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Seminar: WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND REFORM OF THE WELFARE STATE:  
INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND PRACTICES AT REGIONAL LEVEL

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**temps x TEMPS PROJECT. Fostering new forms of work time organisation in Catalan businesses: pilot scheme on two industrial estates.**

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## **SUMMARY OF THE EXPERIENCE**

This initiative was born with the aim of **highlighting the competitive advantage for businesses, of applying work time organisation measures.**

To achieve this aim, the Government of Catalonia, in collaboration with two local governments made available to firms on two industrial estates in the Barcelona industrial belt a series of actions and resources to aid the implementation of measures such as flexible working hours, teleworking, and working time agreements, amongst others, and to verify how they contribute to improving the work-life balance of employees, increasing their quality of life and productivity for the company.

The results of this pilot scheme are proof of the positive impact of the time organisation measures on the firms taking part and their employees.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2007, the Government of Catalonia promoted the Fòrum del Temps (Time Management Forum), an initiative proposed with the aim of reopening the social debate on time management from a more inclusive and wider perspective, which, amongst others, means from the gender perspective.

The Fòrum del Temps was created to commence a thorough treatment of the lack of work-life balance society faces today, based on a comprehensive approach and bearing in mind the complexity of the issue. In carrying out this task the involvement and combined efforts of all the social and economic actors was essential, as was the design of a participative work methodology to facilitate exchange and cooperation in the general approach to the subject. The aforementioned social and economic actors and a representative group of experts from various fields, sectors and regions

attended and took an active part in the forum. Specifically, they came from business organisations and trade unions, the academic world of Catalonia, Spain and Europe, companies, entities and associations and government agencies from all over Catalonia.

Altogether, over 100 experts in the subject contributed to the definition of possible proposals and measures that could help achieve a balance in work time organisation by incorporating the gender perspective and equal opportunities.

Almost all the social actors and experts agreed on the need to approach the matter of time and the life-work balance across the board and were in favour of 'rethinking' time taking into account the needs of both company and employees.

The result of the Forum participation process was a series of recommendations that have guided the Government of Catalonia in specifying and implementing actions aimed at a new form of workplace time management, which have been grouped into four areas:

- Awareness raising
- Business practice
- Training
- Studies and methodological resources

The need to extend the business practice of more flexible time organisation and more rational distribution of working hours, along with a will to continue to innovate, whilst bearing in mind the specific features of the Catalan business fabric, gave rise to the definition and experiment of the project described below as good practice.

## **OBJECTIVES**

### **General objective:**

To make available to firms on two industrial estates in the Barcelona belt (Barberà del Vallès and Rubí), a series of actions and resources that help firms to make the necessary changes in organisation to improve their human resources management by implementing balancing measures and new forms of time management.

### **Specific objectives:**

- To detect the real needs of the businesses where the pilot scheme was implemented.
- To inform and raise awareness amongst businesses, trade union representatives and employees of the benefits to be gained from time organisation that caters to the interests of all concerned.
- To build the skills of management teams and workers' representatives in order to implement the time organisation measures that best suit the needs of the company and the workforce.
- To offer advice and technical support to each of the participating companies in implementing new forms of time organisation.
- To offer services adapted to specific features of each company so that staff can strike the right work-life balance.

### **TARGET AGENTS**

The pilot scheme began in September 2008 with a total of **33 companies**, all of different sizes and operating in different sectors, and **4,307 workers**, 56% of whom are women and 44% men. Seventy-eight percent work in companies with more than 300 employees and mostly in the industrial sector.

#### **Distribution of companies by number of workers:**

- Under 50: 15%
- Between 50 to 300: 35%
- Over 300: 50%

#### **Distribution of companies by sector:**

- 32% Services
- 68% Industry

#### **Distribution of companies by activity:**

- Textiles and Leather goods
- Chemicals
- Handling
- Consultancy
- Labour Risk Prevention
- Economic development
- Logistics
- Other services and industries

## PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The pilot scheme was divided into **three stages**:

### 1 **Diagnosis (September – December 2008):**

#### **Qualitative analysis:**

- Analysis of the status of the companies in regard to policy on reconciliation of work and private life.
- Analysis of company needs and expectations in regard to the pilot reconciliation scheme.

