noted. It is of great importance that this question be present in the public eye in a constant manner, this raises its “profile” and transmits the idea that it is a problem that concerns us all. Nevertheless, the manner in which the questions are handled in “positive” news reports and communications is sometimes potentially damaging. Some of the (mainly local) media create a positive “over-kill” for certain measures adopted by councils (opening of crèche services in summer, parental leave, etc.) which causes a distorted vision of reality in public opinion. It makes it seem that many actions are being taken in relation to reconciliation and that the question has already been successfully addressed, when reality indicates exactly the opposite. For this reason special attention should be made regarding how, when and for what reason news should be transmitted concerning the reconciliation of professional and family life (respecting the informative content of the news items, but avoiding a general, erroneous perspective). In short, it is important that these questions continue to be present in the media, but in a responsible manner.

- In the municipalities studied, the existence of multiple educational/awareness spaces can be seen (where awareness of gender and equal opportunities is fomented). These are training spaces for children, youths, entrepreneurial woman and adults in general. Real changes with regard to the reconciliation of work and family life are, without doubt, a result of changes in attitude and the creation of a culture which understands that both spaces are totally interdependent and that when suitably balanced they allow for a healthy, stress-free productive and reproductive life.
- In the Madrid Region, and particularly in the councils involved in this project, there are (mainly large) companies, which for various reasons are promoting reconciliation between family and professional life (beyond the measures established under legislation). Measures such as: promoting home working (telework); allowing the reduction of the working day if one is responsible for dependent individuals; and the agreeing of days for the resolution of family matters, etc. All of these measures are aimed at the entire staff and not just women alone. Obviously, these measures are a result of Human Resource departments' desires to improve staff productivity (thus avoiding absenteeism and stress which can hinder performance). In short, these are measures which tend to improve company efficiency, the companies' standing in the public eye and also their position in relation to social responsibility. At a local level these initiatives may be even more clearly seen. The companies which promote them may be duly rewarded, which thus acts as an incentive to the entire sector to follow suit. It can also be seen that these types of measure are easier to implement in large companies than SMEs. For this reason the challenge faced by councils in their alliances with local companies is to look for alternatives which favour the generation of reconciliation measures in small to medium-sized enterprises (which, in Spain, represent around 70% of all companies). Moreover, many of these small enterprises believe that the costs associated with reconciliation for their workers should be met by local government and not by the companies themselves.
- In relation to the above point, in order to favour real reconciliation in the workplace the role of unions and workers' representatives is fundamental. Until

only a few years ago, the unions in Spain were markedly “sexist” in nature and the unions’ demands and collective negotiation priorities never included the demands of women. A neutral union policy was followed, where workers’ rights were defended and where it was understood that said rights would be of equal benefit to both men and women. After the incorporation of local Departments for Women or Women’s Areas union policies began to incorporate a gender-orientated approach (although running the risk that the identification of demands for equal opportunities and reconciliation would be seen as questions that concern women alone). At present, we are in an ideal position to incorporate, via mainstreaming, reconciliation measures in all collective agreements, not as mere additional measures for a specific section of the populace, but rather as measures which favour the productivity and quality of life of all workers (irregardless of gender). In this sense the role of local government could be that of promoting and complementing collective negotiations which take place in their municipality.

- The implementation of innovative measures such as the Time Bank project and Cheques-service project are interesting initiatives for testing new approaches in Spain. Many of these initiatives have already been successfully implemented in other countries (principally in Scandinavian countries) and their effectiveness has been proven when they are executed in a coordinated manner. In this sense Spain has a certain advantage in the application of these measures as it already has as a reference in the experience of other countries and the *a priori* identification of weak points that have to be reinforced (such as the adequate identification of the users of the cheque-services).

4.2 Negative Conclusions

- A lot still remains to be done in relation to the mainstreaming of gender and so that questions of equality and reconciliation become a reality in local policies. Up until now, except in certain occasions, equality and reconciliation policies have been the responsibility of social services departments (and especially areas related to women). This is the area where programs and projects are

coordinated with those relating to employment, health and education, etc. Even so, the policy of reconciliation does not extend to other departments or the higher political and technical levels where decisions are taken.

