

# BALANCING EMPLOYER AND WORKER INTERESTS IN ORGANISING WORKING TIME WITHIN THE ENTERPRISE: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SLOVENIAN AND EU LABOUR LAW

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## ABSTRACT

*The objective of this article is to emphasise the complexity of organising working time at the company level in light of the new work-life balance (WLB) concept. The author aims to highlight the significance of both European and national legislations, as well as autonomous legal sources that regulate working time, and their practical application, which is in employers' domain. Employers are responsible for transposing the specific characteristics of their work processes into the organisation of working time. Today, such organisation is fundamentally marked by a qualitative approach, meaning employers must also consider the interests of employees. In modern labour law, workers have the right to achieve a balance between private and professional life, with the concept of private life extending beyond the family and its associated obligations.*

**Key words:** *organisation of working time, work-life balance (WLB), flexible working arrangements, remote work, workers with family responsibilities.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Working time has been a central issue in labour law since its inception. When connected with the rise of trade union movements and collective concern for the position of industrial workers, the issue of regulating (limiting) working hours, along with the fight for fair wages, has been present from the very beginning. The importance of the right to limited working hours as a civilisa-

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tional value is evidenced, for example, by the fact that the first International Labour Organization convention in 1919 specifically addressed working hours.<sup>1</sup> It limited working hours in industrial establishments to 8 hours per day and 48 hours per week. The early development of modern labour law was thus characterised by a quantitative approach to regulating working time, reflected in the limitation and reduction of working hours and consequently the emergence of the concept of so-called normal (today: full-time) working hours. The modern approach to regulating working time is based on a qualitative orientation, fostering the emergence and development of newer and more flexible forms of work time organisation. These allow for consideration of the specific characteristics of individual economic or non-economic activities,<sup>2</sup> as well as the interests of employers on the one hand and workers on the other. The significance and impact of the qualitative approach to regulating working time are not only reflected in workers with family responsibilities,<sup>3</sup> but in all workers, as leisure time today represents an important value for everyone.

In this paper, we aim to highlight several solutions regarding the organisation of working time, adopted in the amendments to the Employment Relationships Act at the end of 2023 (*Zakon o delovnih razmerjih* – ZDR-1; hereinafter referred to as: ERA-1: *Employment Relationships Act*),<sup>4</sup> which are intended to facilitate or at least ease the reconciliation of professional and family or private life.<sup>5</sup> Given that the concept of working time organisation is treated

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization: *ILO Convention No. 156- Workers with family responsibilities*, <[https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx\\_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312146:NO](https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312146:NO)>, last accessed on 12/02/2025.

<sup>2</sup> In Slovenian labour law, this is primarily feasible because the relatively sparse statutory regulation of working time provides social partners with sufficient normative latitude in collective bargaining to accommodate the specific characteristics of individual sectors. In Slovenia, collective agreements are predominantly concluded at the sectoral or industry level.

<sup>3</sup> This group of workers derives its status from international legal norms, notably ILO Convention No. 156 and Article 27 of the Revised European Social Charter. Both legal sources pertain to the prohibition of discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities. In EU law, the term “workers with family responsibilities” is not explicitly addressed as such, though there is a contemporary shift in focus beyond family life and its associated obligations towards the broader concept of private life.

<sup>4</sup> Uredni list RS: *Zakon o delovnih razmerjih (Employment Relationships Act)*, Uradni list RS (Official Gazette RS), Nos. 21/13, 78/13 – popr., 47/15 – ZZSDT, 33/16 – PZ-F, 52/16, 15/17 – odl. US, 22/19 – ZPosS, 81/19, 203/20 – ZIUPOPĐVE, 119/21 – ZČmIS-A, 202/21 – odl. US, 15/22, 54/22 – ZUPŠ-1, 114/23 in 136/23 – ZIUZDS.

