



# GUIDELINES FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

Expanding Choices: Gender-Responsive Family Policies  
for the Private and Public Sectors in Kosovo

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This Guideline provides a summary of the process of supporting several private-sector companies in Kosovo towards transforming themselves into Family Friendly Workplaces. It summarizes the lessons learned, best practices, and challenges throughout the process. The document should be seen as a source of information and a guideline for other private companies aiming to create family-friendly workplaces through their own programs and operations. The guidelines are kept general on purpose in order to be easily adapted by businesses working in different sectors.

The guideline is based on the experience of the Kosovo Women's Network during the implementation of the project "Expanding Choices: Gender-Responsive Family Policies for the Private Sector in the Western Balkans and Moldova", supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation.

This document offers guidelines for businesses in Kosovo towards creating family-friendly workplaces in their own programs and operations. The guidelines are based on the premise that businesses have a role to play in ensuring that families have the support they need to balance work and family responsibilities.

The Project "Expanding Choices: Gender - Responsive Family Policies for the Private and Public Sectors in Kosovo, is funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and implemented by the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) and the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce (KCC). The specific objective of this initiative is to improve the extent to which private and public sectors have gender- responsive family policies in place. This and outputs contributing to it are being achieved through awareness-raising, capacity-building, advocacy, networking, and monitoring. One of the key components of the project includes supporting companies in the private sector to assess, evaluate, and improve their internal policies towards more family friendly and gender equal policies.

## IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

### WHAT ARE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?

The term "Family-Friendly Policies" is a rather new concept in Kosovo. It is not a term that has been frequently used by government actors, civil society, or donors. Family-Friendly Policies are policies that enable women and men to better balance family responsibilities with professional responsibilities. These policies support individuals to have the family they desire, improve maternal and child health, and provide them the opportunity to make informed decisions about their reproductive lives and professional future. Considering the potential benefits of Family-Friendly Policies, their implementation in institutions and businesses in Kosovo is crucial. Unemployment and labour market inactivity is very high in Kosovo and is one of the most persisting developmental problems. The situation is particularly concerning for women, only one in five women is active in the labour market. The women that are active in the labour market face serious challenges in successfully finding employment.

Gender-Responsive Family Friendly-Policies can include, but are not limited to:

- Flexible work arrangements,
- Part-time work or Telecommuting
- Family medical leave
- Parental leave for mothers and fathers
- Childcare assistance
- In-house childcare facilities.
- Health insurance for family members
- Policies on equal opportunities, protection from discrimination and sexual harassment
- Designated lactation rooms

## WHY ARE FAMILY- FRIENDLY POLICIES IMPORTANT?

### Companies:

- Increased employee retention: Family-friendly policies can help to increase employee retention by making it easier for employees to balance their work and family responsibilities. This can save companies the time and resources that would otherwise be spent on recruiting and training new employees.
- Increased productivity: Family-friendly policies can also lead to increased productivity, as employees who feel supported and able to manage their personal and family commitments are more likely to be engaged and motivated at work.
- Improved reputation: Companies that offer family -friendly policies may also benefit from improved reputation, as such policies can make a company more attractive to potential employees and customers.
- Greater diversity and inclusion: Family-friendly policies can also help to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace, as they make it easier for people with caregiving responsibilities to remain in the workforce.

### Governments and Societies:

- Improved economic outcomes: Family-friendly policies can help to improve economic outcomes by increasing the participation of women and other caregivers in the labor force. This can boost economic growth and increase tax revenues for governments.
- Increased gender equality: Family-friendly policies can help to promote gender equality by supporting the participation of women and other caregivers in the labor force. Improved social outcomes: Family -friendly policies can also have positive social impacts, such as reducing poverty and inequality and improving the well-being of families and children.
- Increased social cohesion: Family-friendly policies can also contribute to increased social cohesion by promoting gender equality and supporting diverse family structures.
- Enhanced human rights: Family-friendly policies can also support the realization of human rights, such as the right to work and the right to an adequate standard of living. These policies can help to create more equal and just societies.