- Despite the identification of exemplary business initiatives relating to reconciliation, the prevailing trend demonstrates the low level of awareness concerning the benefits of adequate reconciliation policies in companies. In contrast to other initiatives which are considered as Good Practices, Spanish SMEs continue to think that reconciliation is a subject that concerns and affects women alone. This situation manifests itself in discrimination when hiring women and/or in the professional careers of women.
- Spanish society has not assimilated the idea that reconciliation is a general challenge and still thinks that it is a specific question affecting women, and not all women at that; rather only those women who have a partner with children and/or elderly people to look after. A reductionist vision of the problem is maintained which does not favour the adoption of integral solutions involving all sections of society and men and women alike.
- Resources and support services for reconciliation are insufficient in relation to current demand or even in relation to future expectations for women/men who wish to have children or who are responsible for looking after elderly individuals. This can be seen in:
 - Limited public aid for the child birth or care for the elderly.
 - Limited infrastructures, support services and care and attention resources for dependent individuals: crèches; day centres; old people's homes; home help, etc.
 - Hours of attention to the public and access requirements for certain services designed for people who do not work.
- The question of the reconciliation of professional and personal life from an economic perspective is based, for companies, on whether reconciliation policies can be used as a tool for leveraging a competitive advantage. Unfortunately it is erroneously not seen as such in many cases, thus

overlooking the fact that human capital is the main source of a company's competitiveness and that wage policies are not the only relevant condition for work, but that there are other conditions which define jobs (above all in the case of women ¹³).

4.3 Recommendations

Given the progressive aging of the Spanish population and the better standard of life of the older population, many people believe that the age of retirement should be extended beyond the age of 65, if dealing with professions where age does not signify a physical impediment. Given that in just fifty years there has been an enormous shift in the work force from sector 1 (agriculture) and sector 2 (industry) to sector 3 professions (services), it logically follows that most jobs could easily be performed after the current age of retirement. It is also maintained (without entering into the debate as to whether the age of retirement should be extended or not) that workers between the age of 50 and 65 are in a period of full professional development.

Nevertheless, and as some of the authors consulted commented, the current economic and employment system replaces workers in that age range with younger individuals (either because of savings in costs for companies from the hiring of younger persons or due to a lack of training/possibilities for the "recycling" workers of 55 years of age and the resultant obsolescence of their skills).

The weight of responsibility that therefore falls upon workers from the age of 25 to 45 is, as a result, very high and coincides with the most complex period for the reconciliation of work and family life (due to the following factors):

- Period when one's career is starting. Low/medium wage contracts, high degree of job instability (per project/service, temporary contracts, etc.).)

¹³ (...) for the women who were interviewed, the possibilities presented by a job for reconciliation with family life were almost as important as the wage offered. Various Authors, *Estudio sobre la conciliación de la vida familiar y laboral en España*, Instituto de la Mujer, 2005, page 230.

- Interminable working hours: in Spain there is still a generally held misconception that “s/he who spends most time in the workplace does most work”.
- Period when one moves into a place of one’s own (high rental/purchasing costs).
- Period when one starts a family: singles, couples, couples with children – the difficulties of reconciling working life and family life (time dedicated to care and reproductive tasks and collective and individual free-time activities).

At present, there is no doubt that advances have been made in questions relating to reconciliation (especially in questions relating to changing attitudes/raising awareness in local authorities, the media, unions and NGOs). Companies are also not indifferent to the situation (although they do display a certain reluctance to change – mainly because they identify the problem with women and believe that the costs are excessive for small to medium enterprises).

In short, local solutions have to be planned in a global, integrated manner in several different spheres:

- a. In constant collaboration with all of the departments that may be involved at any time (Social Services, Employment, Inland Revenue, Education, etc.); even using the Department for Women as a central, transcurricular body for ensuring reconciliation mainstreaming between all departments.
- b. Including the participation of citizens in each municipality, bearing in mind the real requirements and demands in relation to reconciliation.
- c. In cooperation with local associations, companies and the major unions operating in the area.

Current legislation may be construed as being somewhat “perverse” in nature, as the majority of policies and measures are directed exclusively towards women. This can bring about the discrimination of women (as may be seen in some of the quoted sources and studies), for having made effective use of their rights in questions of reconciliation. Said discrimination is more obvious in companies where discriminatory

attitudes are adopted even amongst colleagues in an unofficial, yet palpable manner. In order to avoid this “perversion” in reconciliation strategies it is recommended that measures, resources etc. always be directed towards the entire population (i.e. both men and women). Taking this one step further, reconciliation may be considered not simply as a means of facilitating care for dependent individuals, but also as the reconciliation of one’s professional and personal life.

