



Family-friendly strategies in higher education & research: Best practice examples and recommendations from Baltic Gender project

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1. Introduction

Conflicts in career and family balance can hinder the embarking or retention of parents in scientific careers, wherein the intense productivity and mobility demands coincide with building a family. Workplaces with policies, culture, and supervisors that provide flexible scheduling, leave, and/or support for family commitments have employees with lower levels of work-family conflict as well as increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Moors et al. 2014 and reference therein). Moreover, negative effects of work-family conflict for employees include lower job and life satisfaction and reduced job performance and well-being as well as higher absence, stress, and turnover (Moors et al. 2014 and reference therein).

Although family-friendly climates and initiatives are beneficial to all employees, gender and type of job position play integral roles in how the climate for work-family balance and role constraints are experienced. A large number of studies show that a significant proportion of women withdraw their scientific career when they decide to have children and that women scientists have comparatively fewer children compared to their male colleagues and women in general, while male scientists have children at the same rate as the rest of the population (EC 2012 and reference therein). Additionally, female academics are usually primarily responsible for domestic obligations (Sturges & Guest, 2006) and more frequently work part-time than men (Eurofound 2017). Moreover, women scientists appear to have more mobility constraints than men; more young women than men tend to give up the possibility of mobility when they have children or when their partners will not move with them (EC 2012 and reference therein). Consequently, in order to retain trained female talents in science and technology, there is high need to establish a more family-friendly academic culture and to introduce mechanisms for better management of the compatibility of family roles with academic careers.

Until now, the system defines the good scientist as a male who practices a clear distinction between work and family life – and has complete dedication to work (EC 2012 and reference therein). Promisingly, recent findings show a deep generational change with regard to career and family balance. Whilst older generations of women scientists adopted highly competitive strategies in line with the masculine ethos of scientific work, several young women and young men nowadays do not accept the fact that they have ‘to pursue research as the main aim of life’ (Ajello et al. 2008) and find the relationship between home and work in science unsatisfactory and unhealthy (Sturges & Guest, 2006). Against the social expectation, many men prefer to have more time to care for dependent relatives and fathers with young children want to reduce their working hours (Eurofound 2017). Accordingly, while traditionally much of the focus on both gender equality and work-life balance has been on women, a bigger focus on men has the potential to address their preferences and contribute to rebalancing the situation (Eurofound 2017).

Using family-friendly policies and practices help to reconcile work and family life responsibilities, reduce absenteeism and improve the productivity and morale in an institution. In general, family-friendly policies that help to reconcile work and family life responsibilities are concerned with such issues as flexible working arrangements (i.e. flexible time, part-time, workload reduction), leave entitlement (i.e. paid leave, unpaid leave, parental leave), financial and hiring assistance (i.e. on-site childcare, spousal hiring) and other forms of help on work conditions and responsibilities, e.g. elder care (Su and Bozeman 2016 and reference therein).

2. Objective and methods

The objective of this document is to provide a list of practices together with appropriate examples on family-friendly strategies that help to increase family-friendly working conditions in higher education and research organisations and to achieve a better work-life balance among employees (both men and women) with family responsibilities (children or dependant relatives). The document is mainly targeted to the employees and employers (rectors, directors, head of the units, staff of the human resource departments etc.) of the research organisations whose involvement and close cooperation is very important for the successful development and implementation of family friendly measures. The current document is compiled based on the institutional practices of the eight partner institutions of the Horizon 2020 project Baltic Gender (Table 1). Institutions may not be able to compensate all needs that employees with family obligations might have. Fortunately, many of the measures are already the responsibility of national governments. Therefore, national practices of 5 partner countries (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Sweden) of the project Baltic Gender are introduced where relevant.

Table 1. Eight partner institutions of the Horizon 2020 project Baltic Gender.