<sup>5</sup> While discussions in the past centred on the reconciliation of workers’ professional and family lives, the current focus is on the private life of workers, which is a broader concept than family life in terms of its scope and content.

very broadly in the context of EU law,<sup>6</sup> this paper will focus on the concept of working time in the narrower sense of the term. In doing so, we will directly link either the set of legislative solutions or individual solutions to modern HR doctrine approaches and the goals of EU law. The main thread of the first part of the paper will be Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers.<sup>7</sup> The concept of Work-Life Balance (hereinafter referred to as: WLB), as pursued by this directive, is marked by the desire to transcend the realm of discrimination on the basis of family and gender, among other things. However, as Chieragato also points out, the concept of WLB originates from this context. The transition from “family life” to “private life” aims to overcome the gender-connoted perception of balancing the two spheres of an individual’s life, while on the other hand it seeks to extend the concept from the family sphere to areas such as community life, training and education, leisure, personal care, etc.<sup>8</sup> Since the directive addresses and regulates numerous issues in the field of WLB, such as also following the repealed Directive 2010/18 on parental leave,<sup>9</sup> this paper will not refer to its entire content, but only those parts that relate to or are connected with the organisation of working time.

In the second part of this paper, we will address the concept of WLB beyond the influence of family life, gender, *etc.*, emphasising the role of employers in helping to ensure the reconciliation of professional and private life for all workers. Every worker, regardless of gender, family obligations, or any other personal circumstance, has a private life, interests, hobbies, needs, *etc.*, alongside their professional engagements. The thesis in this context is that Slovenian national legal regulations do not sufficiently address this segment of WLB, meaning that achieving these goals largely falls within the domain of employers, their business ethics, culture, practices, and traditions.

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<sup>6</sup> European Parliament: Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, *Official Journal L* 299, 18/11/2003 P. 0009 – 0019.

<sup>7</sup> OL L no. 188, 12.7.2019.

<sup>8</sup> Chieragato, E.: A work-life balance for all? Assessing the inclusiveness of EU Directive 2019/1158, *International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, 36(1) 2020, pp. 61 & 62. On the other hand, some authors understand and use the terms “family” and “private” as synonyms, such as Rataj in the article: Rataj, P.: Nova Direktiva o usklajevanju poklicnega in zasebnega življenja staršev in oskrbovalcev (EU) 2019/1158 ter slovenska ureditev, *Delavci in delodajalci*, 20(2-3) 2020, pp. 205-231.

<sup>9</sup> Council European Parliament: *Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC (Text with EEA relevance)*, OJ L 68, 18.3.2019, pp. 13-20.

## 2. FURTHER CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION SURROUNDING WLB

As previously mentioned, the emergence and development of the concept of WLB have been profoundly influenced by the specific societal and labour market positions of women. With the increasingly prominent and significant role of women in the workforce, alongside their enduring burden of family responsibilities, it has become both necessary and natural to afford particular attention to women in this regard.<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly, the WLB concept has been and remains primarily characterised by gender, as well as family considerations. This is further evidenced by the title of Directive 2019/1158, which primarily addresses the caregiving responsibilities of parents and carers.

Moreover, societal evolution has indisputably led to a substantive expansion of the WLB concept towards greater inclusivity. Scholars such as Chieragato<sup>11</sup> and others<sup>12</sup> assert that WLB pertains to various aspects and domains of private life, including, but not limited to, family. In recognising the myriad dilemmas and questions posed by WLB in the context of gender equality, family dynamics, and the role of men in domestic affairs, this contribution ambitiously aims to understand the WLB concept as an endeavour to facilitate the reconciliation of professional and personal lives for all workers, including those without family or caregiving obligations.<sup>13</sup> While it is acknowledged that the circumstances of workers with caregiving responsibilities differ significantly from those without, it remains true that all workers have their own personal interests and needs. The coexistence of employees with caregiving duties

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<sup>10</sup> For the origins of work-family reconciliation and the position of women therein, which are important to understand the modern WLB concept, see Busby in the article: Busby, N.: The evolution of gender equality and related employment policies: The case of work-family reconciliation, *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, 18(2-3) 2018, pp. 104-123.

<sup>11</sup> Chieragato, op.cit. (fn.8), p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> See Lewis, S., Gambles, R., Rapoport, R.: The constraints of a Work-Life Balance Approach: An International Perspective, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(3) 2007, pp. 360-373.

