Combining family and full-time work: Spain

This is the Spanish 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.

There are two main national surveys on working conditions in Spain.

- The Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo) started in 1999 and takes place each year. It is produced by the General Subdirectorate of Social and Labour Statistics of the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The fifth issue (and most recent at time of writing) was published in March 2004, referring to 2003. It covers the whole of Spain and, in the last issue, 6,020 people were surveyed.

- The National Survey on Working Conditions (Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Trabajo) has been produced since 1987 by the Spanish National Institute of Safety and Health in the Workplace, or INSHT (Instituto Nacional de Seguridad e Higiene en el Trabajo), a subsidiary body of the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The fifth issue of the survey was published in October 2004, the previous ones being released in 1987, 1993, 1997 and 1999. The survey covers the whole of Spain – except Ceuta and Melilla – and, in the latest issue, 9,290 interviews were carried out: 4,054 with business managers and 5,236 with workers.

For further information, see Spanish survey data reports: ES0404SR01 and ES0411SR01.

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 Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace considers, first, an initial range of questions that include the following:

- total number of family members;
- type of family: whether the respondent lives alone, her/his marital status, number of children and other people living in the household.

Then, the survey moves on to a series of questions dealing with the family situation/household:

Q.60 ‘Are you married or do you have a steady relationship? (Yes/No)’
Q.61 ‘What is the activity situation of your spouse/partner?

a) Labour market status: Employee (public/private sector), temporary employee (public/private sector), self-employed with employees, self-employed, non-salaried/salaried employee in the family business, cooperative worker, unemployed, other (what)?

b) Outside labour market: Student, retired, household work, permanently disabled person, other outside labour market (what?), don’t know (DK), no response’

Q.63 ‘Is there any other family member in the household who has a salaried job? – No/Yes. Who? Father/mother, father/mother-in-law, son/daughter, stepson/stepdaughter, son/daughter-in-law, brother/sister, brother/sister-in-law, grandson/granddaughter, other relatives (who?)’

Q.64 ‘What is the labour market situation of these other family members? (See Q.61a above)’

Q.66 ‘Have you children? – Yes (how many?)/No’

Q.67 ‘Have you children at home? – Yes. Under 3 years old (how many?), between 3 and 5 years old (how many?), between 6 and 12 years old (how many?), over 12 years old (how many?)’

Q.68 ‘Do any of your children work? – Yes (how many?)/No’

Q.69 ‘Are there older people in your family who need help to carry out simple daily activities? – Yes/No’

The National Survey on Working Conditions asks for the:

Q.96 ‘Number of children under 18 who live with the respondent: (Number, none, DK)’

b) Work–life balance/reconciliation of work and family life

The Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace directly addresses the issue of work–life balance from the perspective of working time arrangements:

Q.144 ‘If you could change your distribution of time among all the activities that you carry out, to which ones would you commit more, less or equal time than you currently do? (Much more time, some more time, equal time, some less time, much less time, DK):

Work in salaried employment, house chores, family, friends, leisure and hobbies, resting’

The National Survey on Working Conditions asks the following question:

Q.92 ‘Indicate the extent to which the following aspects bother you at work (not at all, a little, regularly, quite a lot, a lot, DK): Lack of autonomy, work pace, control from bosses, working hours, monotony, difficulty in communication with others, physical effort to carry out job, posture at work, lighting at work, noise at work, temperature and humidity, contaminant agents, accident risks, labour instability’

c) Overtime (paid, unpaid)

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

Q.104 ‘Do you generally work longer than your normal working hours? (Always, frequently, sometimes, hardly ever, never, DK)’

National Survey on Working Conditions:

Q.58 ‘Do you generally work longer hours than usual, paid or unpaid? (Yes, paid and/or with time off in lieu/Yes, unpaid/No/DK)’
Q. 59 ‘What is the main reason why you work longer hours than usual? (Excessive workload, temporary lack of staff, personal reasons, other (specify), DK)’

d) **Possibility of influencing start and finish times**

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

Q.112 ‘Could you tell me how often the following situations happen in your job? (Always, frequently, sometimes, hardly ever, never, DK)

- Time goes by very quickly/I find the working day boring and monotonous/I become distracted thinking about important issues, such as my family/I come back home very tired after work/I am flexible as to when to start and finish work/I can take little breaks throughout the day/I decide my own working hours.’