Institution	Abbreviation	Country	Number of employees	Teaching responsibility
University of Kiel	Kiel CAU	Germany	3669 (Mar-17)	Yes
Estonian Marine Institute of Tartu University	UT-EMI	Estonia	107 (Dec-16)	No
Finnish Environment Institute	SYKE	Finland	580 (Dec-16)	No
GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research	GEOMAR	Germany	741 (Jun-17)	Yes
Kiel University of Applied Sciences	Kiel UAS	Germany	486 (Dec-16)	Yes
Klaipeda University	KU	Lithuania	925 (Nov-17)	Yes
Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research	IOW	Germany	221 (Jun-17)	No
Lund University	LU	Sweden	6598 (Sep-17)	Yes

3. Best practices

3.1. Flexible working arrangements

- Flexible working time/hours

Flexible working conditions help most individuals with care responsibilities (childcare, eldercare) and are therefore used by all partner institutions of the Baltic Gender project. Scientists generally have flexible working time and hours, whereas other members of staff may have some restrictions depending on the nature of their work. For example, administrative staff has often “regular” working hours (UT-EMI, SYKE, LU, Kiel CAU, KU) and the nature of some laboratory experiments may require presence of technical staff at regulated working times (UT-EMI, SYKE, LU, KU).

- Home office and/or telecommuting

Home office possibility is employed by certain staff categories, e.g. academic or administrative, in all partner institutions and is helpful to respond individually to family and office demands. Some partners of Baltic Gender have implemented rules regarding how to apply for home office (GEOMAR), but in the case of other partners “home office” can be used in any part of the world, depending on the family situation, if agreed with immediate supervisor (UT-EMI, LU). This flexibility applies mostly for scientists. Remote work possibilities are regulated according to national regulations in Lithuania: the employer must satisfy the request of an employee to work remotely at least one fifth of the whole working time, given that the request is made by a pregnant woman, a new or nursing mother, an employee who raises a child aged up to three years, an employee who is a single parent raising a child aged up to fourteen years or a child with disability aged up to eighteen years

- Part-time employments

In many countries (Germany, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania) part time employment is regulated by national law. For example, in Sweden one is allowed to work part-time if s/he has children under the age of 8 years. Likewise, one can take leave from work if s/he is studying. For elderly-care, one has to make an agreement with the employer.

If the possibility for flexible working time and location exist (UT-EMI), then the need in part time employment is less relevant. However, part-time employment may be agreed if the employer finds that delivering results equivalent to full time work is not realistic due to family responsibilities.

- Work agreements for sabbatical

Taking a semester off allows to devote as much time to family responsibilities as necessary. There are various sabbatical arrangements in different countries. For example, in the Federal State Schleswig-Holstein (Kiel CAU, Kiel UAS), Germany, employees with permanent contracts can get a part time position and work full time during certain periods to take the already worked time as full time leave without affecting the salary based on the part time contract. Many universities have sabbatical systems where staff can take one free semester every 5-7 years. In University of Tartu (Estonia) sabbaticals can be taken by teachings staff, but not by research staff (e.g. UT-EMI staff).

- Adaption of meeting and teaching times to family-friendly hours

All partners try to adopt time-sensitive agendas of meetings (e.g. no meetings on Mondays and Fridays that require travel of staff during the weekend, start and end of meetings within certain time margin from the start and end of official working hours, etc.). In exceptional cases academic, administrative and technical staff may be asked to participate outside of family-friendly hours based on availability (KU). Teaching staff can ask for more suitable time schedule for their classes (KU).

- A substitute for laboratory work for pregnant or breast-feeding researchers

In Germany pregnant or breast-feeding researchers get a substitute for laboratory work paid by the health insurance. At UT-EMI, Estonia, multiple staff members learn how to perform laboratory analysis in order to substitute pregnant and breast-feeding researchers (or colleagues with family responsibilities) in the laboratory.

- School holidays and partner's annual leave are taken into account when planning employees' annual leave

In the partner institutions there is a high flexibility for employees in terms of when and in how many parts to take the annual leave throughout the year. For example, staff can take it during holiday periods when day-cares, preschools and schools are closed for holiday in order to have vacations with whole family. In KU academic staff has no lectures two times per year during school holidays (a week including the 1st of November and a week including Easter). Annual leave can be split into one or multiple parts (UT-EMI) and the schedule changed at any time depending on family needs. Fieldwork and expeditions in partner institutions are always negotiated in advance and are not compulsory for persons with family-care responsibilities or health problems.

3.2. Leave entitlement

In Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania and Sweden, leave entitlements are mostly regulated by national law. Examples of different partner countries are brought out below.

