



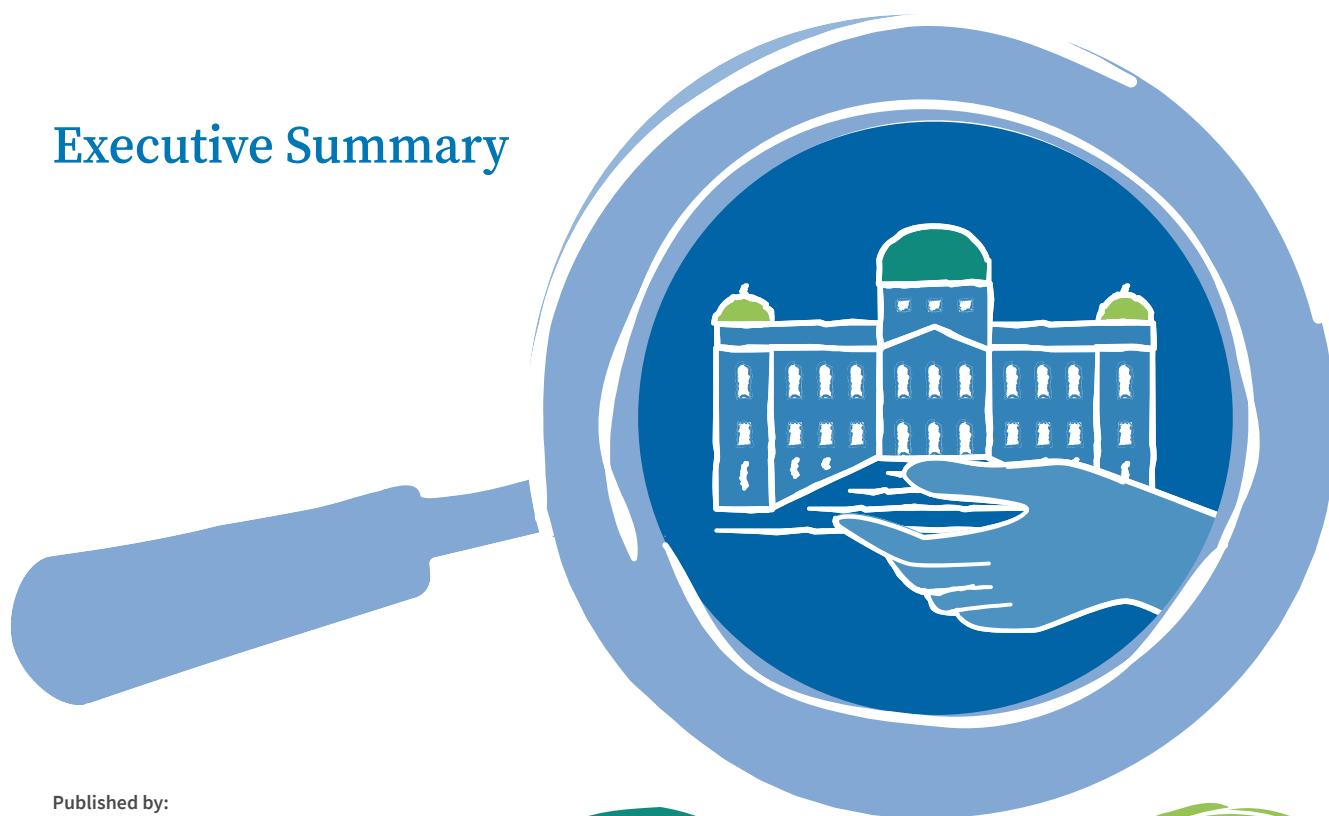
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Culture and Equality

A question of organisation?