National Survey on Working Conditions:

Q.57 ‘Your working hours are: Fixed (fixed starting and finishing times), flexible (possibility of adapting/choosing starting and finishing times), DK’

e) **Positive flexibility of working times**

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

Q.113 ‘Can you take a day off from work without losing pay or without bringing down your holiday count, or ask for sick leave without having to make up for the day off? (Yes, no, DK)’

National Survey on Working Conditions:

Q.49 ‘During working time, can you stop work to leave the workplace when you need to? Yes, if a colleague takes my place/Yes, without a colleague having to take my place/No/DK’

f) **Negative flexibility of working times**

The questions on this issue have been included under the ‘Overtime’ heading.

g) **Predictability of working times**

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

Q.105 ‘Do your daily working hours change in response to the enterprise needs? (Always, frequently, sometimes, hardly ever, never, DK)’

National Survey on Working Conditions:

Q.54 ‘How often do you change your shift? (Number of days, DK)’

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 (NOTE: no self-employed people);
b) men;
c) women;
d) fathers (with children under 15 years old);
(If possible, break down in age groups 0–2 yrs, 3–5 yrs, 6–14 yrs by the age of youngest child)
e) mothers (with children under 15 years old).
(If possible, break down in age groups 0–2 yrs, 3–5 yrs, 6–14 yrs by the age of youngest child)

The Spanish Labour Force Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa) does not provide data broken down by the variable number of children, let alone those who are under 15 years of age. In any case, and as it has been shown above, the Spanish surveys on working conditions set the threshold at the age of 12 years. Bearing in mind available information (see Table 1 below), a vast majority of Spanish employees work full time (91.1%), this share being higher among men (97.4%) than women (82.1%).

Therefore, it may be expected that parents with children, either under 12 or 15 years of age, will also be featured by a massive presence in full-time employment, the proportion being probably greater among fathers than mothers. In this sense, the Report for Spain 2004 (Informe España 2004), published by the Fundación Encuentro, stated that, in 82.6% of Spanish couples with children (no information on age), both members work full time, while in 16.1%, the man worked full time and the woman worked part time.

Table 1: Number of full-time and total employees in Spain and the percentage share of full-time employees, by sex, 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>4,705,675</td>
<td>5,728,475</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>8,012,750</td>
<td>8,226,925</td>
<td>97.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,718,425</td>
<td>13,955,400</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Encuesta de Población Activa (Spanish Labour Force Survey), Spanish National Institute of Statistics

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 (NOTE: no self-employed people);
b) men working full time;
c) women working full time;
d) fathers (with children under 15 years old) working full time;
(If possible, break down in age groups 0–2 yrs, 3–5 yrs, 6–14 yrs by the age of youngest child)
e) mothers (with children under 15 years old) working full time.
(If possible, break down in age groups 0–2 yrs, 3–5 yrs, 6–14 yrs by the age of youngest child)

As shown above, Spanish national surveys on working conditions deal with work–life balance through a series of questions. However, most of the time, available information is not broken down by professional situation (employees or self-employed), or by type of working hours (full-
time or part-time). This is the case for the National Survey on Working Conditions\(^1\). However, it has been possible to access the original data of the Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace, and to work on that.

*Is it possible to provide information on trends? (For each question: Yes/No)*

It must also be mentioned that available information on trends is scarce because there is no access to raw data from previous issues of the national surveys on working conditions.

*Is it possible to link this information with the family situation/household? (For each question: Yes/No)*

With regard to linking the information with the family situation, this is possible for the data from the Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace.

Bearing in mind these limitations, the following results are found.

