New Insights into (Hidden) Discrimination Against Mothers and Fathers at Work and in Applying for Jobs

Nadja Bergmann & Claudia Sorger, 1st of March 2021

Supported by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union (2014-2020)
parents@work – Project Facts

- **Duration:** May 2019 – September 2021

- **Project Consortium:**

  ![Logos of the consortium members]

- **Supported by:**

  Supported by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union (2014-2020)
Raising awareness for the topic of discrimination at the workplace, giving employees information where they can get support for recourse, support for employers

Milestones and Products:

- interviews with employees who have experienced discrimination
- survey of employers on their current practices regarding work/family reconciliation
- material for awareness raising: YouTube clips, website, brochure, training materials

https://parentsatwork.eu/
Austrian Research and Findings

- Views of employees: extensive interviews with 18 former clients from the Ombud for Equal Treatment were carried out (prior to COVID-19: from June 2019 – January 2020)
- Views of employers: qualitative interviews with seven selected employers and an online survey, in which 45 company representatives participated (also experiences during COVID-19: from April – September 2020)

Austrian findings from employees´ perspective

- Discrimination experienced:
  - demotion (financial and/or position)
  - (attempted) dismissal and/or dissuasion
  - mocking and bullying by employers
Two examples of typical workplace discrimination

Ms Dora:

- upon return to work Ms Dora was demoted to a position below her qualification level and was not permitted to choose her preferred working days, additionally she was often unjustly accused of inferior performance
- she sought assistance from the Ombud for Equal Treatment and the Chamber of Labour
- out-of-court financial settlement was received

Mr Oliver:

- upon his application for paternity leave/parental part time? he was forced against his will to leave his job (they offered him only a 2-hour work week as a „copy boy“ instead of his requested 30 hours and he was accused of being unwilling to work)
- he sought legal assistance but decided against recourse and therefore looked for a new job instead
Conclusions

- Ongoing gender-specific role stereotyping regarding division of paid and unpaid work
- Perpetuation that the 40-hour week is superior to part-time work (affecting remuneration, value, qualification, promotion)
- Biases and prejudices that parenting automatically has a negative effect on performance
- Lack of awareness, regulation, standardisation and practice concerning parenting and work exist in the companies
- Legal aspect: adequate recourse is hindered by inconvenient, complicated and lengthy processes (helplessness and frustration sometimes lead to giving up)