Presenting and analysing data on the reconciliation of employment/studying with caring for others and oneself

Executive Summary



Published by:
Culture and Equality unit of the
University of Vienna

Responsible for the content:
Nina Krebs
Waltraud Schlögl
Lena Lisa Vogelmann
Sylvia Bukowska

Graphic design and layout:
Marion Wotruba – Graphic and Art Design,
www.m-wotruba.at

Vienna, April 2023
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Introduction

The professional world is currently undergoing a transformation. The COVID-19 pandemic much accelerated the digitalisation and flexibilisation of working conditions in almost every sector, including universities. While it was already common for scientific work to overlap with private life, this trend can now be observed for the general university staff as well. The two works agreements “Home Office” (“Homeoffice”) and “Flexible Working Time” (“Gleitende Arbeitszeit”) allow the entire university staff a much more flexible organisation of when and where they work than before. This creates opportunities but, in some ways, it also makes reconciling different areas of life more challenging.

Due to these developments, the Culture and Equality unit conducted a study on the topic of reconciliation at the University of Vienna. In [“A question of organisation? Presenting and analysing data on the reconciliation of employment/studying with caring for others and oneself”](#) (only available in German) the University’s reconciliation model is explained and embedded in a larger social and scientific context. This is followed by the evaluation and analysis of data concerning the University’s employees and – to a lesser extent – its students. In conclusion, fields of action to promote the reconciliation of different areas of life are drafted for the University.

This executive Summary presents the reconciliation model, the key results of the data analysis and possible fields of action for the University in a reduced format.

Reconciliation at the University of Vienna

No matter if you are a student or an employee, everybody has to juggle many **different aspects of their life**, which is to say **reconcile** them, on a daily basis. This balancing act is not always easy: Which aspect requires more attention depends on your personal life and career path as well as your current stage of life. Are you planning to earn a university degree? Do you want to get started professionally? Do you want to start a family? Or several of the above? Are you responsible for a child or nursing a family member? Do you have to focus more on self-care due to an illness or an impairment? Some stages in life are more challenging

than others. Some life paths are easier and entail more social privileges than others.

Employers’ awareness for the need to actively promote and shape the conditions for a proper work-life-balance has grown over the last years. Thus, the University of Vienna as an important place of study and employment assumes its social responsibility by taking its employees’ and students’ **care work and self-care** into consideration and making overlaps easier. The road to a university that is fully aware of the requirements for reconciling work and (self-)care is long and winding.

The destination can only be reached by achieving a comprehensive cultural change.

Caring for others, such as our children or sick relatives but also for a community or our environment, is much too often disregarded and not considered essential to our society. Which is why we must pay much more attention to (paid) work-care work-reconciliation.

What is care work?

Care work makes up a large (unpaid) part of every person's private life. We differentiate between **direct care work** for family members or close relations – especially taking care of children or nursing relatives – and **supportive care work**, which includes taking care of the household (grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, tidying etc.) or voluntary (community) work.

In order to be able to sustainably take care of others, have a job or study at university, it is necessary to be able to look after your own health, take breaks, and be satisfied with your life. Which is why we need to focus more on the reconciliation of work and self-care. Recognising self-care as a separate aspect of life puts reconciliation in a new perspective: Everyone needs time and space for their physical and mental recovery as well as for their personal development, e. g. through (further) education. Self-care is only possible if we are not overburdened by our employment, studies and/or care work.

What is self-care?

On the one hand, **self-care** means that our private lives allow for personal time (e. g. for hobbies, sports, socialising, religion/spirituality, or education). On the other hand, adequate working conditions are also essential for sufficient self-care. Self-care is a key factor for remaining mentally and physically healthy and content with life.

Is the reconciliation of work and (self-)care a question of organisation? Everybody organises the different aspects of their life in accordance with their individual time management, trying to find the right balance between stress and relaxation. Besides the legal conditions and social norms, the organisational culture of an institution plays an important part in this.

Reconciliation with employment at the University of Vienna



The University's aim is to help all university members reconcile the different aspects of their lives, especially where their activity at university **overlaps with care work and self-care**. So, in a first step, we will focus on the **employees'** reconciliation of work and (self-)care.

Promoting the reconciliation of work and (self-) care in order to motivate and satisfy employees is mainly a management task. Executives shape the working conditions that allow for satisfactory reconciliation. Ideally, they themselves serve as an example for good reconciliation and further the transformation of the organisational culture.