In this context the following recommendations are made in order to continue advancing upon the work already carried out and covered by this guide:

- Define (strategically and operationally) local reconciliation policies as mainstreaming strategies aimed at the population as a whole and not exclusively for women. A large number of the councils studied had already established this point. However, during its practical application the policies always ended up being directed towards women. In this sense it is recommended that the policy’s definition and its practical application be duly revised.
- Without contradicting the above point, it is also certain that discrimination towards women in the job market is due to two main types of motive:
 - A formal cause, referring to the low qualifications of a specific group of women who have had reduced access to training.
 - A cultural cause, which is still encountered even today: women are implicitly seen as being solely responsible for the care of dependent individuals (associated with maternity). This so-called “feminine” responsibility is in conflict with responsibility towards one’s work.
- In relation to the former point it is recommended that formal qualification-training resources continue to be made available to those women who have had less access to training (such as gypsies, immigrants, people over the age of 45 with low incomes and family responsibilities which are not shared). The type of qualification is recommended that links training and work experience in companies with trades which are currently in demand in the job market. At the same time mainstreaming awareness and training programs must be run on a

large scale (involving the media to encourage the domestic sharing of responsibilities). Males must be educated and encouraged to participate in domestic decision making and management. Only in this way will council services and company policies be truly effective in the reconciliation of family and working life.

- Creation of local platforms for the observation and monitoring of policies for reconciliation in participating municipalities. Platforms formed by councils, NGO, residents' associations, APA, consumers, etc., workers representatives, unions, and by companies. Platforms that provide tools for the monitoring and observation of municipal policies via specific indicators which act as a barometer for determining advances in reconciliation in at least three different spheres:
 - A) Employment, companies and unions
 - B) Municipal sphere : local services and policies
 - C) Private space: home, families, leisure, etc.
- In relation to the above point, it is suggested that an integrated service be created including Resources, Consultancy and Mediation for the reconciliation of working and personal life. This would function as a point of reference for councils participating in the project, thus supporting policies, strategies, the carrying out of studies, projects and training actions related to reconciliation from a strategic, integral perspective. It would be a basic reference centre in this area used as a "point of convergence" for the actions of local platforms in questions of reconciliation.
- Local authorities must provide improved coverage and improved quality support resources, with an equal distribution of these so that neither the lowest income groups nor medium income groups are excluded. The aim of this is to make the use of the resources universal.
- The favouring of more, and better resources for the reconciliation of professional and private life, investing more resources for this end. The

innovative use of other, existing resources must also be realised and the improvement and support of existing resources (such as self-help networks, for example).

- Local authority planning for the use of municipal spaces, socio-educational resources and public leisure spaces, with opening/working hours which make them accessible to people who hold jobs outside the home. The majority of leisure spaces, for example, are available only in hours similar to the average working day (i.e. from 9 in the morning to 5 o'clock at night). Reconciliation of professional and private life also includes leisure activities, which are seen as an important condition for a healthy style of life. Favouring access to sport, leisure and municipal culture must also be aimed at the public at large and not exclusively aimed at that section of the population which does not work outside of the home and has free-time which coincides with the opening hours of municipal services.
- Having verified the importance of new technology, new occupations and the new technical and economic environment in the current market, we may safely assume that Communication and Information technology is an important alley for the achievement of reconciliation. They represent a suitable resource for the implementation of innovative reconciliation measures, such as telework (for both men and women alike). For this reason it is recommended that measures related to companies be created in order to promote telework in a flexible manner (also in other suitable offices and services). Public authorities could carry out rigorous studies concerning the opportunities presented by the use of Communication and Information Technology for increasing flexibility in work and working hours, analysing the costs and benefits which this would entail for both companies and workers alike.
- Creation of a Conflict Mediator for reconciliation questions. A new position could be created (with appropriate powers) of a mediator who could assist with reconciliation in companies: a conflict mediator. This individual not only represents a strategic resource to be included in the Human Resource policies of companies, but would also create a new professional role related to equal



opportunities. This individual could (amongst other actions) advise and accompany both women and men in order to implement reconciliation in professional and private life (and in particular, advise women so that they need not abandon the job market during maternity).

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