Combining family and full-time work: Estonia

This is the Estonian contribution to the topic report on combining family and full-time work, coordinated via questionnaire by Statistics Finland and Oxford Research, Denmark, for the European Working Conditions Observatory.

1. Methodological part

Please describe briefly the surveys – dates, coverage, size and response rates – used in answering the questions. By national surveys is meant nationally representative surveys.

In Estonia, work–life balance issues are examined in several nationally representative regular surveys and in some occasional surveys. General working conditions and employment surveys address working time and work–life balance issues. Labour force surveys (LFS) and the Working life barometer (WLB) are designed to analyse the labour market situation and working conditions. The Labour Force Survey has been conducted by the Statistical Office of Estonia (SOE) since 1995, and on a quarterly basis since 2000 (Statistical Office of Estonia, 2004). It covers around 4,000 individuals each quarter. The WLB has been conducted twice (in 1998 and 2002), at the initiative of the Finnish Ministry of Labour (Antila and Ylostalo, 1999, 2003). It is based on a nationally representative sample of around 1,000 individuals.

There is one survey designed specifically for measuring people’s time use (Statistical Office of Estonia, 2001). The Statistical Office of Estonia joined the international time use survey project in 1995, and the survey was conducted in Estonia in 1999–2000. The data enable a gendered analysis of the differences in use of time, and give information on the time people spend with their families and children. The next time use survey is scheduled for 2005–2006. The target population in Estonia are residents aged 10 years or over (except institutionalised people). In all, 6,234 individual questionnaires, 5,723 diaries for Day 1 and 5,714 diaries for Day 2 were returned (response rate 96.8%).

The Bureau of the Estonian Minister of Population Affairs does not publish regularly any surveys covering work–life balance, but there are occasional surveys about childcare facilities and problems with childcare. These are designed as background information for policymakers. In 2004, a survey on Babysitting in Estonian families was published (Unt and Krusell, 2004) and, in 2001, one on Women, Family and Work (Hansson, 2001). The survey on babysitting covered 501 parents of six month to three-year-old children, who were interviewed in 2003. The sample also included 1,137 people with no children, and the survey is nationally representative. The survey Women, Family and Work, published in 2001, focuses on problems in reconciling work and family life. The target group of the survey were women who are under 40 and have at least one child younger than 10 years of age. The sample was 1,142 women living in Tallinn, who completed forms which were distributed through the kindergartens and schools in 2000; the response rate was 76.1%. According to the authors of the survey, the results can be taken as fully representative of Tallinn.

The following sections will refer more to the regular SOE surveys and WLB, as these are bases for regular information.

Q1. In this part, the aim is to show how national surveys cover work–life balance of working parents in full-time work, from the aspect of certain working time arrangements. Thus, the national correspondents are asked to describe what questions are included in the national working conditions surveys on the following themes.
**a) Family situation/Household**

What kind of information is available about the family situation/household: civil status of the respondent (whether the employee is living alone or with the partner); labour market status of the spouse/partner (employed/unemployed/student... work full time/part time... in permanent/ fixed-term employment/self-employed); number and age of children living at home (is it possible to break down age groups by the age of the youngest child, e.g. 0-2 yrs, 3-5 yrs, 6-14)?

How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.

The LFS gives detailed information about every member of the household. It is possible to detect how the respondent is related to the people with whom he/she is living. There are also questions concerning all of the other family members, e.g. date of birth, civil status, nationality. Thus, the ages of all children living in the household can be examined, and age groups categorised. The responsible member has to answer the questions concerning the number of other members, their dates of birth and position in the household, civil status, whether the household members live together or separately and why. The other household members (aged 15–74) answer only those questions describing their own employment status and working life. The responsible member is defined as the one who is aged 15–74 years and brings the biggest income into the household.

Thus, it is possible to trace the number of children, civil status and employment status of people and their household members.

There are two questions concerning the civil status of the respondents. One question is on their legal status (single, married, divorced or widowed), and the other refers to their actual status:

- single – somebody who has never been living with a partner;
- living with partner – not by registered marriage;
- married – formally married;
- widowed;
- divorced;
- living separately – if the last civil status was married and the divorce is not registered.

