

“Work-life balance and quality of working life in Greece in times of financial crisis”

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The Greek Crisis Context

- 2008-2012: GDP cumulative drop by 20.8% (shrinking to pre-2002 levels)
- One of the worst affected countries in terms of life satisfaction, happiness and satisfaction with standard of living between 2007-2011 in EU27.
- More than a third of the population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion (35.7 %) (2013 data)
- The highest unemployment rate (25.6 %) and the highest youth unemployment in the EU (49.7%) (March 2015 data)
- January 2015: Syriza comes to power; negotiations
- July 2015: Referendum, capital controls, deal or Grexit?

Work and Family Context

- New developments
 - 2014: Fathers in the private sector got the right to request parental leave even when the mother is self-employed.
 - 2013: New provisions regarding childcare leave in the case of multiple births for public sector employees allowing an extra 6 months of paid leave for each additional child.
 - 2012: Introduction of the right to request flexible working for all.
- BUT... Some employers neglect new legislations
 - 2012-13: complaints received by the Greek Citizen Ombudsman regarding employers not agreeing to employ mothers in their previous post when returning from maternity leave.
 - 2014: allegations against an employer who requested a pregnant mother to have an abortion in order to keep her job.

Work-Life Balance Context

- 1 in 3 workers reported unsatisfactory WLB
- More than 20% of workers reported problems fulfilling family responsibilities because of the amount of time spend on their job.
- Often reports of difficulty to concentrate at work because of family responsibilities (several times a week/a month).

Source: Eurofound (2012), Third European Quality of Life Survey

Findings – Study on Quality of Working Life

- Anxiety, stress, uncertainty

‘...will tomorrow be worse? Have we reached the bottom? This is the anxiety about where all of this will stop and if the situation will ever change’ (Lawyer)

- ‘Here and now’ vs. future orientation

‘I don’t have ambitions [laughs]... all I want is to feel secure in my job and not be thinking of being in reserve, redundancy, layoffs and the like’ (Teacher)

Findings – Study on Quality of Working Life

- Pressure on work relationships: competition for work

‘Everyone is now afraid of who will be tomorrow's unemployed and that means that we do not talk anymore about our problems at work’ (Manager)

- Professionalism and professional identity; frustration of not being able to be ‘professionals’

‘We no longer have sufficient equipment and this exposes us to danger, for example when we do not have gloves or disinfectants’ (Doctor)

Findings – Study on Quality of Working Life

- Work-Life Balance

- Working more for less: working hours, overtime hours and financial rewards

‘... in comparison to other professions, doctors in Greece are much under-rated salary-wise, if you consider the number of years of study they have spent and invested. We are low-paid’
(Doctor)

‘I am anxious because of my position and because of the targets that I have to achieve... I am working more than 10 hours daily and this has affected the way I treat my family’ (Manager)

‘I now stay for at least 10 hours in the hospital’ (Doctor)

Findings – Study on Quality of Working Life

- Maternity/paternity leave: still exist, but the employed feel pressure not to take full entitlement due to high unemployment and competition for jobs and this is stronger for the self-employed

‘I had the baby and I was back in court within a week. There was no time to waste’ (Lawyer)

- Family relationships: deteriorated, no time for family, pressure from work, inability to spend money on travel, shopping & entertainment, inability to live on their own

Findings – Study on Working Conditions

- The crisis has brought harsher working conditions
- Increased tension in organizations has led to a concern over employee's health and well-being (physical and psychological):
 - Need to cut costs; downsizing & layoffs, increase in workload
 - Means more stress and pressure, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, deterioration in work relationships
 - Means less time for family

Findings – Study on Working Conditions

‘ . . . Of course I tried to resist and to fight against these new conditions which made my life hell! I work for less money as well as my colleagues and on top of everything I work more than ever before. ’ (Employee)

. . . I do not have enough time to see my family anymore. I have to stay and work overtime at least four out of five working days and sometimes even on Saturdays. This is becoming too frustrating’.
(Employee)

Findings – Study on Working Conditions

‘ . . . There is no point in fighting when you cannot change anything. ... there will be no going back to how working conditions were before the crisis and instead of resisting and making matters even worse, I tried to point out to my team that we need to accept it and find the best way to cope with it’.

(Manager)

Conclusions

- The role of policy & strategies for policy implementation
- The role of the judicial system
- The role of employers in dealing with WLB issues and implementing policies
- The role of individuals in pursuing cases of injustice in relation to WLB issues

Your comments