Reconciling work and family remains a field of action that is central to our strategy. At the University of Vienna, the term "family" includes all types of families: single-parent families, two-parent families, step families, same-sex parented families, foster families etc.

In a second step, the University plans to expand the reconciliation strategy by adding the focus point "employment and self-care". It also wants to play an active part in fashioning a sustainable transition towards more flexibility in the professional world. For some time now, working as a scientist has meant having to be flexible and organising your work individually. Even more so now that the digital transition is leading us towards "new work". During the pandemic, flexible working hours and home office were introduced to the general university staff as well and are now regulated by the works agreements "Home Office" and "Flexible Working Time". On the upside, flexible working hours and working from home can make reconciliation easier. However, due to the constant availability and reachability, blurring the borders between work and private life can also result in work taking over other areas of life and becoming too demanding overall. By putting the focus on reconciling work and self-care, the University hopes to contribute to the evolution of the institutional working culture and thus have a positive impact on different levels, e. g. burnout prevention.

Gainful employment, care work and self-care are not isolated activities. They are taking place in a social and a scientific context which impact how reconciliation is managed and can be managed at the University of Vienna.

The **social context** influences the distribution of gainful employment, care work and capacity for self-care – regarding gender but also other dimensions of diversity such as migration. Who provides most unpaid care? Who is charged with (poorly) paid care work, so that someone else can have a job? Who can afford to practice self-care because their employment and/or care work have not taken over their whole life? These social structures are built on a foundation of historical inequalities which one employer alone cannot undo. But it can scrutinise them and serve as an example to others.

The **scientific community** is a professional field with its own written and unwritten rules that strongly influence how scientists can reconcile the different aspects of their life. Research and teaching are often considered less a "profession" and more a "vocation". The particular working conditions and requirements, for example regarding mobility, result in less time and space for care work and self-care. Living for science means making your employment a priority, which, as a result, gives science a very high standing in the professional world. Nonetheless, the demand for career paths that allow for care work and sufficient self-care is rising.

Employment and studying in the context of other aspects of life:

Results of the data analysis

The University of Vienna is one of the oldest and largest universities in Europe. It employs more than 10,000 people, three quarters of which are academic university staff (AUS) and one quarter is general university staff (GUS). Around 85,000 students are studying at the University of Vienna (as of 2022). For the publication [A question of organisation?](#), data concerning the employees¹ reconciliation of work and (self-)care was analysed and completed with existing data about students². The aim is to give insight into how and by whom

existing offers for better reconciliation of work and (self-)care are made use of.

The academic and the general university staff show differences regarding their employment relationships and forms of employment as well as their working culture. This is why the results of the data analysis for the two groups will be discussed separately. Reconciliation among students will be discussed briefly at the end.

Key results for the academic university staff

Female scientists have fewer children and return to their careers more quickly

- Presently, there are no statistics concerning the number of University employees with children. However, looking at the number of pregnancy announcements in view of the age distribution confirms the frequent observation that female academics are having fewer children than women among the general university staff and the entire working population. At the University of Vienna, the share of female scientists on maternity leave has decreased slightly over the last ten years (2009: 2.9 %, 2019: 2.7 % of the entire female AUS), while the share of 21- to 45-year-olds has dropped slightly as well.
- Especially noticeable is the small number of female scientists taking maternity leave as compared to those being absent during the protection period, which means that often little or no parental leave is taken after the protection period.
- Third-party funded academic employees are having fewer children than ten years ago (2009: 2.6 %, 2019: 2.0 % of all female third-party funded employees), whereas female pre- and postdoc assistants (global budget) are having more children (2009: 2.2 %, 2019: 2.7 % of all female pre- and postdoc assistants). The first group also takes much less or shorter maternity leave than the latter.

Male scientists are going on parental leave more often but not longer than the male working population

- The share of male scientists on parental leave has increased significantly over the last decade and lies well above the share among the general population but below the number for the general university staff. (2019: AUS: 1.5 %, GUS: 3.6 % of all male employees; general population: 0.3 % of all men employed in 2011)
- The average duration of parental leave taken by male scientists has remained constantly on a low level over the last decade (3 months on average), while the average duration for men among the general university staff and the general population was higher ten years ago and is now decreasing (for the GUS, it has decreased from 6 months to 3 months).

