

R11 Etat Tata. Lubię to! (Full-time Dad – I Like It!)  
Poland  
2012-2013

## A multi-pronged national campaign on the father's role

### Summary

Launched in Poland in 2012, Etat Tata. Lubię to! (Full-time Dad – I Like It!) was a multi-pronged national awareness raising campaign targeted at SMEs and employed parents. The main theme was fatherhood and active fathering, and the campaign aimed to encourage men to participate in childcare. Research and data show that the unequal division of care responsibilities is a key issue for reconciliation of work and family life. The campaign promoted reconciliation and tried to convince employers that parents of young children are equal and valuable workers, and through this to address stigmatisation and stereotyping. The initiative also had a strong focus on raising the awareness of fathers, promoting new reconciliation models in the workplace and enabling women to work by developing fathers' awareness and skills. Activities included a database of examples of good practice, the 'Day with a Child at Work' campaign, a competition on employers' good practices, workshops for fathers, radio and TV programmes and information leaflets.

The initiative, launched by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPiPS) and co-financed by the ESF Human Capital Operational Programme, addressed relatively new issues in Poland and was very innovative in the Polish context. It has been strengthened by training activities and is a joint effort of several organisations and stakeholders. The campaign's evaluation found evidence of changed attitudes towards the equal sharing of work and family life.

### A new focus on active fathering

The Etat Tata. Lubię to! (Full-time Dad – I Like It!) initiative was developed in a context of growing recognition that gender inequalities in Poland's labour market are in part due to the unequal division of care responsibilities.

Men's participation in the care of children and other dependents is increasingly recognised as important for the reconciliation of work and family life, as it not only improves women's position in the jobs market but also helps men to develop their role as parents. The main rationale for the campaign was to support equal opportunities for parents returning to work after childbirth or childcare leave. The guiding principle was that work and family responsibilities should be the job of both parents. Through sharing good practice, the project aimed to encourage men to play a more active role in parenting and to take parental leave in order to do so.



The campaign was part of the ESF Human Capital Operational Programme and was launched as a result of a competition initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2012 to promote solutions for reconciling work and family life. The focus on fathers and active fathering is relatively new, and follows recent changes in policy on paternity and parental leave. Although the issue has attracted some public attention, the scope and scale of the campaign was unprecedented. It fits within efforts to improve women's labour force participation as well as respond to the challenges of demographic change.

The campaign was a nationwide awareness-raising initiative. It had two target groups: on the one hand employed parents of children aged 0-7 years, with a particular focus on the participation of fathers in family life; and on the other hand micro, small and medium-sized businesses which implement or would like to implement good practices in the employment of parents of small children.

The main aims of the campaign were to promote the idea of effectively combining employment with parenting, to convince employers that mothers and fathers of small children are equal and valuable employees, and to identify and reduce the stigma and negative stereotypes that arise when the parents of young children go to work. In particular it aimed:

To strengthen the awareness of fathers as men who have children (while this is obvious conceptually, the point here is to highlight men's role in fathering);

To build a model of equal parenting among employees and employers;

To promote women's economic activity through increased involvement of fathers in childcare;

To promote the development of fathering skills and attitudes;

To promote forms of employment which allow work-family reconciliation.

The campaign also aimed to show and strengthen examples of career men who are actively involved in childcare, how to prevent discrimination against mothers through the activation of fathers and how to create parent-friendly employment conditions.

## **TV and radio programmes, a competition, discount cards and workshops**

The campaign encompassed numerous awareness-raising and dissemination activities:

1. The creation of a database with examples of good practices for work-family reconciliation for parents of young children;
2. The campaign 'Day with a Child at Work' (Dzień z Dzieckiem w Pracy);
3. Discount cards for child-related products and services provided to employers, who distributed them to parents, with the aim of bringing parents and employers together. Distribution via employers made them aware how many parents with small children they employed, and the discount card improved parents' access to goods and services;
4. A competition on employers' good practices;
5. Various workshops organised specifically for fathers (advice and workshops were also provided for both parents);
6. TV and radio programmes raising the issue of work-family reconciliation, good practice in equal labour market opportunities among parents and active fathering;
7. The distribution of information in printed form and online.

The main methods of awareness-raising were through the involvement of media (national and regional radio and TV stations, magazines), the production and dissemination of publicity materials, documentary films, conferences, festivals and on-line facilities (website), the use of social media (Facebook, Forum), engagement with social partners and workshops conducted by employers for parents.

## **We changed how Poles think**

Surveys were carried out at the onset and at the end of the campaign to evaluate its effects. Data collected at the end of the project illustrated some change in attitudes among respondents with regard to fathers' and mothers' roles in childcare and child raising and the division of housework and childcare between parents. The campaign was evaluated by researchers at the University of Warsaw (<http://www.etattata.pl/aktualnosci/nid,61/>).

*"I think we have achieved our goal, and the action we organised has changed how Poles think about how to educate their children, and allow for the full development of professional both mothers and fathers,"* said Jolanta Bylica, a spokesman for the project.

The wide range of activities and partners involved, as well as the specific focus on fathers, were innovative for Poland. The campaign brought to the attention of the public and employers the issue of active fathering and it highlighted the importance of work-family reconciliation for fathers.

## **Publicity for good employers**

The campaign contributes to gender equality by promoting a model of equal sharing of unpaid and paid work. One of the main aims of the campaign was to promote women's economic activity and prevent women's discrimination in the labour market through the activation and involvement of fathers. Moreover, its contribution to reducing gender inequality is through making employers aware that work-family reconciliation is important for male employees. The end-of-campaign survey demonstrated some positive attitudinal changes among men and women with regard to sharing childcare and domestic work. However this change should be interpreted as a continuous process in which attitudinal and behavioural changes interact with a changing policy environment and opportunity structure.

A number of factors made the campaign a real success. These include the scope of the campaign which was designed as a nationwide initiative, its multi-pronged strategy (a wide range of activities and methods), the wide involvement of employers, the publicity given to companies that implement good practices, qualitative and quantitative surveys pre- and post-campaign on men's and women's family roles, the clarification of legal provisions in specific cases by experts and the dissemination of this information on-line.

At the same time there are aspects that require further consideration. Corporate social responsibility is voluntary, and the kind of firms and organisations willing and in the position to champion active fathering is likely to be small. The participation of employers is important, but a more concerted and coordinated approach (top-down and bottom-up) is needed for discernible change to take place. Another potential problem is that active fathering is seen instrumentally – as a tool to improve the productivity and loyalty of valuable workers. Where such a link cannot be made, the issue of fathers' involvement in childcare is unlikely to be promoted. Fatherhood and active fathering should be seen as a stand-alone social and policy objective.

The assessment of the campaign concludes that creating reconciliation measures is worthwhile, and that the information gathered will contribute to changing attitudes and the wider adoption of good practices, especially among employers. Another conclusion is the role of media in creating a pro-family media climate supportive of 'investment in the family'. The focus on fathers was intentional, since the organisers noted that the role of active fathering is generally undervalued. Nevertheless the organisers were satisfied with the level of engagement of fathers in the campaign's activities. Improvements could include additional efforts to overcome employers' reluctance to accommodate fathers' needs, broadening the scope and rationale of the practice, and strengthening the legal underpinning of active fathering.

The initiative is relevant to the majority of EU member states. The division of paid and unpaid work between men and women remains unequal in most EU countries and the issue of work-family reconciliation, particularly at the company level, is still perceived as concerning mostly female employees.