

ESRC Seminar Series, Manchester University  
*‘Work Life Balance, fairness and social justice in the recession’*  
April 11, 2014

Recent Reforms in Work/Life Balance Policies in France: the Ambivalent  
Effects on Parents in Precarious Work Arrangements

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# Summary

- Setting the context: a dramatic development of precarious jobs since the nineties
- The case of women living in ‘Priority areas for urban development’, *Zones Urbaines Sensibles (ZUS)*
- WLB policies and working conditions of parents in ZUS
- Ambivalent outcomes

Number of hires: Breakdown by type of labour contract  
Evolution 2000-2013  
Source: ACOSS-URSSAF

Number	2000 (January 1)	2013 (January 1)
Short-term contract less than one month	1,600,000	3,600,000
Short –term contract more than one month	1,000,000	950,000
Open-ended contract	750,000	740,000

# Short-term contract and working conditions in '*Priority Areas for Urban Development*' (ZUS)

ONZUS INFOS, March 2014

- Development of forms of employment deviating from the standard open-ended contract: short-term contract, temporary agency work and involuntary part-time jobs
- Frequently low paid and associated with the development of atypical, irregular and/or unforeseeable working time schedules
- Factors that make it difficult to combine a job with family responsibilities and to plan ahead childcare arrangements and to organise family life

Women aged 15-64 living in ZUS: Share of Atypical Working Hours,  
Part-time Jobs and Short-term Contract, 2009-2012

ONZUS INFOS, March 2014

%	2009	2012
Atypical Working Hours (Sundays and/or evenings)	16.6	20.5
Part-time Jobs	30.4	33.4
With a short-term (fixed term) contract (women aged 15-29)	38.5	45.6

## The issue of WLB of parents in socio-economically disadvantaged areas ZUS: what is at stake?

- How to tackle the problems working parents are confronted to in their everyday life when they live in ZUS
- How to enhance women's employment in those areas and reduce unemployment among low-qualified women?

.....while taking into consideration

- Employers' demands for more flexible work schedules
- The unbalanced power relationships between workers and employers in a context of high unemployment and under-employment
- A rising demand for 'flexible' forms of child care arrangements: an outcome of the development of non standard work schedules
- Shortfalls in the supply of formal childcare arrangements and providing affordable care for children

# Recent decisions made in childcare policies and the ZUS

Main objectives: enhancing women's employment in ZUS, and increasing the supply of publicly supported formal childcare places

- In ZUS, low qualified and unemployed women are being encouraged to become licensed childminders
- Reduction from 50% to 40% in the minimum share of staff required to qualify as skilled workers (as a result of shortfalls of skilled labour) in childcare centres
- Increase of 20% in the number of children these centres are authorized to accept
- Increase in the enrollment of two-year-olds in Nursery schools (*écoles maternelles*): Additional funding and resources from the state in ZUS
- Promotion of operating hours that favour 'the needs of working parents': extended to over 10 hours per day
- Registered childminders now authorized to look after up to 4 children at the same time instead of the previous limit of 3



## Conclusion: Ambivalent Outcomes

- In ZUS, recent measures have helped mitigate work-family conflict for some parents
- Some women in ZUS have been able to qualify for jobs in the childcare sector (in particular as licensed childminders)
- However, in ZUS women's employment rates have been decreasing from 2006 to 2012 while in other parts of the cities those rates have been increasing
- Women living in ZUS have frequently been obliged either to leave employment or to lower their work hours (shortage of places in centre-based settings, longer commuting times as a result of the strengthening of urban segregation, poor working conditions, employer-driven working schedules...)

## Activity Rates of Women Aged 15-64 years

(Source: Employment surveys, INSEE and ONZUS INFOS, March 2014)

	2006	2012
Women living in ZUS	57.3	52.6
Women living in cities with ZUS but outside of ZUS	64.9	66.8

Thank you for your Attention

## Under-threes: Distribution of main childcare arrangements during the week by income level (in %)

Source: CNAF, Observatoire de la petite enfance, 2014

Income per consumption unit	Parents	Licensed child-minder	Childcare centres (EAJE)	Others	Total
First quintile	91	2	4	3	100
Second quintile	84	5	5	6	100
Fifth quintile	31	37	16	16	100

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