



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Equality Body's Social Research
As a Part of
the Work-Life Balance Support Strategy

Ms Paula Nowek

Department of Equal Treatment and Protection of Rights of People with Disabilities

Office of the Human Rights Defender in Poland

www.rpo.gov.pl

Tallin, 2 July, 2015



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Polish Equality Body

- As an Equality Body, Human Rights Defender:
 - ✓ provides independent assistance to victims of discrimination in lodging complaints of discrimination, handles the complaints
 - ✓ **carries out independent research on discrimination**
 - ✓ publishes independent reports and makes recommendations on discrimination-related problems

www.rpo.gov.pl



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Why social research ?

- Underreporting
- Acquiring further knowledge about discrimination and people's experience with unequal treatment on the grounds of race, ethnic origin or nationality, gender, religion, denomination or beliefs, disability, age, sexual orientation.
- Gathering relevant local data to support our cause and recommendations



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Equality Body's social research

1. Choosing the area of research
2. Meeting and consulting with experts
3. Preparing the concept of the research
4. Conducting the survey
5. Publishing and promoting an Ombudsman's report
6. Conference promoting the results and recommendations
7. Presenting the recommendations to the authorities and monitoring the process of their implementation

www.rpo.gov.pl



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Equality Body's social research

- In 2014 we decided to take on the subject of work-life balance and conduct qualitative social research titled *Work-life balance. The situation of young parents on the labour market*
- Main goals:
 - ✓ Compare the perspective of young parents with different kinds of contract of employment
 - ✓ Compare the perspective of employers, organisations representing employers, trade unions
 - ✓ Put the area of work-life balance into antidiscrimination perspective



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Polish background

- Low birthrate
- Longer maternal and parental leaves as a main work-life balance strategy promoted by authorities
- Although the usage of 2-week paternity leave grows, it is mothers who most of the time take longer leaves f. ex. parental leaves (98%)
- Underuse of flexible forms of work
- Governmental „Child Programme” – more money to provide institutional care for children under 3 years old. Still, only 5% of children under the age of 3 are enrolled in childcare institutions.



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Methodology

Main objectives

- Identifying problems with mothers' participation in labour market and fathers' engagement in parenting role
- Identifying the workplace practices that enable work-life balance from the view of parents, employers, trade unions and employers' associations
- Comparing those perspectives and identifying gender-based discrimination



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Methodology

- 3 Focus-Group Interviews with **mothers** with different types of contract of employment
- 3 Focus-Group Interviews with **fathers** with different types of contract of employment
- 27 In-Depth Interviews with **employers** and HR managers
- 6 In-Depth Interviews with representatives of **trade unions**
- 3 In-Depth Interviews with representatives of **employers' associations**



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Main results

Parents

- Work-life balance strategies primarily offered to mothers
- Obliviousness to discrimination and further negative consequences
- Gender stereotypes are still very common and deep-rooted



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Main results

Well, he sometimes wants to take care of our child. Let's face it, I too sometimes need to go out somewhere, take care of other things. But I prefer to do everything by myself because he cannot do it properly, or he will do it his way, and therefore later I would have even more work with setting things right.

[Self-employed mother]



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Main results

Employers

- Employers declare openness to employee's work-life balance needs but do not take initiatives in that area themselves

Trade Unions

- The area of work-life balance and equal treatment principle is not a priority in trade unions' activities

www.rpo.gov.pl



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Main results

At my work there is a so-called „room for mother and child” but at the moment there is only a pool table in there...

[Do mothers use that room?]

No, no... The heating in the room is never on. So...

[Father working full-time]



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

The work-life balance strategy – main goals

- Turning a spotlight on discrimination aspect – unequal treatment of mothers on labour market and of fathers in fulfilling their parental roles
- Influencing the lawmakers and government (ex. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)
- Changing the policy-making and legislation



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Challenges

- Human Rights Defender has no competence to handle discrimination cases concerning private entities
- Combating gender stereotypes
- Communicating our recommendations not only to authorities but to society in general



RZECZNIK PRAW OBYWATELSKICH

Thank you for your attention!

e-mail: p.nowek@brpo.gov.pl

Department of Equal Treatment and Protection of Rights of
People with Disabilities

Office of the Human Rights Defender in Poland

www.rpo.gov.pl