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## **BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LABOUR MARKET REINTEGRATION OF MOTHERS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN FROM A COUNSELLOR'S PERSPECTIVE**

**Анотація.** Сім'я є запорукою стабільності, а її збереження – турбота кожного. Угорське суспільство сприймається як в основному орієнтоване на сім'ю та дитину. Мета нашого дослідження полягає в тому, щоб розробити взаємовигідне, перспективне та довгострокове рішення, яке підкреслює численні обов'язки молодих матерів у прийнятті рішень і базується на ідентифікації та усвідомленні їхніх основних здібностей, які ми проаналізували. Метою цієї статті є продемонструвати, що впевненість у собі та ключові компетенції є визначальними факторами реінтеграції на ринок праці та збереження роботи. Більшість опитаних співробітників з маленькими дітьми не були повністю усвідомлені щодо власних ключових компетенцій, але їхня впевненість у собі зміцнилася завдяки знайомству з ними.

Опитування проводилося трьома різними методами: особисте інтерв'ю, анкетування та структуроване групове інтерв'ю. Всього в опитуванні взяли участь 700 матерів з маленькими дітьми до 6 років. Наше дослідження показало, що матері намагаються знову вийти на ринок праці, що для них не просто з кількох причин. Роботодавці відіграють вирішальну роль у забезпеченні того, щоб працівники з маленькими дітьми могли зберегти свою роботу. Якщо період дітнародження можна спланувати і включити в життя компанії, він не стає непроникною стіною між роботодавцем і працівником. З часом зникає відчуття, що по той бік стіни стає все більш невідомим для обох сторін. Дуже важливо, щоб їм були запропоновані можливості, які відповідають їхньому професійному шляху. Наш інноваційний підхід полягає у використанні професійної орієнтації як інструменту надання допомоги, яка, окрім позитивної дискримінації на робочому місці, може гарантувати, що вони мають належні умови праці та перспективи на майбутнє, які є стійкими в довгостроковій перспективі. Майбутні дослідження мають бути зосереджені на максимально точному відображенні потреб як працівників, так і роботодавців. Це могло б стати основою для комплексної програми реінтеграції та збереження роботи для працівників з маленькими дітьми, яка добре інтегрована в повсякденне життя компанії.

**Ключові слова:** стійкість, працівник з маленькими дітьми, профорієнтація, реінтеграція, впевненість у собі, ключові компетенції

**JEL Classification:** J23, J29, J49.

**Absztrakt.** A család a fenntarthatóság kulcsa, megőrzése pedig mindenki ügye. A magyar társadalom alapvetően család- és gyermekközpontúnak tekinthető. Tanulmányunk célja egy kölcsönösen előnyös, előremutató és hosszú távú megoldás kidolgozása, amely a fiatal anyák többszörös döntési felelősségét

hangsúlyozza, és az általunk elemzett alapvető képességeik azonosításán és tudatosításán alapul. Ennek a cikknek a célja annak bemutatása, hogy az önbizalom és a kulcskompetenciák meghatározó tényezők a munkaerő-piaci reintegrációban és a munkahely megtartásban. A megkérdezett kisgyermekes munkavállalók többsége nem volt teljesen tisztában saját kulcskompetenciáival, de az önbizalmuk erősödött azok megismerésével. A felmérés három különböző módszerrel készült: személyes interjú, kérdőíves és strukturált csoportos interjú. A felmérésben összesen 700 6 év alatti kisgyermekes anya vett részt. Vizsgálatunk kimutatta, hogy az anyák igyekeznek visszakerülni a munkaerőpiacra, ami több okból sem könnyű számukra. A munkaadók kritikus szerepet játszanak abban, hogy a kisgyermekes munkavállalók megtarthassák állásukat. Ha a gyermekvállalás időszaka tervezhető és beépíthető egy cég életébe, az nem válik áthatolhatatlan fallá munkáltató és munkavállaló között. Idővel megszűnik az az érzés, hogy a fal másik oldala mindkét fél számára egyre ismeretlenebbé válik. Nagyon fontos, hogy szakmai pályájuknak megfelelő lehetőségeket kínáljanak számukra. Innovatív megközelítésünk, hogy a pályaválasztási tanácsadást olyan segítségnyújtási eszközként alkalmazzuk, amely a pozitív munkahelyi diszkrimináció mellett garantálhatja a megfelelő munkakörülményeket és a hosszú távon fenntartható jövőkilátásokat. A jövőbeni kutatásoknak a munkavállalók és a munkáltatók igényeinek minél pontosabb feltérképezésére kell irányulniuk. Ez lehet az alapja a kisgyermekes munkavállalók komplex reintegrációs és munkahelymegtartó programjának, amely jól beépül a cégek mindennapi életébe.