**Work–life balance / reconciliation of work and family life**

The Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace finds that a majority of full-time employees in Spain would like to give more time to their family, friends and leisure/hobbies (see Table 2). This does not necessarily imply that these workers have problems achieving a work–life balance but it gives some indication. Concerning parents, the reporting proportions tend to be greater, particularly for mothers. No clear relationship by age of children is found, even though the share appears to decline as age increases.

**Table 2 Proportion of full-time employees who would like to give ‘some more time’ and ‘much more time’ to family, friends and leisure/hobbies, by sex and family situation (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Under the age of three years</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 3-5 years</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 6-12 years</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 2003 Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo 2003), Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004*

By activity sectors, extractive industries and fishing report the highest proportions of workers wanting to give more time to their families, friends and leisure/hobbies. Those working in education, other social activities/personal services and domestic service report the lowest shares.

By occupation, managers, support technicians/professionals and craft workers/qualified workers in manufacturing, construction and mining present the highest proportions, contrasting with non-qualified workers, qualified workers in agriculture, and fishing and administrative personnel who report the lowest.

\(^1\) There has been no access to raw data.
The National Survey on Working Conditions reveals that working time is the most bothersome aspect at work for 8% of workers, the highest proportions being found in chemicals (11.7%), other services (10.9%) and the metal industry (10.6%).

**Overtime (paid, unpaid)**

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

It is found that 16.4% of full-time employees in Spain work overtime (always or frequently), the proportion being slightly higher among men (17.4%) than women (14.6%). These results hold true for fathers and mothers, the former reporting higher percentages of overtime work. In this sense, the greatest gap is found among fathers and mothers of children under the age of three (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Proportion of full-time employees who report working overtime (always or frequently), by sex and family situation (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Under the age of three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 3-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 6-12 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 2003 Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo 2003), Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004*

By activity sector, the highest proportion of overtime work is found in fishing, catering and financial brokering. The lowest shares are found in public administration and domestic service. Concerning occupations, managers and scientific and intellectual professionals report the highest proportions of overtime work as opposed to non-qualified workers and administrative personnel.

The National Survey on Working Conditions also shows that a majority of Spanish workers do not work overtime (53.6%), this share being greater among women: 58.4%, compared with 50.7% among men. Notwithstanding this, women are more likely to receive no compensation for their overtime work than their male counterparts: 27.8%, compared with 19.4%. It is also worth noting that workers in the following groups report the greatest proportions of unpaid overtime work: social services (33.7%), permanent workers (23.6%), IT equipment users (35.5%), technicians (48.8%), support technicians (35.6%), administration staff (26.7%), and those aged 25–34 years (26.1%). The main reason for overtime is reported to be excess workload (74.1%).

**Possibility of influencing start and finish times**

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

Most Spanish workers can never influence their start and finish times, this proportion being slightly higher among women than men (see Table 4). Data for fathers and mothers report the same gender gap and show an increase in the proportion of both fathers and mothers who have flexible start and finish times as the age of their children increases. In other words, the lowest percentage shares of fathers and mothers who can influence their start and finish times are found among those with children under the age of three years.
Table 4: Proportion of full-time employees with flexible start and finish times (always or frequently), by sex and family situation (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Under the age of three years</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 3-5 years</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 6-12 years</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2003 Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo 2003), Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004

By activity sector, the highest flexibility is found in agriculture/farming, financial brokering and retail. The lowest flexibility is reported by extractive industries, public administration, education and fishing. Regarding occupations, the highest proportion of workers reporting flexibility concerning their start and finish times is found among managers and qualified workers in agriculture and fishing. On the other hand, lowest flexibility is reported by army workers and workers in catering, personal services and retail.

Similar results are found concerning workers setting their own working hours (see Table 5). Again, only around 5% of Spanish workers report doing so always or frequently, men being more likely than women to do so. Data on fathers and mothers reveal once more a positive relationship between the proportion of workers who may set their own working hours and the age of their children.

Table 5: Proportion of full-time employees who set their own working hours (always or frequently), by sex and family situation (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage share of full-time employees who establish their own working hours, by sex and family situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Under the age of three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 3-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 6-12 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2003 Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo 2003), Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004

The activity sectors with the greatest proportion of workers who can set their own working hours are agriculture/farming, retail and other social activities/personal services. The lowest shares are found in public administration, extractive industries and education.