Scientists are only seldomly taking advantage of offers to make the reconciliation of employment and childcare easier

- Early parental leave (“Papamonat”) has only been made little use of since its introduction in 2013. Scientists almost never make use of parental part-time work and very seldomly take dependant care leave (2009: 0.9 %, 2019: 1.7 % of the AUS). This could indicate that (longer) breaks in productivity are not an option for many scientists.
- Among the academic university staff, third-party funded scientists are making less use of reconciliation offers than employees funded through the global budget. This could suggest that the need for reconciliation is not (sufficiently) taken into account for third-party funded projects.

The specificities of the scientific system tend to even out gender-specific differences

- If a scientist works part-time or full-time depends less on their gender and more on their employment category. In 2021, mostly third-party funded employees (76 %) and Senior Lecturers (69 %) were working part-time, while permanent professorships (5 %), tenure-track positions (4 %) and predoctoral assistants³ (2 %) saw only few part-time positions. The biggest gender disparity with regard to full-time and part-time work existed among the third-party funded academic staff (2021: men: 71 %, women: 81 % working part-time).
- While female scientists claim more care-related absences than male scientists (e. g. parental leave 2019: 2.5 % of all women, 1.5 % of all men), the gender disparity is relatively small – compared to the general university staff and the entire working population.

The percentage of women working in a field impacts the average number of hours and the standing of an activity within its field

- In scientific fields with a large share of men (MINT), members of the academic staff tend to have contracts with slightly longer hours than in scientific fields with a larger percentage of women (humanities) – regardless of the individual’s gender. However, in every department, the average hours per person depend more on the different types of positions than on the percentage of men and women.

- Academic care work, i. e. activities where quality relies on communication and relationships, seems to be disproportionately done by women. This is suggested by an analysis of the teaching statistics that shows that women teach slightly more hours than men (on average over all types of positions 5.83 hours as compared to 5.64 hours).

The reduction of working hours or absences for (self-)care are only made use of in rare cases

- The possibility of family hospice leave/part-time and dependant care leave/part-time is only made use of in rare cases. This could be due to these possibilities not being widely known or it could indicate that the offer's framework does not meet the needs. As the actual need for these offers is not known, a survey might be of value.
- The reduction of working hours by scientists in the interest of self-care, such as phased retirement or a sabbatical, is negligible. The same can be said about time off from work for the sake of further education (educational leave/part-time, educational vacation periods). Official offers such as educational leave might be of less of an interest to the academic staff since the scientific career is an educational career.

Key results for the general university staff

Part-time positions are becoming more common among the general university staff

- This trend is consistent with the developments in other service sectors. At the University, the share of part-time positions is rising as well and lies above the average of the entire working population. What is noticeable is that, compared to the general population, at the University of Vienna, a lot more men are working part-time (2021: 33 % of the GUS, 12 % of the working population).
- Parental part-time work is also made use of more than before, with a much larger share among women (2019: 9 % of women, 4.2 % of men among the GUS).

Fields with a large proportion of women continually offer more part-time positions – for men as well; a large percentage of men results in more full-time positions – not in the same degree for women

- The large share of women in the GUS working part-time (2021: 53 %) is not only a consequence of the additional earnings model prevailing in Austria. It is also maintained by the growing offer of part-time jobs in fields dominated by women.
- In comparison, in areas dominated by men, part-time positions are rather rare. This creates barriers for women wanting to work part-time in these fields and contributes to sustaining the norm of men having to work full-time. Thus, men are less likely to reduce their working hours in favour of care work or self-care.

- The analysis of different areas of work shows that men accept part-time positions when they are given the opportunity. This is less true for women with regard to full-time positions.