**Kulcsszavak:** fenntarthatóság, kisgyermekes munkavállaló, pályaválasztási tanácsadás, reintegráció, önbizalom, kulcskompetenciák.

**Abstract.** *The family is the key to sustainability, and its preservation is everyone's concern. Hungarian society is perceived as basically family- and child-centred. The purpose of our study is to develop a mutually beneficial, forward-looking and long-term solution that emphasizes the multiple decision-making responsibilities of young mothers and is based on the identification and awareness of their basic abilities that we have analysed. The aim of this article is to demonstrate that self-confidence and key competences are determining factors in labor market reintegration and job retention. The majority of the employees with young children interviewed were not fully aware of their own key competences, but their self-confidence was strengthened by getting to know them. The survey was conducted using three different methods: a personal interview, a questionnaire and a structured group interview. A total of 700 mothers with young children under 6 years old participated in the survey. Our study showed that mothers are trying to get re-enter the labour market, which is not easy for them for several reasons. Employers play a critical role in ensuring that workers with young children are able to retain their employment. If the period of childbearing can be planned and incorporated into the life of a company, it does not become an impenetrable wall between employer and employee. Over time, the feeling that the other side of the wall becomes more and more unknown to both parties disappears. It is critical that they be offered opportunities that are appropriate for their professional path. Our innovative approach is to utilize career guidance as a tool to give assistance that, in addition to positive workplace discrimination, may guarantee that they have the proper working conditions and prospects for the future that are sustainable in the long-term. Future research should focus on mapping the needs of both employees and employers as accurately as possible. This could be the basis for a complex reintegration and job retention programme for workers with young children, which is well integrated into the daily life of companies.*

**Key words:** *sustainability, employee with young children, career guidance, reintegration, self-confidence, key competences.*

**Introduction.** The emergence of women in the world of work marked a great turning point, as throughout history until the 19th century in Europe, the primary role of women was fulfilled in creating family harmony [28, pp.100]. Today, we spend most of our time at work. The position of women has been and is being studied in a number of studies around the world. Everywhere the focus of the studies is different,



but it can be said that the situation of women in the labour market is different from that of men in terms of economic empowerment, social differences and traditions. Koncz K. [10, pp.30-39] has carried out a number of studies on this issue, which show that they differ in various countries, but show similarities in the way that they have led to the devaluation of feminised occupations. This is confirmed by a 2014 study by Karolinyné and Galambosné [8, pp.100-117], which found that managers were overwhelmingly male. "*Women's equality, women's employment ... is a very frequently heard social and economic issue in the EU, yet in the developed world the results are mostly disappointing*" [26, pp.36-44].

A large proportion of employers perceive mothers with young children as problematic employees rather than valued employee [16, pp.7-11]. We hope that this attitude will change in the near future, and that we can contribute to it with our new approach.

Today, society in Hungary has an ambivalent expectation of mothers with young children to work, but also to stay at home with their children for as long as possible. According to research, the majority of women plan to stay at home until their child reaches the age of three [27, pp.45-52]. Bálint and Köllő (2008) calculate that on average, a mother spends 4.7 years away from work with a child, and for families with several children this may be even longer [2, pp.430-438].