It is possible to distinguish between a status of employment, unemployment and inactivity for an employee, employer with employees, employer without employees, single entrepreneur, farmer without employees, freelancer, and employee without pay in a family business.

Time-related working conditions include full-time or part-time work, and contract type. Part-time work constitutes less than 35 hours a week, and some other specific cases prescribed by law (15–16 year olds up to 20 hours, and 17 year olds up to 30 hours).

Identifying the type of contract means that it is possible to distinguish between an employment contract, civil service contract, service contract or oral contract. Also, permanent and non-permanent work can be differentiated, where non-permanent work means work for less than one year.

The other surveys do not give such a comprehensive picture of the employment situation of the family. For example, the WLB does not give the possibility of following the person’s civil status or number of children, nor is it possible to detect the employment status of the family members.
b) Work-life balance / reconciliation of work and family life

As an example of this kind of question, see Q20 of the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS): ‘In general, do your working hours fit in with your family or social commitments outside work very well, fairly well, not very well or not at all?’ – Do you have similar question(s) in your national survey?

How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.

The LFS does not include such questions. It includes questions on the usual working hours and the organisation of working time, but not on the satisfaction and compatibility with other commitments. There are no relevant questions in the WLB. Nor do the occasional surveys by the Bureau of Estonian Minister of Population Affairs have such a question. There are more general questions regarding what the most important problems are in reconciling work and family life.

c) Overtime (paid, unpaid)

Do you have question(s) about overtime work (paid or unpaid) in your national survey?

Frequency? How many hours a week or month?

The LFS includes the following questions: ‘How many hours a week do you work usually? How many hours did you work last week (separately for each day)?’ If the person worked more than usual, they are asked the reason why. One of the options given is overtime work.

The WLB is much more specific on overtime. It includes questions on:

- ‘How many hours did you work last week?’
- ‘Do you work overtime during a normal working week (i.e. working time which lasts over the fixed working time in the employment contract)? (Yes, no, do not know)’
- ‘Which of these have you received for doing overtime? a) money compensation, b) time in lieu, c) no compensation.’
- ‘How many hours do you work overtime per week usually?’

d) Possibility of influencing start and finish times.

For example, in the EWCS, Q 18a_3 asks: ‘Do you work fixing starting and finishing times?’ – Do you have similar question(s) in your national survey? How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.

Questions concerning this theme are found in the LFS 2003 supplement on working conditions (which was included in the questionnaire for two quarters):

- ‘Are you able to determine starting and finishing times at your workplace? (Yes, partly, no)’
- ‘Which of the following is usually your schedule? ( a) day-time (working between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.); b) working at evenings and nights (working between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.); c) alternating between work during the day or at nights, depending on the schedule; d) long working days, followed by days off; e) up to you, depending on needs; f) other – specify)’

It is possible to link this information with the family/household situation but, as the questions were only in the LFS supplement in 2003, no trend can be found. Also, as the question is in the supplement, the results of the data are not published by the Statistical Office of Estonia.
e) Positive flexibility of working time

For example, in the Finnish Quality of Working Life Survey, there are questions that indicate positive flexibility: 'I can use flexible working hours sufficiently for my own needs.' – Do you have similar question(s) in your national survey?

There are no so specific questions on positive flexibility of working time in the LFS or WLB. There are more general questions on homework and telework, which can be connected to positive flexibility. At the same time, these might be connected with unregistered and unpaid overtime.

f) Negative flexibility of working time

For example, in the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey, there are questions indicating negative flexibility: 'How often do you have to be flexible in your working hours, dictated by your tasks or your superior?' 'I have to do more overtime work than I would like to.' – Do you have similar question(s) in your national survey? How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.

There is no specific question regarding negative flexibility of working time, but related questions concern working time schedules. In the WLB, there is a question on the possibility of influencing the tasks:

‘Who normally performs the following work tasks at your workplace? a) daily planning of own work, b) weekly planning of own work. ( 1) employee him/herself, 2) employees together, 3) foreman, 4) management, 5) do not know)’

All answers other than the ‘employee him/herself’ suggest a rather negative flexibility of working time and tasks. The option ‘employees together’ implies that compromises have to be made.