Female members of the GUS have fewer children than ten years ago

- The decrease in pregnancy announcements among the female GUS (2009: 3.6 %, 2019: 3 %) is probably not only due to the rising age average over the last decade, but could also be related to the constantly growing qualifications of the female members of the GUS. Women with tertiary education tend to have fewer children. One reason for this could be that they might have to relinquish more pay and career opportunities than the average woman when starting a family.

More men and fewer women take parental leave than before

- Over the last decade, the share of women taking parental leave has decreased significantly – in fact, more than could be explained by the declining birth rate. The average duration of leave has also dropped slightly. Women among the GUS thus show a similar development as female scientists and women with an academic degree.
- Starting from a low level, the share of men taking parental leave has seen a sharp increase over the last ten years (2009: 12 %, 2019: 31 % of all people taking parental leave). This percentage is much higher than that among the general working population in Austria. However, the average duration of leave has significantly decreased over the last decade (2009: 6.1 months, 2019: 3 months). Fathers and non-birthing parents are making slightly less use of early parental leave than parental leave.

Dependant care leave is very important for the GUS, working from home changes how it is made use of

- Members of the GUS are frequently taking dependant care leave, with numbers rising over the last decade. Men have also been making use of this tool for reconciliation more frequently than before (2010: 14 % of all women, 9 % of all men; 2019: 18 % of all women, 15 % of all men).
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to working from home, however, these numbers have seen a significant decrease. More flexibility regarding the work place and the working hours has obviously become an obstacle to taking dependant care leave.

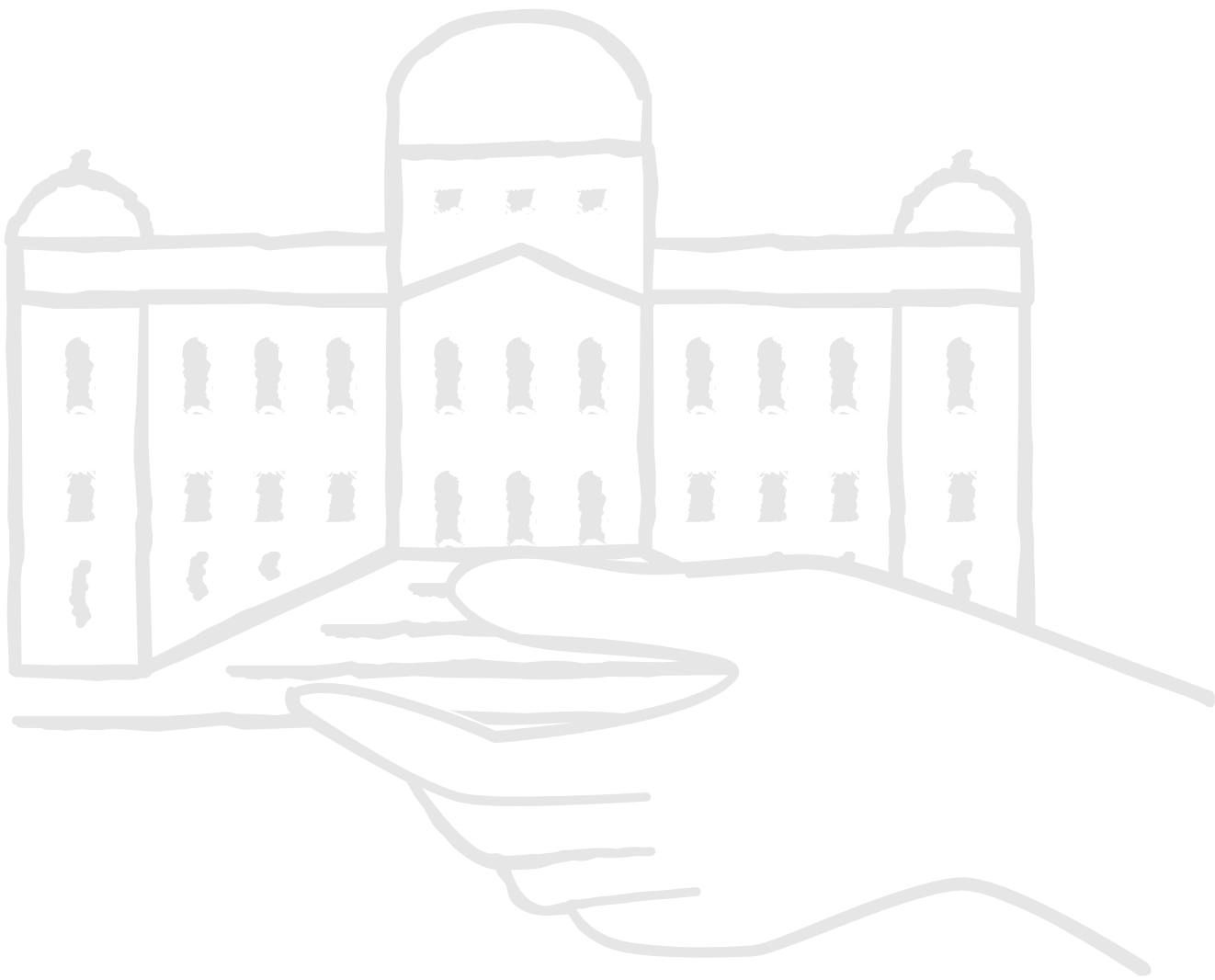
The reduction of working hours or absences for (self-)care are only rarely made use of