**Literature review.** Women as a disadvantaged group in the labour market are considered as an object of discussion in different scientific research. Today, women are at a disadvantage in the labour market and do not enjoy equal opportunities [5, pp.494]. Kenderfi [9, pp.312-330] defines a disadvantaged person as someone whose social career opportunities are not guaranteed due to their living conditions and circumstances. In Hungary, the concept appears in Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities and the constitution regulates the issue of discrimination, according to which women and men have equal rights. The European Union prohibits all forms of discrimination. According to UNESCO (1997), women who raise their children alone are disadvantaged.

Discrimination starts at the job application stage, as the fact of having a child or the expected biological age of a woman can influence the selection of two candidates of the same quality for a job, and later on, a woman may have to face a number of negative situations during her career.

Employers are becoming more and more conscious of the need to do more to promote the well-being of their employees, in addition to making a profit. Developing and retaining workforce is part of an HR strategy, which is a very complex task. It is also included in the UN's Sustainable Development Agenda for the period up to 2030, adopted in 2015, as one of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Gender Equality 5).

Overall, the situation of women in the labour market has improved considerably over the past decades, but there is still a significant gap with men.

It would be important for organisations and society alike to operate a system that supports rather than excludes family involvement, so that the question of family or career does not arise [13, pp.523] or the problems of dual careers when children are born, as they have both work and family in their lives, and the difficulty of reintegrating them into the workplace is a risk factor [15, pp.324].

Finding a job is not easy for anyone, as everyone is looking for the job that best suits them. Our chances of finding and keeping a job are greatly influenced by our cross-skills, or key competences.

Super [22, pp.148] was the first to recognise this and over the past half century or more, there have been countless definitions of the cross-occupational skills that influence the way we work on a daily basis. These skills are now increasingly appreciated in our complex and flexible world of adaptability.

Mothers have a range of skills that could be put to good use in the labour market if they were aware of their skills and were given the opportunity to use them consciously.

Perhaps one of the most complex definitions of key competences is the one below, which is included in the glossary of a Hungarian journal. *"The set of abilities which, in addition to professional knowledge, fundamentally determine the employee's characteristics of integration, motivation, manageability and creativity. It includes the human, social and emotional characteristics that, in addition to skills and intellectual ability, determine how an individual copes in a community, in a work environment"* [6, pp.30].

The concept of key competences itself was introduced in the 1970s by a German work educator, Dieter Mertens (1974) [21, pp.43-54].

According to the EU recommendation, *"The demonstrated ability of an individual to apply his or her knowledge, skills and qualifications in both normal and changing occupational contexts"*.

Key competences are reflected in job advertisements, the prevalence of which has been studied by Mertens, Werner and Siegrist, among others.

In Switzerland, 682 job advertisements were analysed according to Mertens and Brassard's criteria. Siegrist [21, pp.43-54] ranked the key competences according to their frequency of occurrence.

In Hungary, Bajusz [1, pp.486] examined the general employee attributes during the social and economic changes of the 1990s, namely knowledge of job search techniques, lifelong learning ability and openness, foreign language skills, information processing skills, adaptability, ability to work in a team and autonomous decision-making. On this basis, a list of core competences (work, key and leadership competences) expected by employers has been drawn up.

Key competences will define the world of work much more in the future than in the past. Employees need to know their own competences, which they need to develop continuously. It is beyond the scope of this study, but the skills and attitudes of the future generation of workers that will be needed in the workplace of the future present very exciting challenges for both employers and workers (e.g., the emergence of new professions and new ways of working).

**Goals of the article and presentation of an empirical study.** Aligning the corporate and individual career paths is an important HR task if we want to work with employees in the long term, especially women employees with young children.