## GUIDELINES ON TRANSFORMING YOUR WORKPLACES

This section will include a step-by-step guide on how to introduce family- friendly policies and will be divided into three overall sections including “Time and IT”, “Financial Help”, and “Attitudes and Behavior”. The guide is based on the methodology devised by UNFPA and adapted by KVN during the process. Businesses looking to use this step by step guide should adapt the recommendations to their needs, business challenges, and resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TIME AND IT

- 1) Ensure that family- friendly practices that may already be provided on an ad-hoc basis are codified in internal documents rather than occurring on an ad-hoc basis based on individual will.
- 2) Modify Contracts and Human Resource Manual to include Guidelines that specify maternity, paternity, parental, and carers' leave according to the requirements of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive.<sup>1</sup> The cost of these provisions would not damage the financial viability of the company, but could rather contribute to higher employee retention and lower turnover. Additionally, it will provide the company with a head start as these provisions will be required by the Labour Law very soon. Beyond the maternity leave provisions part of the Labour Law, these modifications can include:
  - a. Providing 10 days of paternity leave, right before or after the birth of a child
  - b. Four months of parental leave for all employees, that can be taken before the child is 8 years old. Two of these months are non-transferable so all employees, men and women, must take them.
  - c. "Care Leave": Up to five days of paid leave for employees that need to take care of family members.
  - d. Extending flexible working hours for all employees who have children under the age of 8.
  - e. Extending flexible working hours for all employees who are carers
- 3) Amend the Code of Conduct and the Human Resource Manual to include provisions guaranteeing equal opportunities, protection from discrimination, and a no-tolerance policy for sexual harassment.

### Example of Human Resource Manual statements on equal opportunities, gender equality, and sexual harassment

The Company strives to continuously create an environment that promotes equal opportunity for advancement in order to correct previous imbalances and improve the conditions of individuals and groups who have previously been disadvantaged due to gender, ethnicity, or disability.

Interview questions will be focused on the job requirements and will not be discriminatory. For all positions, an adequate summary of the interview session should be recorded. Private questions about marital status, children, and family planning will be avoided, not least because they are illegal.

No form of sexual harassment will be tolerated in the company and will pose grounds for immediate dismissal.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FINANCIAL HELP

- 1) Provide financial contribution for parental leave in accordance to the provisions of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, for both mothers and fathers.
- 2) Consider providing financial childcare support (such as paying nursery fees, paying for day-cares, etc). Specifically, the company could provide a designated area inside their offices that could be used as a temporary day-care for employees who need to take their children to work temporarily, or employees who will decide to bring their children in every day.
- 3) Companies with employees who are pregnant or breastfeeding should work towards designating a space to be used as a lactation/pumping room. Mothers who are still breastfeeding can use this room to either pump breast milk, a practice that is continuously growing worldwide and in Kosovo, or to breastfeed their babies in case another family member brings them over. The room ideally should be clean, private, and hygienic and equipped at least with a refrigerator and sink.

<sup>1</sup> As per the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union and the Government of Kosovo, the requirements of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive are expected to soon become legal requirements within the Kosovo Labour Law.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

- 1) Establish and communicate the company's commitment to transforming into a more family-friendly workplace. This can be done through a written statement of commitment that is signed by the CEO, shared with all employees at an open event, and documented with the rest of internal policies. The statement could describe the inspiration behind creating new policies and their need, by referring to the above assessment.
- 2) Communication efforts should always be gender-sensitive. Companies should make conscious efforts to include gender -sensitive language and images in communication efforts, including websites and social media pages.
- 3) Organize a one-day workshop on equal opportunities and Family -Friendly Policies for all staff across the hierarchical order, including management. The workshop can be held by HR staff who attended the workshops organized by UNFPA, or can be externally recruited including through support from UNFPA, the ECC, and/or KWN. The workshop could support employees in better understanding family- friendly policies and what they and the company benefit from them. Such workshops could also cover topics such as gender roles, norms, stereotypes, and their negative effects on employees and the company as a whole.
- 4) Ensure women and men's equal representation in leadership and decision-making. This way tThe concerns, views, and opinions of women and men will be represented in internal discussions and future priorities of the company contribute to women and men's concerns. Furthermore, the Kosovo Law on Gender Equality (No. 05/L-020) establishes equal representation as the equal representation of men and women (50%-50%). Although the law is only directly applicable to public institutions, it can be taken as a best practice by other actors, including private companies and businesses. Additionally, the Kosovo Law on Protection from Discrimination (No. 05/L-021) promotes affirmative measures, temporary measures to increase equality in cases of underrepresentation of either men or women.
- 5) The company should appoint several "role models" or appointed leaders at different organizational levels, including at management and leadership levels. These individuals who should be both women and men, would actively promote family- friendly policies.
- 6) Existing employee satisfaction surveys should be modified to also include specific questions on how employees perceive and value the company's family-friendly workplaces, including the support in terms of Time and IT, financial support, and attitudes and behavior within the Company. These surveys should be anonymous and disseminated at least once a year.
- 7) Every company should designate an equality, diversity, and inclusion focal point, possibly within the HR department. This person should be in charge of overseeing issues concerning equal opportunities, gender equality, and discrimination prevention within the Company. These responsibilities should ideally be incorporated into this person's job description. The gender focal point should receive additional and more targeted training in addition to attending training similar to other colleagues.
- 8) Every company should ensure that all data and information, where possible, is disaggregated by gender and other factors including ethnicity, age, and ability status.
- 9) Companies should also keep track of how much the different benefits provided are used by employees. This will enable the company to better document their investment in Family- Friendly Workplaces and track its effects.