- As with the AUS, the possibility of family hospice leave/part-time and dependent care leave/part-time is only made use of in rare cases.
- Members of the GUS are making less and less use of phased retirement, with numbers for women decreasing more rapidly than for men. This could be due to the current conditions not corresponding to the target group's needs or because the resulting financial loss is less manageable now than it was – especially for women.

- Time off from work for the sake of further education, such as educational leave/part-time is not often made use of, but it has remained on a steady level over the years. Women are taking advantage of this offer more often than men. Sabbaticals and educational vacation periods are taken by the GUS only in rare cases.

Key results concerning students

- The students' social survey 2019⁴ shows that about two thirds of all students have a job in addition to studying. Reconciling studying with gainful employment is by far the biggest challenge students are facing, this concerns older students more often. The University's graduates name gainful employment as the by far most important cause for delays during their studies.
- Having to care for children and/or relatives as a reason for delays in their studies is named by 6 %–10 % of the University's bachelor's and master's graduates. For doctorate students, this number rises to 20 %. In the students' social survey 2019, about 8 % of students declare having children that need to be looked after, 5 % state that they are nursing relatives. Every semester, the University of Vienna remits more than 1,000 tuition fees because of caring responsibilities for children under the age of 7. Since 2014, the share of men taking advantage of this has increased from 9 % to 22 %. The possibility of taking a leave of absence from studying is made much less use of (about 400 cases per semester), with a rather constant gender distribution (around 20 % men).
- Students have various voluntary commitments at university, e. g. as a student representative, and in civil society, for NGOs or in politics. They are providing care work in the broader sense of the subject. Between 1 % and 4 % of the University's graduates state that their studies have been delayed because of their commitments within university. 7 % to 27 % indicate a delay because of their voluntary commitments outside of university.⁵
- 12 % of all students that took part in the students' social survey 2019 declared having health impairments, 40 % of which have a mental impairment. Additionally to the resulting strain on their studies, this group is two times more likely to have financial difficulties than students without impairments.



Possible fields of action for the University of Vienna

As stated at the beginning, work-(self-)care reconciliation is a question of organisation – on an individual basis as well as on an institutional level by achieving a transformation of the organisational culture towards a university that embraces reconciliation. The challenges on this path cannot be solved today – in part, because the University of Vienna acts in a social context (e. g. gender roles in connection with the distribution of care work or the need for self-optimisation) and a scientific context (e. g. the need for excellence and mobility).

In order to promote the transformation of the organisational culture, possible fields of action for the University's employees are lined out and prioritised in the University's new reconciliation strategy. On the one hand, the fields of action for the employees were determined in accordance with the trends shown by the data and the interviews with experts conducted for the publication. On the other hand, they include ideas which were discussed during the [Work – Care – Wellbeing Days](#) at the University of Vienna in June 2022.