Human resource development opportunities and HR tools that can help both employers and employees to retain jobs are of particular importance in the life of an organisation. These can include non-traditional working time structures and employment practices, internal communication, adult learning (training/retraining), training methodologies, e-learning [17, pp.271], knowledge management and transfer,



mentoring and talent programmes, equal opportunities at work, career development, career planning, time management, and various social policies to promote employer-employee relations [7, pp.232].

In our opinion, career counselling methodology can become a key tool in this process, as each worker's case is different from the others, in whole or in part, and requires individual consultation. With relatively little effort, companies could preserve their greatest asset, the employee. Our aim is to raise awareness among employers that, in addition to positive workplace discrimination, they can use the tools of counselling (structured career planning, career counselling/planning, self-awareness, time management, communication, etc.) to retain valuable employees, and mothers can plan better if their relationship with their workplace is not completely disconnected or reduced to administrative questions (e.g., When do you want to come back? How many babies do you want?). It is hoped that the method of personal counselling can help to create a healthier competitive situation between women without children, male workers and mothers with young children, and thus moderate the tension between them. It should be clear to everyone that everything is always a matter of individual reflection and choice [20, pp.352]. A career plan should be developed jointly, which can be constantly adapted and adapted to changing needs [11, pp.227]. This gives young women the chance to moderate their professional lives, and companies do not see it as a threat or a constraint when the employee's status at work becomes passive, or when they become active again, often with the return of a 'new' colleague with new goals. It is useful to have a well-prepared and practically adaptable counselling programme in the form of individual and group counselling [20, pp.352].

Some mothers experience a loss of self-confidence during their stay at home after childbirth but find it much easier to think through their problems if they have other activities or work to do in addition to childcare.

**Methods and methodology.** A total of 700 mothers with young children under 6 years old participated in the survey between 2011 and 2019. The survey was conducted using three different methods: a personal interview (103 participants), a questionnaire (564 participants) and a structured group interview (33 participants). The programme was carried out with the involvement of students of Human Resource Counselling at the University of Gödöllő, during which a large number of mothers with young children were met. Mothers with young children were defined as mothers with a child or children under 6 years of age.) This development project was designed to support them, to address their lack of self-confidence and to develop their skills.

The innovative approach of the model used is due to the fact that it is adapted to the women's life situation, specifically designed with their interests in mind (e.g., in terms of locations, timing and childcare). The primary focus is on increasing self-confidence through the confrontation, when women realise that the knowledge, they have acquired during childcare is convertible to the labour market, while other skills become obsolete during their time at home. Although the focus of the programme was fundamentally on development, there were quantifiable results that could be shared.

We see a dual benefit of the programme combined with the study.

On the one hand, their CVs, essential for their job search techniques, were updated and extended with real key skills related to the activities they had carried out during the childcare period. Key competences have been identified, some of which are competences previously known by the mothers and some of which are competences