- Paid parental leave possibility for both parents

Estonia

Maternity leave-140 calendar days (100 percent of average earnings) which 30 - 70 days can be taken before expected date of birth. Paternity leave- 10 working days. Can be taken during two months before or two months after the birth of a child. Parental leave- paid at 100 percent of personal average earnings (for 435 days) from after the end of maternity leave or until the child reaches 18 months of age. All working parents are eligible for parental leave. Fathers are eligible for parental benefit when their child has reached 70 days of age. Parents have right to return to their exact position they did hold before the leave (no changes in contracts allowed).

Finland

Maternity leave can be taken 30-50 working days or about 5-8 weeks before due date. The maternity allowance is paid for 105 working days. Fathers can take paternity leave after the birth of their child (can last up to 54 working days or about 9 weeks). During this period, both parents can stay at home at the same time for up to 18 working days. Parental leave- 158 working days, to be taken after the end of Maternity leave. Parents can share the leave between themselves as they wish but cannot be on leave at the same time.

Germany

Maternity leave- 14 weeks (100 per cent of earnings): six weeks before the birth and eight weeks following the birth. Parental leave- up to 3 years after childbirth for each parent, of which 24 months can be taken up to the child's eighth birthday. This is an individual entitlement and non-transferable. Both parents are entitled to take leave at the same time and both can take up to two leave intervals. An income-related benefit is paid if a parent takes full-time or part-time leave.

Lithuania

Maternity leave- 18 weeks (126 calendar days). 100 percent of previous net earnings. Paternity leave- 1 month (30 calendar days) allowed at any time from the childbirth until the child becomes 3 months old. In case of a complicated childbirth or multiple births – until the

child becomes 6 months old. Parental leave starts after maternity leave and lasts until the child is 3 years old. Parents can choose between two options: 100 per cent of net earnings until the child is 12 months; or 70 per cent of net earnings until the child is 12 months old and 40 per cent of net earnings until the child is 24 months old. The last period of leave – the third year - until the child is three years of age is unpaid. Grandfather, grandmother or any actual caregiver of a child (if parents do not use leave themselves) is eligible for parental leave, but not for parental benefit. According to Lithuanian Labour codex the employer must ensure the right of employee to return to the same or equal work position and to provide the same working conditions as they were before leaving for maternity leave, paternity leave or parental leave.

Sweden

Temporary leave for the partner - 10 days. Designed to be used to attend delivery, to care for other children while the mother is in the hospital, to stay over in the hospital in a family room after childbirth and/or to participate in childcare when the mother comes home. Parental leave- parents are entitled to 480 days of paid parental leave when a child is born or adopted, which parents can share. For 390 of the days, parents are entitled to nearly 80 percent of their normal pay. The remaining 90 days are paid at a flat rate. At least three months of 480 days is allocated to each parent on a “use it or lose it” basis. All governmental bodies, including universities, cover the additional amount up to 90% of one’s full salary during the parental leave (390 days). Most parents spread the days over more than 13 months and one can use the days up till the child is 12 years with maximum of 96 days after the child’s 4th birthday.

- Extended unpaid or paid leave for taking care of dependent relatives.

Estonia

14 calendar days per episode of illness leave can be taken by either parent to care for a sick child under 12 years, with 80 per cent of earning replacement for up to 14 calendar days per illness episode. Parents with a handicapped child may take one day of leave per month with full earnings replacement. A parent with a child under 14 years of age can take ten working days of unpaid leave per year. Parents may take a supplementary period of holiday: three days per year for a parent raising one or two children under 14 years and six days per year for a parent raising a child under three years, or three or more children under 14 years. In UT-EMI employers can take unpaid leave in the cases where elderly care needs to be so extensive that flexible working hours with the expected full time equivalent results are not realistic.

Finland

Parents of children under 10 years can take up to four days leave when a child falls ill. There are no limits on how often parents can take leave for this purpose during the course of a year. Payment is dependent on collective agreements but is often at full earnings for three or four days at a time. If an employee needs to be absent from work to care for a family member or other close person, the employer has to try to organise work so that the employee can be absent from work for a fixed time period. The employer and the employee agree on the length of the leave and other arrangements. Return to work has to be agreed on before the leave between the employer and the employee. If an agreement cannot be reached, the employee can, with reasonable grounds, interrupt the leave by announcing this to the employer a month before the return at the latest. The employee has to account for grounds of the absence and for interrupting it if the employer asks for it. No benefit or wage is paid during this leave.