Also relevant to negative flexibility is the following question from the WLB:

‘Do you consider it is possible that, in the next year, your working schedule will be changed against your will? (Certainly yes, probably yes, probably not, certainly not, do not know)’

g) Predictability of working times

As an example of this kind of question, see Q19a and Q18a_1 in the EWCS: ‘Usually, how many times a month do your schedule working times change?’ ‘Do you work the same number of hours every day?’ – Do you have similar question(s) in your national survey? How have the questions been formulated? If definitions are used in questions, give them.

There are no fully relevant questions in the surveys. By combining two questions from the LFS, predictability of working time may be derived, as people are asked their usual number of working hours in a week, and to recall how many hours they worked every day during the previous week. If a significant difference can be found between the usual working hours and the hours of the previous week, a low predictability of working times may be guessed. Problems in this method concern definitions, e.g. how many working hours represent a significant difference, and does the one-example difference from the usual working time necessarily mean that there are often changes in the schedule. Although the following three questions ask whether the previous week was longer or shorter than usual, and ask the reasons for it, most of the options suggested do not reveal anything with respect to predictability: e.g. knowing that the week was longer because of overtime does not indicate whether it was predicted in advance.

The main sectoral/occupational differences cannot be distinguished as there is no report analysing the work–life balance issue that compares different sectoral/occupational groups. Nonetheless, as
the LFS survey and the WLB both include the variable on occupation and sector, it should be possible to present the issue by these categories.

2. National context

The focus group is working parents working full-time with children under 15 years old. Please give figures concerning working parents with children under 15 years old, in line with Q1 and the LFS convention. If this information is not available, please describe what kind of age limits in children’s ages have been used while answering the questions.

Q2. Please give the proportions of full-time workers in the following categories (you can use the Labour Force Survey):

a) all wage and salary earners (not self-employed people), b) men, c) women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salaried employees, by sex and working full/part-time in main job, 2003 (%)</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is possible to give trends. For a definition of part-time work, see Q1.

d) fathers (with children under 15 years old), e) mothers (with children under 15 years old)

These data exist in LFS surveys, but are not published regularly and there are no reports which present these data. The process for deriving the data from the LFS is difficult; therefore, it is not done in the framework of the current topic report. It is possible to give trends.

Q3. Give figures for Q1b–Q1g in your country according to what is available in national working conditions surveys.

a) all wage and salary earners working full time (not self-employed people), b) men, c) women

In the following figures, the best data that are possible to get are presented. In most cases, these do not correspond to the specified question.

The WLB figures do not distinguish between full-time and part-time workers, though, in principle, it is possible, if the database were available. However, as the database is not available to the authors of the current report, the data cannot be presented. It is possible to give comparable data from 1998 for some questions from the WLB.

Data from the LFS presented here refer to the supplement of the LFS 2003 and it is not possible to give trends. The LFS data are restricted to full-time salaried employees. It is possible to connect to the data regarding family situation and household (see Q1). But, as this data is not published in any report, it will not be presented here.
Figure 1: Working overtime during a normal working week, 2002 (%)

Source: Antila and Ylostalo, 2003, p. 138

Figure 2: Overtime work and compensation, 2002 (%)

Source: Antila and Ylostalo, 2003, pp. 140–141
The above figures show that men do overtime more often than women (34% and 23%, respectively). Uncompensated overtime is higher for women: of all women who work overtime,
40% do it without compensation, compared with 32% of men. Antila and Ylostalo (2003, p. 141) point out that overtime work is clearly related to occupation. In higher occupation levels (especially managers and specialists), people work unpaid overtime more often than in lower levels of occupations.

**Figure 5: Usual work schedule, full-time salaried employees, by sex, 2003 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LFS 2003 database, author's calculations

**Figure 6: Possibility of influencing start and end time of work, full-time salaried employees, by sex, 2003 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LFS 2003 database, author's calculations
With regard to work schedule, three quarters of full-time employees work to a daily schedule, with the working time between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Some 14% alternate between day and night work, and around 8% work to a schedule where working days alternate with days off. There are no essential differences by sex. Regarding the possibility of influencing the start and end time of work, men are on average in a slightly better position: 30% of full-time male employees can do this, compared with 24% of women. There are few observations in terms of occupational and sectoral differences, and the results are not given due to the unreliability of small samples.

