

Youth – Actor of Social Change

“Working fathers”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at

<http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
Title of programme/ practice	Working fathers
Location	Two (anonymous) enterprises in the metal and electro-technology branch, together with the corresponding unions took part in a project under supervision of knowledge centre E-Quality for emancipation, family and diversity.
Main theme	Young parenthood Participation
Practice/Programme-related keywords	Parental leave; fatherhood; work-life balance; cooperation of societal actors
Summary of programme/ practice	The knowledge centre E-Quality addressed the widely recognized problem of full time working young fathers in two industries with least parent-friendly policies. It is unique – and typical for Dutch tri partite policy tradition - that the employers/managers and unions agreed to the project.
Target	1) Target area: Economic: flexibilization of working times.
	2) Target groups/issues/problems addressed: (Young) fathers who would want to work less in order to have more time for their family but work in sectors with almost 100% full time workers.
Objectives of programme	More flexible working times for (young) fathers.

Content of programme/ practice	Giving the male workers the opportunity to express their wishes, it showed that being allowed to decide themselves about how and when to use their vacant days was the most urgent wish, closely followed by own decision about use of working time. Also working at home scored high.
Time scale	Changes in the working culture of enterprises are slow and depend very much on the sector (most flexibility in the public sectors health and welfare). If the above enterprises did alter their policies is not known; the information stems from Mai 2008. But the fact that these hardliner enterprises participated in such sensitive issues shows their willingness to take changes in male working force seriously. Unions press for more leniency in working times and better work-life balances. There are also initiatives from the government which launched a Taskforce "Part time plus" and plans further incentives in 2009. The International PriceWaterhouseCoopers is experimenting with flexible work schedules: employees (m/f) with more than 5 years attached to the enterprise may min. 1 and max. 2 years 80% work and get 90% salary. Also home-based work belongs to such initiatives (E-Quality nr. 3, September 2008). Other international companies experiment with similar measures to attract medium and high educated personnel.
Programme/ practice design	1) Development of programme/practice: Not known in how many enterprises active work-life balance policies are conducted.
	2) Decision-making actors and process: In the two above enterprises it was the managers who were in charge of working schemes. It showed that the male workers did not know all their rights concerning parental leave, paid and unpaid.
	3) Legal framework: Family compatible flexibilisation of work for males is totally in charge of the enterprise but is strongly pushed by various family and women organisations and also by the government
Resources involved	No information
Evaluation	1) Evaluation process: This project is not part of a nation-wide evaluation of working cultures – and no such research is initiated to our knowledge.
	2) Results / impact of programme: See under time scale
Lessons to be drawn from programme or practice implemented	Given the fact that there is much female part time work and also given the fact that the 1 ½ model is standard in the NL, it is doubtful of changes in favour of more part time work for males/young fathers will come soon. Enterprises are not keen on such changes and the labour market does not force them to do so. There are numerous societal initiatives, though, to keep the issue on the agenda. That is why this quasi-project was chosen: the knowledge centre E-Quality is a government-subsidized independent institute which intermediates between social science, implementation and policy relevant actors.

Contact information	http://www.e-quality.nl