Germany

Acute nursing case: a short 10-day leave, when acute nursing cases occur. The leave can be taken on very short (daily) notice. Salaries of persons taking the leave are substituted through the social security system.

Full or part-time leave for a maximum of six months: unpaid leave for reasons of elder care for close relatives for a maximum time of six months. Elder care has to take place at home

and the employer has to be informed a minimum of 10 days before. Salary deficits can be substituted via a state loan free of interest. This leave can only be taken once per nursing case. The law does not apply to civil servants.

Accompanying close relatives during their last phase of life: possibility for a full or part-time leave for a maximum of three months during the last phase of life of a close relative. The accompanying can take place at home or another place such as a hospital or hospice. Salary deficits can be substituted via a state loan free of interest. The law does not apply to civil servants.

Part-time leave up to 24 months: elder care of close relatives and part time work can be combined for the maximum length of 24 months. A minimum of 15 working hours per month has to remain. The employer has to be informed eight weeks before. The elder care has to take place at home. Salary deficits can be substituted via a state loan free of interest. This leave can only be taken once per nursing case. The law does not apply to civil servants.

Lithuania

Regulations according to the Republic of Lithuania Law on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance

An insured person has the right to nurse a sick family member and to receive the allowance from the State Social Insurance Fund resources but no longer than for 7 calendar days.

14 calendar days per episode of illness leave can be taken by either parent or even grandparent (new! starting from 01/01/2018) to care for a sick child under 14 years and 7 days for a sick child above 14 years with 85 per cent of earning replacement for up to 14 calendar days per illness episode.

For parent or grandparent who is nursing a sick child under 7 years of age undergoing in-patient treatment, as well as the family member, guardian or curator who is nursing a child under 18 years of age undergoing in-patient, outpatient treatment or/and in medical rehabilitation and sanatorium treatment facilities, who is sick with serious diseases (the list of which shall be approved by the Minister of Health and the Minister of Social Security and Labour), has a paid illness leave for the whole period of the necessary treatment, but for no longer than 120 days in a calendar year.

New from 01/04/2018: Grandparents has a right to care about their grandchild and to receive illness allowance (if they are insured by sickness and maternity social insurance) during the period of parent illness, when parents are unable to care about their child.

Employees who rise a disabled kid who is less than eighteen years old or rise two children who are less than twelve years old are given an extra day off during a month (or the working time of the week can be shortened for two hours). Employees who rise three and more children who are less than twelve years old are given two days off during a month (or the working time of the week can be shortened for four hours). In both cases the employer is being paid as usual.

According to Lithuanian Labour codex the employer must satisfy employees request for unpaid holidays if such a request is given by an employee who belongs to one of the following categories:

- 1. Employee, who has a kid aged less than fourteen years old, 1-14 calendar days of unpaid holidays;*
- 2. Employee, who is disabled himself, employee who has a disabled kid aged less than eighteen years old, employee who nurses a disabled person, who is in constant need for nursing – 1-30 calendar days of unpaid holidays;*
- 3. Employee male can have unpaid holidays during the time when the mother of his child/children is on maternity leave or on parental leave, also employee female can have unpaid holidays during the time when a father of her child/children is on paternity leave. The maximum term of such unpaid holidays in those cases is not more than three months.*
- 4. Employee who nurses a sick family member – for the time recommended by a health care institution;*
- 5. Other categories of employees can be allowed to go on unpaid holidays for the time period mentioned in the collective agreement applied in that workplace.*

Sweden

The Swedish social security system reimburses 80% of your salary if a child below the age of 12 is sick and needs to be at home. This rule also applies for taking care of older children if they need to be at a hospital or if a close relative is life-threateningly ill and you have to be off work for up to 20 weeks.