Executive level

- Create more possibilities for part-time work/job sharing, including management positions
- Offer training for reconciliation awareness for management positions
- Use the yearly staff appraisals to discuss reconciliation-related matters with employees
- Encourage employees (especially men) to actually take time off or reduce hours for care work and self-care
- Plan employees' leaves of absence and their return to work with them and the entire team (s. check lists for staff appraisals in the handbook "Managing Parental Leave for (Future) Parents and their Superiors")
- Create replacement options in case of parental leave/reduction of working hours (especially in the context of third-party funded projects and teaching)
- Encourage employees to make use of dependant care leave (despite flexible working conditions such as home office)

Work organisation and working conditions

- Develop career models that allow for more long-term planning (e. g. for starting a family), especially with regard to the AUS
- More flexibility concerning new full-time or part-time positions, in order to allow for more part-time jobs in fields dominated by men and for more full-time positions in areas dominated by women, especially regarding the GUS
- Introduction of new perspectives in connection with working time models (e. g. discussing 30-hour weeks) by the University of Vienna, e. g. in negotiations for Collective Bargaining Agreements
- Promote family-friendly scheduling, e. g. avoid appointments during off-peak hours, weekends and school holidays and keep within the agreed upon time frame (s. “Recommendations for executive staff and decision-makers in order to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family at the University of Vienna”)
- Look for solutions to schedule in-person appointments (e. g. classes, service hours) for parents/caregivers at times that are covered by external care services
- Keep promoting flexibility regarding working hours and the place of work (especially with the AUS and in areas dominated by women)

Hiring process and evaluation of work

- During the hiring process, do not consider periods of leave or part-time work due to caring responsibilities (children or nursing relatives) a bad thing; for AUS, evaluate publications differently (e. g. consider the publications’ quality not the quantity)
- Evaluate the candidate’s internationality and network not only based on (longer) periods of mobility (especially concerning AUS)
- Broaden the criteria for excellent scientific work (e. g. focus more on quality than quantity, teaching, supervision of theses, Third Mission, work in university bodies etc.)
- Examine requirements and strains in areas of work, especially in areas dominated by women (gender bias in evaluation) and when tasks change; adjust salary classifications, if need be (especially concerning AUS)

Social norms/values

- Anticipate and take into account potential responsibilities requiring reconciliation (not only regarding women)
- Encourage men/fathers to provide care work (e. g. longer parental leave) and integrate appreciation for male caregivers within the executive culture
- Lift the taboo on nursing relatives and conduct a survey on the need for support (e. g. number of people or needs of long-distance carers, especially regarding international AUS)
- Appreciate the additional qualifications gained by care work and self-care
- Raise the standing of care work within and outside of gainful employment and make its essential role in the system more visible

Self-care

- Expand the offer for workplace health promotion, occupational psychology and medicine in order to facilitate self-care in the context of gainful employment
- Put in place measures for slowing down working days (e. g. plan team breaks and reflection periods)
- Evaluate the workload in teams/units in regular intervals and put measures in place to avoid overstrain

Childcare infrastructure

- Expand offers for long-term and flexible childcare
- Offer support for the organisation of childcare in case of mobility (especially for AUS, both incoming and outgoing scientists)

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- ¹ *The entire data concerning the University's employees was provided by the EDV-Koordination und Personalcontrolling sub-unit of the Human Resources and Gender Equality unit.*
 - ² *The data concerning the students was extracted from the students' social survey 2019 and from the graduate surveys carried out by the special unit Quality Assurance. Additional data was provided by the Teaching Affairs and Student Services unit.*
 - ³ *However, the Collective Bargaining Agreement for predoctoral assistants sets full-time work at 30 hours per week, with the remaining hours being intended for writing the dissertation.*
 - ⁴ *The data from the students' social survey 2019 concerns all students in Austria and is based on the respondents' self-assessments.*
 - ⁵ *It has to be noted that these last numbers are not entirely conclusive because the question not only spoke of commitments but also of interests outside of university that resulted in a delay in their studies.*