<sup>13</sup> With this starting point, we recognise that authors discussing the concept of WLB generally remain within the formal scope and content of Directive 2019/1158. This pertains to the care of worker-parents and carers, often emphasising the improvement of women's status, as they continue to bear the greatest burden of family obligations in European society. For example, Carvalho, C.: Reconciling professional and family life for promoting gender equality in Portugal: Some considerations and prospects in the light of the new Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers, *Revue de Droit Comparé du Travail et de la Sécurité Sociale*, (4) 2020, pp. 96-107; as well as Calafa, L.: The transposition of the Directive 2019/1158 in Italy: Unresolved issues and complex solutions, *Revue de Droit Comparé du Travail et de la Sécurité Sociale*, (4) 2020, pp. 82-95.

and those without presents an additional challenge for employers in organising working time.

In the following discussions, we will observe that the Slovenian legislator has addressed certain flexible work arrangements specifically for employees with families and other carers, while some provisions apply to all workers. This is viewed as a highly positive development, aligning with contemporary values, despite the fact that Article 182, paragraph 3 of the ERA-1 has long contained a general provision mandating that employers facilitate the reconciliation of professional and personal obligations for their employees.<sup>14</sup>

### **3. PROVISIONS OF DIRECTIVE 2019/1158 THAT IMPACT THE ORGANISATION OF WORKING TIME**

The most significant provision of the Directive that directly pertains to the organisation of working time, and which imposes a specific obligation on employers, is contained in Article 9, which introduces the concept of flexible working arrangements. According to Article 9, every worker with a child up to the age of 8 years, or a caregiver, has the right to request flexible working arrangements from their employer for caregiving purposes.<sup>15</sup> Employers are required to respond to such requests and, in the event of refusal, provide a justified explanation for the rejection of the proposed working arrangement. In this context, Senčur-Peček explicitly emphasises, in light of both the purpose of the Directive and the new Slovenian legal framework, that an employer cannot summarily or arbitrarily reject an employee's proposal. Moreover, an employer cannot reject the proposal solely because it would require a different organisation of the work process. The author asserts that the employer must assess in each individual case whether the proposed flexible arrangement constitutes a disproportionate interference with the organisation of the work process.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, Caracciolo di Torella considers the employer's

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<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Kresal Šoltes and Senčur Peček in their explanation of the legal solutions from the recent amendment to ERA-1 from the end of 2023: Kresal Šoltes, K., Senčur Peček, D.: *Zakon o delovnih razmerjih z novelo ZDR-1D, Uvodna pojasnila*, Ljubljana: GV Založba, 2024, p. 87.

<sup>15</sup> The Directive defines the concept of flexible working arrangements in Article 3, describing it as the opportunities available to workers to modify their working time patterns, including arrangements such as remote work, flexible working hours, or reduced working time. The Directive provides examples of three possible approaches to the adaptation or organisation of working time.

<sup>16</sup> Senčur Peček, D.: *Delovni čas in prožne ureditve dela ter njihova uveljavitev v ZDR-1D, Delavci in delodajalci*, 24(2-3), 2024, p. 186. Similarly, Bagari, S.: *Direktiva o usklajevanju*

obligation to respond to an employee's request as significant, but less stringent compared to Senčur-Peček's interpretation.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1. PROPOSAL OF A PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

ERA-1, amended in November 2023 to transpose Directive 2019/1158, has incorporated this Directive's provision as follows: according to Article 65.a of the ERA-1, a worker who is caring for a child under the age of 8 years or providing care to another person has the option to propose entering into a fixed-term, part-time employment contract to facilitate the reconciliation of their professional and private life. The employer must decide on the worker's proposal within 15 days and provide a written justification for the decision or the reasons for rejecting it. If the worker's proposal is accepted, meaning the employer agrees, a fixed-term, part-time employment contract is concluded. In cases where the worker is already employed by the employer under an indefinite full-time contract, the rights under the original employment contract are suspended for the duration of the new part-time contract. It is important to note that while the ERA-1 aligns with the Directive's objectives, it does not grant workers the right to an actual adjustment of the employment relationship and, consequently, the working hours. Instead, it merely offers the specified group of workers the opportunity to propose a change in working hours and employment scope. Whether such a change will materialise depends on the employer's willingness and capacity to adjust the work process to accommodate the request for reduced working hours. Two points must be emphasised in this regard. First, it is anticipated that most employers will not approve such proposals, as they typically require full-time labour resources, and the change in employment relationship is not mandatory. Second, any worker, whether with family responsibilities or not, who wishes to align their professional life with their private life could theoretically make such a proposal to the employer, even without the new Article in the amended ERA-1. All that is needed is mutual consent from both contractual parties, as the nature and scope of the employment relationship cannot be altered otherwise. The only distinction introduced by the amendment to the ERA-1 is the worker's right to receive a written explanation of the employer's decision regarding their proposal and the suspension of rights under the original employment contract, if applicable.