- Possibility to extend work contracts for the amount of time that scientists are on parental leave. For example, forms of funding that supports people (with a limited contract) to return to work after a family break, e.g. parental leave

Institutional funding can be used to support people with a limited contract to return to work after a family break; Inge-Lehmann-Fund at GEOMAR is such an example. Between 2015 (when the award was put into place) and 2017, 9 female and 2 male scientists have been funded to get their foot back in the door after interruption of scientific activity due to periods of child- or elderly-care.

At LU, KU, UT-EMI the prolongation of PhD and postdoc positions is more or less automatic if one has been on parental leave. The national funding can be temporarily postponed in case of parental leave. If a PhD student or postdoc is on parental leave and the money cannot be saved (projects with fixed-time contracts) the department has to cover the prolongation since the guaranteed position is for a certain number of years.

Estonian National Science Foundation and Finnish Academy funding grants are automatically extended in the case of parental leave. Employment contracts are also automatically prolonged in UT-EMI and SYKE. Employers cannot change any contracts during the parental leave.

At KU, the employment contract for scientist is automatically prolonged and the time for attestation is postponed in the case of parental leave.

- Funding to replace people temporarily on parental leave (stand-in)

At GEOMAR, there has been temporal replacements for persons on parental leave, which was done with overlap both before and after the period of absence to assure a continuity on that positions. At LU administrative or technical staff often have stand-ins during the parental leave period.

3.3. Financial and childcare assistance

In most countries the childcare is provided by local (city, commune, etc.) governments and is regulated at national level. However, some partner institutions provide extra opportunities to their employees.

- On-site childcare

Kiel CAU has 61 cribs and 30 kindergarten places in seven different day care centres for employees (students are not included, they can refer to places belonging to the student union). Kiel CAU holds childcare places in co-operating facilities on and near the campus, open to all staff and very well used especially by scientists. Kiel UAS has childcare arrangements for emergency or exceptional situations.

- Additional childcare places for people who have difficulty to find a place in a short and timely manner, e.g. persons from abroad or single parents

GEOMAR provides three regular childcare places in communal day-care facilities since 2018. Especially for persons from abroad or single parents it's difficult to find a place in a short and timely manner and need extra support.

- Organized childcare during conferences, seminars or other meetings (on demand)

Kiel CAU has on demand childcare organized by the Family Service during congresses, seminars or meetings held in or near Kiel (age 0 to 14). This service is often used by marine

scientists. IOW has play corners in their library and child care with child-appropriate play offers during institutional celebrations. In times of frequent childhood diseases, IOW supports parents e. g. by providing them separate parking lots that guarantees quick parking and driving off in a problematic parking situation.

- Holiday programs for school children

In Kiel CAU and Kiel UAS schoolchildren of academics and staff can take part in a holiday day camp during most school-holidays (age 6 to 14).

- Funding for childcare during business travel

Funding support for childcare and travel costs (related to family care) can be offered during expeditions or conferences. At GEOMAR needs due to expeditions or conferences (e.g. onsite childcare or compensating the travel costs of an additional care-taker to allow single-parent to travel with a young spouse and take part in a conference) could be financed when applying for these costs together with travel costs.

- A compensation for study disadvantages caused by the incompatibility of family issues with their studies (for students).

Kiel CAU students can apply for a compensation for study disadvantages caused by the incompatibility of family issues with their studies.

KU students having children can apply for compensation of their study fee (this is regulated only on the basis of faculties and the responsibility lays on the faculty's budget).

3.4. Other forms of help on work conditions and responsibilities

- Social gatherings for families

Kiel UAS organises social gatherings for families (for students within the whole institution).

- Informative events and distribution of informative materials about national legislation and organizational options for employees with family issues

Seminars arranged by departments at LU.

- Opinion surveys among employees gathering information regarding reconciling work and family obligations

SYKE organises opinion surveys among employees gathering information regarding reconciling work and family obligations.

- Supports for personal health and wellbeing.

Practices that advance employee health and wellbeing favour employee commitment, reduce stress and diseases on one hand, and support health and wellbeing of families (healthier relationships, more opportunities to spend time together etc.) on the other hand.

LU pays for health improvement expenses (up to 180 Euro/year) to cover a gym card or equal. Expenses for medicines prescribed by a doctor or appointments with for example a physiotherapist or psychologist are also partly reimbursed. For work-related health issues, there is a special doctor or psychologist that the employer can direct you to, paid by the university.