that the mothers are not aware of, and which represent new opportunities. During the interviews, more and more competences were identified about themselves (e.g., shared attention, empathy, problem solving, planning, taking responsibility). Women recognise that the knowledge they acquire during childcare is convertible in the labour market, but that other skills become obsolete during their time at home. The process of getting to know each other was followed by the first step of unpacking the CV, the second step was to pick out activities (e.g., "I put together the child's nursery clothes", "I plan the weekly lunch", "I invent games", "I defend and make peace", "We create, we do crafts", "I am always on the lookout", "I talk to mothers in the playground", "I organise activities", "I make quick decisions", "I wake up and rock her all the time", "We are patient", "I go to parent-teacher meetings", "I wash, cook and clean", "I change nappies, I babble") and the third step, to collect and make them aware of the underlying skills with our help and then to add them to her CV. Existing skills were as follows (in order of frequency): independence, precision, good communication skills, collaborative skills, flexibility, stress tolerance, practicality, good coordination, perseverance, patience and empathy. Skills identified include (in order of frequency): workload management, divided attention, flexibility, good communication skills, responsibility, good organisational skills/logistics, creativity, decisiveness, autonomy, cooperation, precision, reliability and punctuality. These skills, which are also often presented in job advertisements as conditions for employment, can be defined as key competences for the labour market. During the exploration, the number of skills that were subjectively accepted by the members of our target group increased by more than 2.5 to 3 times. Feedback during the group exercise indicated that they did not even think they possessed so many skills. As a result of the programme, the CV writing process also revealed issues that could help them to re-enter the labour market. The mothers have consciously thought about how they will build their future lives, making decisions based on their individual perspectives. Their personalities are enriched with key skills during child-rearing, which, with more attention, can be put to good use in a wide range of areas of the labour market. The individual and group counselling sessions will help them to identify and take stock of the skills they can use in any job. In our experience, they have increasingly identified skills that we make them aware of. It is important for them to be aware that during their time with their children, they are developing several key skills that can be converted into labour market skills (such as, among others, shared attention, autonomy and responsibility). These activities are of particular importance in the coaching process at work [24, pp.332; 23, pp.228; 22, pp.148; 18, pp.320; 19, pp.404; 4, pp.298].

On the other hand, the associated recognition had a positive impact on the self-esteem and self-confidence of the mothers. This research was essentially designed to support mothers in identifying and improving their lack of self-confidence, because our surveys show that self-confidence, inhibition and fear of failure are perhaps the biggest barriers to mothers' chances of finding a job and reintegrating into the world of work. Regaining self-confidence is key to this process. After having a child, mothers need to return to the labour market with awareness, self-confidence and self-interest, so that employers do not see them as disadvantaged workers but as potential sources of work, and it is important to shape attitudes on both sides to this end [12, pp.41-51].



## Research results and discussions.

**Positive experiences of mothers.** Many skills improved during the time at home (e.g., problem-solving skills, creativity, flexibility, reliability, precision, ability to take responsibility, empathy, patience, self-discipline, sacrifice, sharing attention, physical strength, manual dexterity, interpersonal skills, logistics, tolerance of monotony, time management, willpower, sense of duty, not striving for perfection, organisational skills, ability to renew, more efficient time management). Some social competences, such as adaptability, cooperation, empathy, conflict management, are strengthened. Among personal competences, a sense of responsibility has improved markedly, autonomy has improved considerably, perseverance and creativity have improved. Among the cognitive competences, attention, strategic thinking and problem solving improved, but the ability to organise tasks did not change. Positive changes in competence are observed after birth and during childcare. Among the key competences, the most pronounced are the ability to cooperate, to communicate and to be independent. In addition to these, general work-related qualities such as cooperation, communication, autonomy and problem-solving skills have also improved. It is observed that some experiences enrich the range of competences, attention increases in proportion to the number of tasks, tolerance and tolerance improve, creativity becomes more prominent, they are more able to work under pressure and to take responsibility. They are eager to learn new things. Creative tasks have become part of everyday life, which are the result of the new life situation (interviews show that they are e.g., needle painting, glass painting, napkin technique, sewing, crocheting, learning to bake and cook). Mapping daily routine tasks, making a daily time schedule, being organised, increasing their ability to cope with stress, developing their organisational skills, problem solving and adaptability. Tolerance, tolerance, ability to share attention, empathy, reliability, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, flexibility, willingness to compromise and stamina (also under greater physical strain) are increased. Several times during the interviews it was mentioned that they had been enriched by the feeling of knowing unconditional love, that family had become the most important thing for them. Some have developed a wide network of relationships and a varied social life. Some have thought about a good career and have made a change of career, taking up a new profession. Mothers undergo a very intensive skills development during their time at home. It is also observed that higher levels of education are associated with higher levels of autonomy, easier decision making and a preference for autonomy. In many cases, problem-solving ability increases in proportion to the number of children. For married mothers, conflict resolution seems to be easy for them. As women get older, they feel more experienced. Mothers with a higher level of education can list more skills. They think that on an individual level, there are more opportunities for mothers today than there used to be. It was stressed that with the right help, you can really make a difference.