### **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Focal Point Responsibilities that can be included in the Terms of Reference.**

Ensures that information and guidelines on gender equality, equal opportunities, protection from discrimination, and sexual harassment are shared with the staff.

Encourages colleagues to promote gender equality in all activities.

Ensures a gender perspective is included in internal policy documents, including human resource documents, strategies, action plans, and codes of conduct.

Ensures that gender-disaggregated data is collected and used for internal policy-making.

## A SUMMARY OF THE EXPERIENCE IN KOSOVO

Through funding and support by UNFPA, KWN and KCC supported 7 private companies in identifying and implementing family - friendly policies. During this process, many challenges, best practices, lessons learned, and successes were identified. KWN and KCC first supported companies in assessing existing policies; as a second step specific recommendations were developed in cooperation with the companies; then the companies were also supported to implement the recommendations.

### Main Challenges:

A lack of understanding of the benefits of Family Friendly Policies.

HR teams are already overworked, having no time to work on family-friendly policies.

No written commitment by companies.

### Main Opportunities:

Many companies already have family -friendly policies, however, they are not formally written in internal policies.

## BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

It is important to note that every company is different and what works for one may not work for another. It's important to consider the needs and preferences of your employees and the unique nature of your business when developing and implementing family-friendly policies.

### Reiffeisen Bank in Kosovo.

**Sector:** Banking

**Employees:** 851 out of whom 450 are women.

Raiffeisen has stated that by being part of this project, Family Friendly Policies made a comeback in the companies' agenda. They have implemented several FFP, all of which will have a long-term impact on employees and company culture. First off, they have subsidized the category of children in the health insurance package for their employees' children. Second, they have implemented the hybrid working model which enables employees, particularly parents to work remotely. Thirdly, Raiffeisen has paid a special attention to the health and wellbeing of employees by offering different physical activities such as: hiking, football tournament and indoor activities (pilates and yoga in the workplace). These are very good opportunities for all employees, especially for parents, as being physically active directly affects employee's health and well-being. Moreover, Raiffeisen is committed to modifying the next employee satisfaction surveys and include questions on FFW and how happy employees are with them. They are committed to discussing the results of the surveys and implementing necessary changes as suggested by employees. These are only the changes that were implemented successfully. Raiffeisen has several other changes in the pipeline as well.

### Cactus

**Sector:** Information and Communication Technology Employees:

**58 employees, out of whom 24 are women.**

Cactus have dedicated a space within their offices for employee's children. The space includes books, toys, puzzles, and other things that can keep a child occupied in an educational and fun way while their parents are at work. This space will be used by parents who lack childcare, in emergencies etc.



**Super Viva****Sector: Retail****Employees: 874 out of whom 524 are women**

Super Viva implemented two important actions towards transforming their workplace into more family friendly. First off, they extended paternity leave provisions provided by the company. So far the company has provided three days of paternity leave, as required by the Labour Law. They now have added one additional day, providing a total of four days for new fathers. While this may not seem like a very big change, it does show the companies' commitment towards improving FFP, as this is 33% higher than what the Labour Law provides. Additionally, Super Viva has a large number of employees all of whom will be impacted by this new policy. Secondly, Super Viva has implemented a new policy through which pregnant women may only work 7 hours during the day, but get paid for the full 8. Super Viva is currently looking into providing Health insurance and designated spaces for pumping and breastfeeding.

### FEMINIST APPROACH TOWARDS FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

A feminist approach to implementing family friendly policies recognizes that traditional gender roles and expectations often result in women bearing a disproportionate burden when it comes to caregiving responsibilities. This can lead to women being disadvantaged in the workplace and experiencing discrimination and inequality. To address these issues, companies can adopt a feminist approach by implementing policies that actively challenge and dismantle these traditional gender roles and expectations. This might include offering equal parental leave for both men and women, as well as supporting men to take on caregiving responsibilities. Companies can also provide resources and support for working parents, such as on-site childcare or flexible work arrangements, to help alleviate the burden of caregiving. Additionally, companies can adopt a feminist approach by actively promoting gender diversity and equality in the workplace. This might include implementing policies and practices to prevent discrimination and bias based on gender, as well as actively promoting women into leadership positions and providing equal pay for equal work. By adopting a feminist approach to implementing family friendly policies, companies can create a more inclusive and equitable workplace for all employees, regardless of their gender or caregiving responsibilities.



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