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poklicnega in zasebnega življenja ter pravica do zahteve za prožne ureditve dela, *Delavci in delodajalci*, 22(2-3) 2020, p. 236.

<sup>17</sup> Caracciolo di Torella, E.: One more step along the way: the 2019 work-life balance Directive, *Revue de Droit Comparé du Travail et de la Sécurité Sociale*, (4) 2020, pp. 78-79.

### **3.2. TAKING A CARER'S LEAVE**

The taking of carer's leave, which has been newly regulated by the ERA-1, also impacts the organisation of the work process and, consequently, working time. However, this does not imply a change in the employee's labour status concerning their general work regime; rather, it imposes a responsibility on the employer to appropriately account for the employee's absence in the operation of the work process and, if necessary, to reorganise working hours. The ERA-1 fully aligns with the Directive in its regulation of this leave, granting eligible individuals the right to unpaid leave of up to five working days in a calendar year. In this context, the employee has two obligations: i) to inform the employer in advance about their absence due to carer's leave, although the law does not specify the required notice period, and ii) to assert their right to carer's leave through a formal declaration that outlines the circumstances and reasons justifying their eligibility for such leave.<sup>18</sup>

## **4. THE CONCEPT OF WLB BETWEEN FAMILY AND PRIVATE LIFE**

Although the Directive, by referencing parenthood and caregiving, indicates a particular emphasis on workers with family responsibilities, it is essential to investigate and assess the implications of replacing the concept of family life with that of private life. As noted above, and drawing on Chieragato's insights,<sup>19</sup> the concept of WLB transcends the gendered connotation of reconciling work with family obligations. The practical implications for a specific employer will depend, on the one hand, on the approach of the national legislator, and on the other hand, on the employer's own stance. The challenge lies not only in the position of men and women within the family context and the distribution of responsibilities between them, but also in the overall entitlement of workers with family obligations to certain benefits. This latter consideration is undoubtedly appropriate and just. With the adoption of the WLB concept emphasising private life, established practices among employers will also need to evolve in the future. Employers will therefore have to try to incorporate not

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<sup>18</sup> According to the fourth paragraph of Article 182 of the ERA-1, workers are entitled to carer's leave if they are faced with the need to provide significant care to a family member or a person living in the same household due to health reasons, provided they are not entitled to absence from work under the health insurance regulations. Similar to the Directive, the ERA-1 employs the term "significant caregiving," which is a legally undefined concept. In practice, there is likely to be a lack of uniform understanding of this term among workers and employers, particularly during the initial period of implementation of this new provision.

<sup>19</sup> See fn. 8.

only the private sphere of employees with families into the organisation of work processes and HR policies but also consider all other workers and the interests related to their private lives.

#### *4.1. REGULATION IN THE ERA-1*

##### **4.1.1. CHANGE IN WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS**

The ERA-1 has contained several provisions since 2003 aimed at facilitating the reconciliation of family and professional life for workers with family responsibilities. In addition to a general provision mandating that employers enable easier coordination of family and professional obligations, a particularly interesting regulation from the perspective of organising working time is found in the third paragraph of Article 148. This provision allows workers to propose a different arrangement of working hours to their employer due to the need for reconciling family and professional life, with the requirement that the employer must provide a written justification for their decision. Since the latest amendment to the ERA-1, effective November 2023, the scope of reconciliation has expanded. In both instances mentioned, the terms “family responsibilities” or “family life” have been replaced with the concept of “private life,” with the additional stipulation that the employer must respond in writing to proposals for changes in working time within 15 days. A key question that arises in this context is how employers will practically position the concept of private life among workers with families and those without such obligations. To illustrate with a hypothetical scenario: an employer receives a request for a change in working hours from a single parent with three minor children and a similar request from a worker preparing for an Ironman triathlon. If the demands of the work process allow for only one proposal to be granted, it would be difficult for the employer to maintain credibility if they were to reject the request from the worker with children. Legally speaking, under the ERA-1, both workers are in the same position, as both seek a change in working hours for reasons related to their private lives. In such cases, the practical consequences of abandoning the concept of family obligations or expanding the concept to private life will become apparent. Personally, we believe that the situation of a worker with family responsibilities is sufficiently unique and different to warrant, if not mandate, more favourable treatment compared to workers without such obligations.