UT-EMI compensates each employee's health improvement expense since 2018. The university reimburses the following expenses on sports: expenses directly related to regular use of sporting or mobility venues (sports clubs' membership fees and passes); and participation fees in public sports events (public sports events are events in which everyone can take part). Additionally, UT-EMI supports personal health check-ups at least after every three years. UT-EMI staff allowed to dive for work purposes goes through annual medical checks. Glasses can be compensated for staff members working with computer.

- A reference person or office for the issue of work-family reconciliation (family-services)

Kiel CAU has an institutionalized Family Service. The office is equipped with 1,75 permanent positions and periodically up to ten student assistances (for the holiday-program and childcare on demand). It gives confidential advice about personal matters concerning the compatibility of family with work or studies. It is open to all students and staff. Advice is also possible in English. The office maintains, coordinates and implements measures for the compatibility of family with work and studies in close collaboration with the university board, the commissioner for equal opportunities, student representatives and administrative units. Additionally, extensive information, also bundled for certain target groups, e.g. persons with elder care tasks, is provided by the Family Service via its internet pages. This is essential to reach to the whole university community easily and whenever needed. Also, a multiple recommended brochure was launched "Hochschule und Familie" (University and Family), that was primarily intended to support and sensitize staff with personnel responsibility.

Kiel UAS was audited in 2014 as a family-friendly university. In the last three years many measures were implemented to enhance the possibilities of balancing work and family life, and support students and employees who have family duties. A special "office for family-services" was created in order to manage this process and also to provide counselling for students and employees about the vast possibilities of support, state funding, childcare etc. Further, the office for family-services carries out activities that aim at raising awareness to the topics of parenthood and elderly care. It also implements measures, for example structural changes of which employees with family duties profit mostly, e.g. drafting a service agreement on home-office, establishing the family-friendly meeting times, holding information events about family-friendly studying and elderly care and discussions about leadership in part-time, making sure that trainings for employees take part-time or family duties into account.

- Welcome Service

Kiel CAU has a Welcome Service for persons relocating to Kiel from another town within or from outside of Germany. Families are benefitting from this service in particular, when questions of housing, childcare, schools or job seeking for spouses arise. The institutionalized Welcome Service provides own services and bundles information about offers that are located at different units throughout the University. International students and scientists can, for example, find first contact and services in the International Centre. Special attendance from different service points, such as HR Department (civil servant issues), Staff Training Department (staff training and program for newly appointed professors), Welcome Service (dual career service for spouses, housing), Family Service (childcare, schools) is given to newly appointed professors and their families during the recruiting and onboarding process.

- Family-friendliness as permanent goal

Family-friendliness for students and staff is a central issue at Kiel CAU politics and in the universities social engagement. It is a permanent goal (signed by the university board) to integrate the subject into future documents, processes and concepts if useful. This guarantees that a broad variety of measures to promote family-friendliness are established step by step. Kiel CAU holds a certificate as "family friendly university" since 2002, over 120 measures have been carried out in the past, many of them still ongoing. Family orientation has reached a high level, is implemented throughout the university structures and well used by students and staff. It is still helpful though, that there is the permanent goal to maintain established measures and to integrate the subject into future documents, processes and concepts. This enables a future progress of the subject.

4. Recommendations

Working arrangements in an institution should be flexible to facilitate family friendliness. This flexibility can be in the form of flexible working time and place, part-time employments, adaption of meeting times to family-friendly hours, flexible holiday planning etc.

Management should support both men and women in using their right **to paid parental leave.**

All employees should be aware and have **the possibility to use** their right to **unpaid or paid leave for taking care of dependent relatives.**

Extending work contracts for the amount of time that scientists are on parental leave should be made possible.

Funding to replace people temporarily on parental leave (stand-in) should be made available.

Childcare support should be accessible in the form of organized childcare service availability during meetings, expeditions or conferences as well as daily childcare in a nearby day-care center during working hours.

Every organization should have **a reference person or office for the issue of work-family reconciliation (family services).**

National and institutional legislations that concern different family friendly policies should be available to all staff.

Management should organize **surveys that make it possible for the staff to give their opinion regarding family-friendly policies.**

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