#### **Quantitative analysis:**

- Analysis of the profile, needs and expectations of the workers in regard to reconciliation of a sample of 816 workers.
- Surveys of management to compile and measure business indicators (absenteeism, staff turnover, etc.), which were measured again once the scheme had finished.

### 2 **Implementation (January – December 2009):**

Once the diagnosis of the status of the companies was completed, the following was put into operation:

- **Individualised diagnosis** of the situation in each company.
- **Individualised work plan** for each company. In some cases centred on implementing new forms of organising work schedules and in others on improving time organisation.
- **Support** in the process of implementing the measures.
- **Training management and other staff** in work time organisation and reconciliation
- **Training management and other staff** in time management.
- **Networking sessions** in which companies shared good practices. Four of these networking sessions were held on subjects such as: teleworking, working hour's bank, internal communication, etc.
- **Best practice sessions** in which guest companies, which are references in reconciliation, shared their experience.
- **Home assistance services and medical helpline** for workers

### **3 Assessment (January – March 2010):**

#### **Qualitative assessment**

Personal interviews with those in charge of the project from the 33 companies that took part in order to obtain a qualitative assessment of the pilot scheme and the perceived effect of the reconciliation measures in companies.

#### **Quantitative assessment**

- Survey of workers and management of the companies that took part in order to obtain a quantitative assessment of the effect of the reconciliation measures implemented in the companies.
- Evolution of business indicators (with a sample of 1,654 workers): the evolution of absenteeism was analysed in the companies taking part.

## **ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **Main results:**

- The reconciliation measures implemented in the companies have enabled staff to greater work-life balance and have led to a better time management.
- Better time management based on flexible working hours means it is easier to make the most of more productive periods.
- New forms of work time organisation, based on flexible working hours, are useful to reduce absenteeism and the loss of work time in an emergency.
- Flexible working hours mean there is a margin to cover personal requirements and complete the tasks assigned more efficiently.
- The new forms of work time organisation make it easier to incorporate workers' needs and this leads to a better work environment.
- The improvement measures linked to the work environment are very highly considered and become a powerful tool to attract and retain talent.

### **Benefits obtained:**

- More efficient time management. True for 88% of companies that took part.
- Increased productivity. True for 81% of companies.
- Reduced absenteeism. True for 85% of companies.
- Less stress. True for 73% of companies taking part.
- Improved work environment. True for 84% of companies.
- Talent is attracted and retained. True for 65% of companies.

**Positive effect of the pilot scheme according to a survey of the workers at the start and end of the scheme:**

- 12% more workers would recommend their company as a good place to work than at the start of the scheme
- 4% more feel more committed to their company than at the beginning
- Perception of team performance and efficiency increased 13%
- 22% more workers felt their team had motivation and job satisfaction
- 11% more consider the team learning environment adequate
- Satisfaction with pay and the job done increased by 18%

**Absenteeism:**

Taking absenteeism as an indicator in four large companies in the pilot scheme a reduction in absenteeism was observed:

	Nº persones treballadores	Absentisme	
		2008	2009
Empresa 1	600	7,00%	5,00%
Empresa 2	86	6,42%	5,21%
Empresa 3	310	3,60%	3,10%
Empresa 4	968	4,30%	3,80%
	1964	5,33%	4,28%

With a base of one thousand, nine hundred and sixty-four workers, absenteeism dropped by almost 1.1 points

**Challenges for the future and conclusions on the pilot scheme:**

- The challenge is to formulate and consolidate a dynamic that will enable companies to continue to exchange experiences and open up meetings to other companies that did not take part in the scheme.
- The reconciliation measures have had to be adapted to the circumstances of the economic crisis and the changing circumstances of the companies. Therefore, flexibility in the type of measures and linking reconciliation to improved time management is fundamental if companies are to notice the benefits of this type of measure.
- In regard to dissemination of reconciliation throughout Catalonia, it will be necessary to overcome the internal reticence towards reconciliation, such as,



the misconception that it involves a cost, that it cannot be applied in times of crisis, and so on.