#### 4.1.2. REMOTE WORK

A very similar approach to the proposal for a different arrangement of working hours has been adopted by the legislator regarding the possibility of remote work. The third paragraph of Article 68 of the ERA-1 now stipulates that if a worker proposes entering into an employment contract for remote work due to the need to reconcile professional and private life, the employer must provide a written justification for their decision within 15 days. This provision is regarded as extremely welcome, as work processes have changed in the post-COVID era; many professions and jobs, where appropriate and feasible, are now performed in a hybrid manner, partially from home and partially at the employer's premises. With this regulation, the legislator has encouraged both workers and employers to thoughtfully consider the potential for a hybrid work approach and to implement such arrangements when it serves the interests of both parties.

#### 4.1.3. SOME CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE ERA-1 APPROACH

The legislator has therefore implemented the Directive's requirement to allow for flexible work arrangements through the option for workers to propose new employment contracts for part-time work (for parents and caregivers), as well as through proposals for changes in working time arrangements and the inclusion of remote work (for all employees). It is important to note that the actual realisation of these three options, along with other measures related to WLB, primarily depends on the employer. This includes the employer's understanding of the WLB concept, their traditions, positive past experiences, and their level of social responsibility. Two additional key factors in this regard are undoubtedly the demands and characteristics of the employer's work processes on the one hand, and the overall sufficiency of the personnel within the company on the other. Current labour market trends indicate a general shortage of workforce, which consequently leads to challenging and prolonged recruitment processes for new employees. As such, while the legal framework now supports greater flexibility, the practical application of these provisions will hinge on the employer's commitment to fostering an environment that values work-life balance and recognises the diverse needs of their workforce. Employers must be proactive in adapting to these changes to not only comply with legal requirements but also to enhance employee satisfaction and retention in a competitive labour market.

#### **4.2. THE “FAMILY-FRIENDLY ENTERPRISE” CERTIFICATE<sup>20</sup>**

Regarding the rights and obligations imposed on employees and employers in the context of WLB by European and national legislation, as well as collective agreements, it is essential to emphasise the following points. Since 2007, Slovenia has implemented a program for granting the “Family-Friendly Enterprise” certificate. This certification was introduced to encourage employers to adopt measures that facilitate a better reconciliation of professional and family life for their employees. The certificate is designed as a tool to enhance job quality and improve the socially responsible business practices of companies. The initiative behind this certification stems from a desire to increase the quality of life for employees and their families while simultaneously improving corporate performance. This area transcends mere regulatory compliance and reflects the aspirations and interests of employers to contribute positively to their workforce. The measures implemented are highly diverse, with a significant portion dedicated specifically to addressing working time issues: for example, the scope and duration of weekly working hours, flexible start and end times for the working day, additional short breaks during working hours, the introduction of hybrid work models, and the incorporation of health-conscious minutes into the workday. These initiatives have primarily aimed to ease the reconciliation of employees’ family responsibilities, but the approach has now expanded to include workers without familial obligations. This broader focus is encapsulated in another certification for socially responsible employers, for which further details will be provided in Section 4.3.

The process for obtaining the certificate involves several steps. First, the company conducts a self-assessment, analysing its current practices and policies regarding the reconciliation of work and family life. This is followed by the preparation of an action plan, which includes specific measures such as flexible working hours, the option to work from home, additional leave for parents, and similar initiatives. Once the action plan is approved by a designated committee, the company begins implementing the planned measures. Every company that receives this certificate must regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of these measures and report on their progress in order to maintain the certificate. Companies are required to submit annual reports detailing their advancements and any improvements made, ensuring that standards are upheld and continuously enhanced. Undoubtedly, the “Family-Friendly

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<sup>20</sup> Despite this certification having been in use by Slovenian employers for nearly 20 years, there is a notable absence of professional or scientific contributions on the subject in Slovenian literature. Therefore, the information regarding the presentation of the certification will be drawn from the website of the Ekvilib Institute, which has been managing this certification project since its inception. (<https://www.certifikatdpp.si/>; last accessed on 30/09/2024)

Enterprise” certificate brings numerous advantages for both employers and employees. Employees report higher satisfaction levels, reduced stress, and increased motivation, leading to greater productivity and lower absenteeism. Furthermore, companies gain the reputation of being responsible and socially conscious employers, which can attract talented candidates and enhance the loyalty of existing employees.