Data on telework and homework are not presented here, as these questions are only indirectly connected to working time flexibility issues. Regarding the availability of other data, see Q1.

d) fathers (with children under 15 years old) working full time, e) mothers (with children under 15 years old) working full time

The data for questions in the LFS exist, but are not published officially (there is also the concern that sample sizes for such specific categories are very small). As explained under Q1, for some details there are no data. The WLB data do not distinguish between mothers and fathers, and there are no indicators for children.

Q4. Give a short description about what issues seem to be the most relevant and/or problematic concerning work–life balance and working times among working parents currently in your country, according to major national surveys or qualitative research.

In 1999, Hansson revealed that the work–life balance problem is more acute for women than for men (the basis for the conclusion was the Estonia survey 1998). While women are earning money and going to work as men do, they usually have to do more housework than men, and it is more difficult to find free time for children and family life. The Estonian Time Use Survey (Statistical Office of Estonia, 2001) reveals that men spend 2:41 hours a day on household and family care compared with the total average of 3:52 hours per day. Single men and men in couples without children spend slightly more time than others; men living alone have to do all the chores themselves. Women spend 4:47 hours a day on household and family care. At the same time, on average, women are working less in paid employment. Working for pay takes on average 3:16 hours a day overall, but men spend more time than the average (3:54 hours a day) while women tended to work less (2:47 hours a day on average) in 1999–2000.

The problem of not having enough time for family was also widely noted among women in 2000, according to the survey Women, Family and Work. Working less or giving up their job was not an option as it brought in essential income for the family, and most of the women did not have a sufficiently flexible working schedule to cope well with both – family and work. The survey asked what the biggest problems are for mothers in reconciling work and family life. Some 55% of respondents considered that the possibility of working on a more flexible time schedule was the most important aspect for reconciling work and family life. The next most pressing needs were dividing homework more equally (19%) and more understanding on the side of the employer (11%). The results of this survey, however, are not nationally representative (see methodological part).

The latest research of the same kind Babysitting in Estonian families (Unt and Krusell, 2004) reflects that most women find working important, and their wage is often an essential source of money for the family. Therefore, full-time work is mainly preferred. At the same time, it is not easy to find affordable places for all-day childcare for children less than three years of age. For children aged three years old or more, it is much easier to find a kindergarten place. The most unsatisfied people are parents with children under three years old who would like to go back to work. Flexible working time and part-time working possibilities are in short supply, and kindergartens do not take account of parents’ work schedules.
Thus, there are several problems for work and family life reconciliation. Surveys have found that one of the main problems is lack of flexible working time arrangements, which encompasses both lack of part-time work and also difficulties in fitting a working day around the opening times of childcare facilities. In addition, part-time work is not so much favoured, as the mother’s income is vital for families. At the same time, for children under three years old, it is difficult to find affordable childcare facilities.

Unfortunately, there is no research which compares objective working time, overtime and other working arrangements with subjective problems, such as satisfaction with work–life balance and childcare affordability. Current work-life and employment surveys do not bring together problems in reconciling work and family life, and working conditions and work arrangements.

Q5. Give an example of best practice of good working time arrangements from the aspect of work–life balance among working parents, preferably in small and medium-sized companies in your country. Are best practices collected as part of a governmental policy programme?

The best practices are not collected as part of a public policy programme. However, there is a private initiative for choosing the most family-friendly company each year. The initiative is organised by the magazine Pere ja Kodu (Family and Home), and a company has been chosen every year since 2001. The different qualities of companies are examined and the following factors are considered important:

- flexibility of working time as well as the possibility of working partly at home;
- more than the legislative minimum should be paid to workers on childcare leave with children younger than 12 years old;
- parties for children and families,
- other gatherings and occasions for workers and their families.

The initiative promotes the view that caring about workers plays an important role in keeping employees loyal and content, and firms should be interested in improving working conditions. Being listed as a family-friendly company helps to create a positive image, and serves as useful promotion for a company. Companies that have won the title so far are not necessarily very large enterprises which can afford to spend more. For example, in 2004, Paikuse saw-mill (Paikuse saeveski) won and, in 2003, AS Holmen Mets. These are smaller companies than AS Eesti Post, for instance, which has also won the title.

References