A lot of skills have been gathered in the sessions, usually three times as many are revealed by the end of the sessions. For example, in one session 515 skills were collected, of which 139 were revealed independently and the total number of skills revealed during counselling was 376. The number of skills revealed increased more than two and a half times during the structured interviews (most common skills: empathy, physical resilience, autonomy, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, good organisation, responsibility, accuracy, divided attention, attention, conflict resolution,

brainstorming). On average, 2.6 skills were listed as skills they would like to include in a CV. The number of competencies listed by mothers is correlated with age, education and number of children. These listed competences in order of frequency are: perseverance, communication, creative, autonomy, resilience, responsibility, attention, reliability, empathy, conflict management, confidence, problem solving, organisation, cooperation, planning. After the skills are discussed, activities related to everyday childcare are collected ("I put together the child's nursery clothes", "I plan the weekly lunch", "I invent games", "I defend and make peace", "We create, we do crafts", "I am always on the lookout", "I talk to mothers in the playground"! ", "I organise activities", "I make quick decisions", "I wake up and rock her all the time", "We are patient", "I go to parent-teacher meetings", "I wash, cook and clean", "I change nappies, I babble") After the group session, they were able to list 0.6 more skills on their CVs.

During the sessions, existing skills were discussed (in order of frequency): autonomy, accuracy, good communication skills, cooperative skills, flexibility, stress tolerance, practical, good coordination skills, perseverance, patience, empathy. Skills revealed (in order of frequency): resilience, divided attention, flexibility, good communication skills, taking responsibility, good organisational skills/logistics, creativity, decisiveness, self-reliance, cooperation, precision, reliability, punctuality, both. Most of the feedback from the group sessions was that they had no idea that they had so many skills and that they could use them in the labour market.

Mothers are resilient and able to share attention and the most popular skills identified were (in order): resilience, shared attention, responsibility and flexibility.

**Other changes related to motherhood according to participants.** Typically, mothers' values are changing (health is a new value, healthy and conscious lifestyle is emerging, shopping habits are changing (quality, cost). Hungarian society is perceived as basically family- and child-centred. They feel that women have to choose between being a good mother or a good worker when they return to the labour market. They believe they are at a disadvantage. The majority are forced to work full time because of financial constraints. Mothers prefer part-time jobs, which pay less. They consider part-time employment, home offices and teleworking to be ideal as opposed to full-time and fixed working hours. At present, employers support mothers in the workplace through part-time work, flexible working hours, financial support for children and childcare, according to mothers' reports. The majority of respondents consider the ideal age for returning to the labour market to be between 2 and 3 years old, but mothers find it difficult to leave their children in nursery or crèche, which they feel is more difficult the younger the child. The time to return to the labour market and the number of children is emotional and less likely to be generated by financial support. Mothers would like to stay at home for 3 years, which is not changed by the low amount of maternity benefit or the extra grant, if they can afford to stay at home financially, most regret the early return. Work-life balance is important according to 89.7%, "A happy, well-balanced mother can cope both at work and at home...But if she is overworked, stressed, she cannot perform at essentially any level she would expect, which leads to frustration and irritability." Many people say that if the mother is happy, the family is happy. The emergence of new learning methods (self-taught language learning, courses, reading books, which was not previously the case).