In Slovenia, an increasing number of companies are opting to obtain this certificate, recognising that investing in employee well-being is an investment in the long-term success of the business. The certification is thus becoming an essential part of corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategies. Recent data indicate that there are over 300 employers in Slovenia with the “Family-Friendly Enterprise” certificate. These employers are committed to implementing measures that enhance the work-life balance of their employees, bringing benefits to both the workforce and the companies themselves. The number of certified companies continues to grow, as more employers acknowledge the importance of investing in employee welfare.

#### *4.3. THE “SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYER” CERTIFICATE<sup>21</sup>*

In addition to the “Family-Friendly Enterprise” certificate, which has a tradition of nearly 20 years, Slovenian companies have been able to apply for the “Socially Responsible Employer” certificate since 2020. This certificate represents recognition for companies that commit to responsible practices towards their employees, the environment, and the broader community. It aims to encourage companies to implement sustainable and ethical practices that contribute to a better working environment and society as a whole. The process of obtaining the certificate involves several stages. Companies first conduct a self-assessment of their current practices regarding social responsibility. Based on this assessment, they prepare an action plan that includes specific measures to improve practices in various areas, such as working conditions, environmental care, equality, and support for the local community. After an independent commission approves the action plan, the company begins implementing the planned measures.

Regular monitoring and reporting on the implementation of these measures are crucial to maintaining the certification. Companies are required to report annually on their progress and any improvements, ensuring that standards

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<sup>21</sup> The same conclusion applies to this certificate as well. There is no professional literature on the topic yet, and basic information along with the certification’s presentation is available at: <https://certifikatdod.si/>; (last accessed on 30/09/2024).

are continuously upheld and enhanced. The “Socially Responsible Employer” certificate brings numerous advantages. Employees are often more motivated and loyal to the company, knowing that their employer cares for them and the broader community. Additionally, companies that engage in responsible practices enhance their reputation and competitiveness in the market, as more consumers and business partners value socially responsible operations. In Slovenia, an increasing number of companies are opting to obtain this certificate, recognising that social responsibility is essential for sustainable development and long-term success. Thus, the certificate is becoming an important part of the strategic planning of companies that wish to contribute to positive societal change.

The certificate is awarded for various measures across multiple areas, one of which is the reconciliation of private and professional life, reflecting a modern approach to employee management. This approach signifies a step forward from merely catering to employees with family obligations. The specific measures a company chooses to implement are ultimately at the discretion of the company or its management, potentially in consultation with employees or their representatives. This consultation indicates the level of democratisation within the company’s operations, which is also a strong factor in the company’s social responsibility. It is crucial that the selected measures aim to adapt the work process to the caregiving obligations of employees, as well as promote and ensure respect for their private lives. A particularly significant aspect of these measures is the opportunity for a tailored approach to organising working hours in the context described above.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Organising work schedules has long been regarded as a challenging yet crucial task for employers. Particularly today, the so-called qualitative approach has become highly prominent and emphasised, as it is no longer sufficient to merely pursue optimal business results; the interests of employees must also be considered. The introduction of the WLB concept adds yet another layer of complexity for employers. What is particularly interesting is that the legislative or autonomous regulatory frameworks for working hours address the concept of WLB but still serve merely as a foundation for scheduling at individual companies. Therefore, we can affirm that the hypothesis presented in the introduction as an abstract legal norm cannot address all the specificities of employers’ work processes and the individual characteristics of their employees. It is crucial that employers consider these factors when organising their work processes, as obligated by the relevant European and national legal sources. This is clearly demonstrated in the article, where over the past 20 years, work

scheduling patterns in Slovenia have evolved significantly, enhancing the normative framework. We observe an interplay between theoretical foundations, legal regulations, and the actual practices of employers, which can differ considerably. This variation is not problematic, as the business activities and work processes of individual employers are themselves diverse. Regardless, the concept of WLB has left a lasting impact.

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