As far as occupations are concerned, managers and qualified workers report the highest likelihood of setting their own working hours, whereas administrative workers, non-qualified workers and those in the army report the lowest shares.
The National Survey on Working Conditions, in line with what has been stated above, finds that over three-quarters of workers (76.4%) have fixed start and finish times. This proportion varies significantly across activity sectors, ranging from 90.4% in construction to 84.3% in manufacturing and 72.3% in services.

Positive flexibility of working times

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

Slightly over half of Spanish workers (50.7%) may take a day off from work without any effect on their salary or annual holiday count, or having to make up for the day off. This share is slightly greater among men than women: 51.5% compared with 49.3%. Data on parents show that those with children aged 3-5 years report the lowest shares in this particular indicator, especially mothers (40.8%). The highest proportion is reported by mothers with children under the age of three years (58.3%)

| Table 6: Proportion of full-time employees who may take a day off without any effect on holidays or salary, by sex and family situation (%) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | Men | Women | Total |
| Total           | 51.5| 49.3  | 50.7  |
| With children   | 54.4| 51.1  | 53.4  |
| - Under the age of three years | 53.7| 58.3  | 55.1  |
| - Aged 3-5 years | 49.8| 40.8  | 47.9  |
| - Aged 6-12 years | 51.4| 48.8  | 50.7  |

Source: 2003 Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo 2003), Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Madrid, 2004

By activity sector, the greatest proportions are found in financial brokering and public administration, while the lowest are reported by fishing and domestic service. Regarding occupations, those working in the army and managers report the greatest shares, as opposed to non-qualified workers and workers in catering and retail.

The National Survey on Working Conditions shows that 10.1% of workers cannot leave their workplace if they need to, while slightly over half of them (57.1%) may leave without a colleague having to take their place. By activity sector, construction reports the highest proportion of workers who cannot leave their workplace (14.9%), whereas those with the greatest degree of autonomy are to be found in manufacturing (62.6%) and administration/banking (63.2%).

Predictability of working times

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

A majority of Spanish workers do not have to change their working hours in response to needs of their enterprises. Only 14.7% have to do this always or frequently, the proportion being slightly higher among men than women (see Table 7). Information on parents reveals that the greatest gender gap is found between fathers and mothers of children under the age of three years.
Table 7: Proportion of full-time employees whose working hours change (always or frequently) in response to enterprise needs, by sex and family situation (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Under the age of three years</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 3-5 years</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aged 6-12 years</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2003 Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace (Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo 2003), Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Madrid, 2004

By activity sector, results show that fishing, other social activities/personal services and production/distribution of electric energy, gas and water report the highest proportions of workers having to alter their working hours in response to their enterprise’s needs. The lowest shares are found in public administration, manufacturing and agriculture/farming. By occupation, managers, army workers and scientific and intellectual professionals report the highest shares of unpredictability of working hours, as opposed to administrative workers, non-qualified workers and craft workers.

The National Survey on Working Conditions reveals that 67.8% of shift workers have their shifts changed frequently – every seven days or less. In services, 28.8% of workers report that their shifts are changed more often than in seven day intervals, while in administration/banking, this proportion rises to 49.1%.

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.

Public debate on work–life balance in Spain has been triggered, mainly, by a couple of reasons:

- Firstly, as mentioned by the Report for Spain 2004, the increasing entry of Spanish women into the labour market since the mid 1980s, despite the fact that most of the time they remain in charge of the household chores and the care of dependent relatives.
- Secondly, support from the EU institutions and regulations, especially after the approval on 3 June 1996 of the Council Directive of the 96/34/EC.