**Gaps and difficulties according to mothers.** In many cases, it was highlighted that during the stay-at-home period, the professional knowledge is eroded and should be





constantly updated, which leads to a deterioration of professional/specialised competences. Keeping knowledge up to date is a very big challenge. This trend is perceived as unfavourable for the labour market. Employers are aware that they have a harder time dealing with mothers, but they would nevertheless expect more support and empathy from them. They have little information about the opportunities available to them as employees with young children in a particular company. They are out of the corporate routine during their time at home. Mothers experience work and family responsibilities as a double burden. In general, they feel that it is difficult to find a job, that there is a difference in pay compared to other workers, that the birth of a child is accompanied by problems at work and that the careers of mothers with several children are being eroded. The smaller the child, the greater the mother's guilt about separation when she returns to the labour market, so there should be more leeway for when she returns in the future. Younger age groups have a more negative view of mothers with young children than older mothers. Almost all respondents (questionnaire and interview respondents) believe that mothers with young children are in a more difficult position in the labour market than their counterparts without children. Some of them may find their relationships more restricted and withdrawn, their self-esteem low during their time at home. Our research suggests that larger firms are not much more family friendly than smaller ones. And family-friendly policies do not actually help mothers with young children enough. Questionnaires and interviews show that childcare is not a problem during the day, but employers are still reluctant to take on atypical workers. The least developed skills are manual dexterity, interpersonal skills and precision. Manual dexterity, interpersonal skills, precision and communication skills show different levels of development. Among the specific/professional competences, foreign language, business value and entrepreneurial competences have not changed. Mothers' entrepreneurial competence declines as they age, they are less likely to start something new, preferring to stay in a secure environment for a long period of time. Attention is positively affected by an increase in the number of tasks for mothers with young children. Declining foreign language competence is reported to result from years of non-use. Mothers with young children have a heavier workload and a greater lack of time than workers without children. The sooner the mother returns to work, the harder the separation is for both parties. They feel outraged by the 'forcing' into the labour market and feel there should be the option to remain a stay-at-home mother with financial support. In the workplace, overtime is expected, but the opening hours of childcare facilities are inflexible to the needs of the labour market.

**General recommendations.** It is motivating to know that the mother can return to work. Reintegration is currently under-supported. Employers should be persuaded to employ workers with young children. Employing mothers is in the economic interest. It would be beneficial to set up a maternity club, e.g., for reintegration purposes, where the child could also attend group counselling sessions. Work-life balance measures (music room, anti-stress, sports card, family days) are very much appreciated. A workplace mentoring programme and training courses organised in different ways would help. More days off would be necessary during pregnancy. Even while staying at home a transfer or training scheme should be introduced. Mothers go back to work earlier because of their financial situation, which is later regretted by those who could have chosen otherwise. Financial support could remedy this. Return to work between

the ages of 2 and 3 is ideal, but if it is possible to work from home, it can sometimes be earlier. Home office, flexible working, part-time or full-time with flexible working hours are important. Family work-sharing is needed for a return to work. Childcare and child-rearing responsibilities need to be shared so that they are not just on mum's shoulders. Support for the learning of mothers with young children is very important. Atypical employment cannot happen without public support. The creation of family-friendly workplaces is important. There is a need for active communication between employee and employer, which would be crucial to meeting expectations and ensuring a successful return. There is a demand to improve the information of economic operators on benefits (e.g., maternity grant extra, tax benefits, contribution benefits, Start Plus card, etc. (M K, 2014). Changing traditional attitudes is also key to a successful return. Skill development (especially for key and general workers) creates a more favourable labour market situation. The majority would like to get re-enter the labour market, and to do so they need to know their circumstances. It would be important to sensitise other colleagues to mothers in the areas of empathy, cooperation and tolerance, so that they are more accepting and understanding, thus creating a friendly working environment. Suggested values exploration and confidence building training for this group, to help them to return more easily, as they are not aware of their skills and their applicability in a working environment. In their opinion it would be worth informing them every six months about what is happening, calling them in from time to time to keep in touch, flexible employment, family-friendly workplace, atypical employment, part-time work support, looking at how it works in other countries (good practices). Mothers with young children could be given time off, special working hours, flexibility.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** Overall, our study showed that mothers are trying to get re-enter the labour market, which is not easy for them for several reasons. The most ideal age for mothers to return to work is between 2 and 3 years of age of their children, most often for financial reasons, which the vast majority of mothers later regret. The problems described in the literature review over the past decades have also emerged in our research, so our results have shown that, although there is a shift towards progress, they are still mostly live problems that need to be solved.

