



Martin Kastler

Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments

Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear guests,

as the patron of today's conference may I warmly welcome you to the European Parliament in Brussels.

I am pleased that today we focus on a determining topic which is so much important for Europe, its citizens and economy - the work-family-balance.

At the same time with this event, we recall the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of Family.

The reconciliation of work and family is also in the context of demographic change, a key challenge for the Austrian family policy. The political task is to create the suitable conditions so that the balance between work and family life can turn out well.

The globalization of the economy and its impact on the workplace, and the changes in family and demographic structures require new responses to the needs of parents in the employer and the employee role.

Family friendliness is already a hard, tangible location factor in the competition for the best candidates. Europe must take good position in this global competition. Knowledge is our most precious commodity - accordingly fundamental it is for us to keep the best and to avoid brain drain,

Exactly these young people are the ones who provably care about family life and work. Thereon the politics and the economy have to react - at local, regional, national and European level.

Today we speak a lot about the so-called Europe 2020 objectives. If you ask me: family friendliness and the genuine reconciliation of work and family are with no doubt a part of it.

I am pleased that today we talk about the possibilities of a European label for family friendliness. I have to say: In general, I'm not a fan of such labels - because in many areas there are already too many and their value is zero.

When it comes to family friendliness I know a functioning example from my country: The Hertie Foundation developed a work & family audit. Proceedings and logo are now widely used and socially recognized in Germany and Austria.

It would be logical to support such an initiative for the entire European market. We should consider today that the Hertie Foundation and its European work & family audit has already provided a good pattern. European work & family audit would be the first Europe-wide applicable tool for certification of family-conscious personnel policy - which we so desperately need facing the economic and demographic developments.

Based on the experience of several years in Germany and Austria, a binding minimum European standard is possible, which guarantees uniform audits in the area of family-conscious personnel policy.

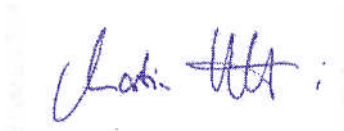
in Europe. But this is not just about the European label. This development can be considered the foundation of a family policy strategy for the European Union.

Another focus of such a strategy for more work-family balance must apply to health, especially mental health. Although, as the statistics is telling us that the Europe's employees do less often call in sick because they fear losing their job - but when they call in sick, it is increasingly due to mental illness: stress, depression at work, burn out. In Germany alone, the percentage of the lost time between 2001 and today increased from 6.6 % to over 12 %. According to an EMNID survey, every fourth German employee suffers from burn-out syndrome, a physical as well as emotional exhaustion. The inability to work due to a mental illness increased by 85 % between 1994 and 2012. And it was particularly because of young mothers and fathers and fathers who were trying to get work and family under one roof.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can not leave this problem on the backs of parents, their children and families. Economics and politics are required - There can not be an economy, a society that makes our young fathers and mothers ill. Also we have to make a topic, if we are talking now have about work-life balance and tomorrow on about the European year of reconciling work and family life in 2014 or about the European label for family friendliness.

I am in - and I can only say to Commissioner Andor : Listen here and now good. Support this cause, so that Europe is more than ever on the side of families. They are the future of Europe, which we all hope for.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Kastler', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martin Kastler MEP