This eventually led to the approval in November 1999 of the Law 39/1999 on Conciliation of work and family lives of working people (Ley de Conciliación de la Vida Familiar y Laboral de las Personas Trabajadoras), which represented a significant step, even if only because it is an act specifically devoted to this issue. Nonetheless, the Spanish Economic and Social Council (Consejo Económico y Social de España) argues that this law does not constitute a comprehensive policy fostering work–life balance:
• The scope is deemed to be too centred on work-related measures, mainly leave due to family reasons, which is used principally by women. Little attention is given to services in support of children and other dependent members.

• Additionally, there are many institutions across all layers of public administration (national, regional and local), carrying out programmes in the field of conciliation of work and family life, which emphasises the relevance of the issue but also reveals a somewhat scattered element.

As a result, the most relevant issues concerning work–life balance in Spain are the following:

• There is a lack of childcare facilities. This problem is particularly acute for children under the age of three years, and it is aggravated because many of the existing facilities are private, which implies higher fees. Available data (Report for Spain 2004) reveal that 96.5% of Spanish children aged 3-5 years attend nursery school, most of the funding being public, compared with just 9.9% of children aged 0-2 years.

• Measures must be adopted for the care of elderly people, who have been traditionally looked after by their respective families.

• Current working times are not generally compatible with the social life of workers. There is strong resistance to alter traditional practices that are deeply rooted in Spain, such as split working hours (morning and afternoon), extremely long working hours, and fixed start and finish times, which do not coincide with school times and holidays. Nevertheless, unlike a decade ago, there are already enterprises and activity sectors where agreements on time distribution have been reached.

• According to the Spanish Economic and Social Council, only 7.8% of working women report that their working time is their biggest help when it comes to achieving a work–life balance. The main support stems from their own mothers (26.7%), their spouse/partner (24.7%) and physical proximity to work (13.9%). On the other hand, services offered by the school lie in the last position (1.5%).

• Pay systems should be more linked with results rather than time availability/working long hours.

Hence, it may be concluded that measures in the field of work–life balance should not only focus on the adoption of flexible working time arrangements, which are likely to arise from collective bargaining, but also on the establishment of an adequate network of support facilities to take care of children and older people. It is also worth bearing in mind that women are not the only beneficiaries of work–life balance measures but that men and, especially, children and other dependent members should be the target of these type of practices.

3. Best practices

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 (SMEs) in your country. Are best practices collected as part of a governmental policy programme?

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2 Even though one of the highlights of the law was the definition of a voluntary ‘paternity’ leave for fathers, to be shared with that of the mothers.
The identification of a good practice on work–life balance among Spanish SMEs is guided by the National Award for Flexible Enterprises (Premio Nacional Empresa Flexible). This award is organised by the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Spanish High Council of Chambers of Commerce, among others, and has been granted on an annual basis since 2001. It aims to acknowledge publicly enterprises which have implemented active policies aimed at achieving a work–life balance for their workforces. It offers an award under two categories: large enterprises and SMEs.

In 2004, the winning SME was Coface Ibérica, the Spanish division of the French insurance company. It employs 81 people, 70% of whom are women, and recently achieved annual sales growth rates of 40%. The company has adopted the following practices to promote work–life balance:

- Flexible start and finish times are permitted, as long as the monthly target of working hours is met. A deficit of up to 10 hours may be accumulated but this has to be written off in the following month. Equally, excess working hours, with an upper limit of 10 hours, may be exchanged for days off. There is no work on Friday afternoon.

- It is unlikely that employees will request a reduction in working hours or even part-time work, although it is possible. Instead, employees are allowed to change their working hours in response to their particular family needs.

- Maternity and paternity leave go beyond the legally established limit, at the request of employees. However, evidence shows that this only happens in exceptional cases, such as international adoptions. Annual holidays are set at 31 working days and there are reduced working hours in the summer between 15 June and 15 September.

- There is complete flexibility when family emergencies occur. Absence from work in these circumstances does not affect annual holidays, but is compensated through the monthly target of working hours.

- In addition to the aforementioned strategies, employees benefit from training on time management and stress management, along with reliable information on first class care services for children and older people.

- Other benefits include life assurance, medical insurance (for workers’ relatives as well), medical insurance covering accidents outside work, pension schemes, and restaurant tickets for reduced meals.