Workers with young children need help to stay in the labour market and to return to it with the skills and knowledge to enable them to work at the required level. They are motivated if they feel they can return to work. In addition, vocational training is essential for successful reintegration. Support for their development is necessary, as in professions where they need to keep up to date with, for example, changes in legislation, they will be at a considerable disadvantage years later. The employee is likely to be anxious about returning to their position, because of the likely many changes that have taken place since they left, and the employer is concerned about whether the employee, who was once known for reliability and speed, will make good and professional decisions. In addition to knowledge, their professional satisfaction and confidence would presumably be enhanced if they did not fall behind, as quality work also gives them self-esteem [14, pp.52-55]. Knowledge based on individuals and skills is the key to a modern management strategy [25, pp.312].

Firms can even help with internal training (e.g., communication, IT, foreign languages). Later, depending on demand, they can be given the opportunity to get



involved in the workplace for a project. This would be as useful for the company as it would be for the mother. Other HR tasks (such as a Santa Claus party for the children, a monthly internal communication newsletter, Christmas and New Year gift packages, team building training, etc.) are also a priority. In addition to this, ongoing informal and formal contact can reinforce the sense of belonging to the company, moderating the process, creating a sense of temporal boundaries and a future-oriented approach [29, pp.476].

In addition to family support (e.g. work-sharing, self-time, childcare, financial security), the key to their successful reintegration is the recognition of existing and new skills that can be converted into labour market skills, the discovery and conscious application of their usefulness, the development of their self-confidence and self-esteem (which is significantly reduced during the time spent at home), and the updating of the childcare system (e.g. flexible adaptation to labour market needs in terms of their opening hours), public subsidies (which have improved significantly over the last decade), training (support for reintegration programmes, which are currently under-supported) and changes in employers' attitudes (flexible employment frameworks, creating genuinely family-friendly workplaces, providing opportunities for promotion, an inclusive environment, tolerance and persuading them to employ mothers). The issue of the importance of self-time and the division of labour in the household emerged clearly among young mothers, for whom these are more basic needs the younger they are.

In addition to skills, employers today value reliability, learning, flexibility, responsibility, conflict management, emotional intelligence, cooperation and shared attention, which are essential for today's worker. Therefore, when they return to the labour market, young mothers have a good chance of applying for a wide range of jobs, because their presence on the labour market can bring a quality level by exploiting these skills, which still have a large human resource potential.

However, for reintegration to be successful, it is essential that the mother is an appropriate partner in the process. Everyone makes their own luck, it is always a matter of choice, decision and conscience. If the period of having children can be planned and integrated into the life of a company, it does not become an impenetrable wall between employer and employee. Eliminating the feeling, as time goes on, that the other side of the wall is becoming more and more unknown to both parties.

From the employee's side, the aim is to give meaning and value to work, to increase professional skills, to improve quality of life, to maintain a career path, to develop life goals, to reduce social exclusion, to avoid maternity depression, to maintain a "sense of usefulness", "can do" attitude, to maintain and possibly develop practical skills and to strengthen or increase loyalty.

From the employer's side, the aim is that opportunities for integration/reintegration and support are explored, employee know-how is preserved, the biggest obstacles and solutions are identified, and internal labour needs are met. "*...it is important to what extent the mother feels herself to be a full-fledged employee, an employee who is not determined by uncertainty, the constant possibility of mistakes, the fear of the new in her work, but an employee who can be an active member of her organisation in terms of knowledge, practice and emotions*" [3, pp.68-78].

Future research should focus on mapping the needs of both employees and employers as accurately as possible. This could be the basis for a complex

reintegration and job retention programme for workers with young children, which is well integrated into the daily life of companies.

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