- In order to ensure the survival and extension of the reconciliation measures implemented in the companies, a monitoring system must be consolidated. To do this, companies must be given a set of structured monitoring indicators that can highlight the benefits of the measures.
- In many cases, the workers' perception of the measures in each company depends largely on internal communication campaigns. It is therefore very important that internal communication is fostered and the reconciliation measures in effect explained, along with how to put them into practice.
- The scheme must be extended to more companies throughout Catalonia for it to become consolidated.

## **DISSEMINATION AND EXTENSION OF GOOD PRACTICE:**

The pilot scheme was publicised in the media and through the publication of the results. This publication was distributed in several sessions and symposia organised with companies to work on equal opportunities and work time organisation.

Networking sessions were held with companies throughout Catalonia to make known the measures and procedures companies are implementing in making changes in work time organisation to aid employees in reconciliation.

This pilot scheme model tested is currently being used by companies on industrial estates throughout Catalonia to validate it and consolidate good practice in companies that are making changes in work time management to improve the quality of life of staff along with the productivity and competitiveness of organisations. This scheme, which is implemented throughout Catalonia, is called **temps x TEMPS**.

## **CONTINUITY of 'temps x TEMPS' PROJECT**

This innovative project is an initiative of the Ministry of Enterprise and Labour, subsidised by the Servei d'Ocupació de Catalunya (Employment Service of Catalonia) and the European Social Fund.

It was born with a desire to contribute to transforming the current productive model based on physical presence at work with the conviction that we can beat the crisis by innovating: new strategies and new actions that value people's time.

'temps x TEMPS' is a project that invests company time to promote new business strategies based on efficient work time management, increased productivity, and increased worker satisfaction in regard to equal opportunities. It is an initiative that fosters the life-work balance whilst promoting the most profitable, durable and innovative organisations.

This project operates on industrial estates in the four provinces of Catalonia and involves sixty companies, collaborating organisations and municipal entities, social agents, chambers of commerce and so on, and consensus is being sought amongst all the agents participating in Catalonia.

'temps x TEMPS' represents a small investment in time for companies in order to achieve a clear objective in which everybody wins: more time for the company in increased productivity and time and quality of life for employees and society in general.

The project was implemented in 60 companies in February and will finish on 31 December 2011 with an individualised and collective assessment of the results.

## **COMMITMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CATALONIA**

The work-life balance is a core issue on which the Government of Catalonia is taking action. In this regard, the Ministry of Enterprise and Labour is implementing public policies to promote change and improvement in work time management and internal human resource management processes in companies.

This is one of the strategic objectives of this Government, given that this is a time of change and opportunity to seek and implement new formulas that enable reconciliation between the people's wellbeing and business productivity.

## **APPENDIX**

**Total budget for the pilot scheme:**

**289,014 euros**

**Companies taking part in the pilot scheme:**

➔ **Empreses participants. Rubí**

Avanzit Infraestructuras  
B-Braun  
Blindados  
Emerson Process Management  
Grifoll Print Promotions  
Industries gràfiques Grifoll  
Roche Hermanos  
Serca Injecció Plàstics  
Tecus Plàstics



➔ **Empreses participants. Barberà del Vallès**

6PM  
ACS  
Aisa  
Barberà Promoció  
Baricentro  
Armand Basi  
Cartservice  
Cetba  
CCS Agresso  
Clece  
Embalatges Porta  
Gabinete Técnico Neriz  
Grupo CAT  
Mol-matric  
Pentatrans  
Pinter  
Prelab  
Provital  
Quimihotelco  
Seur  
Sernal  
Sucitesa  
Ternum  
Vuitton

