

Combination pressure: the work family balance in European countries

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1. Introduction

Today all kinds of people are busy and feel hurried (Gleick 1999). Due to the fact that in many households both partners have a paid job, also when there are young children present, they are in a continuing process of balancing work and family life. Employers also seem to demand increasing commitment from their employees. Working overtime is in a number of professions has become a common phenomenon. Based on American figures Schor (1992) confirms in her study the 'Overworked American', that American citizens face serious distortions in the allocation of time over paid work and the private sphere and Hochschild (1997) argues that in the USA work has become home, and home has become work. But it is also believed that the "stress" society is no longer anymore a truly American phenomenon (Schor 1998).

At least in the western part of Europe, men and women increasingly experience time pressure (Garhammer 2002, Allan & Grow 2001, Peters 2000). Although Gershuny (2000) argues that over the last 50 years in western societies there has been an increase in leisure time, it feels as if we are running out of time. Working partners have to make the most of their time, and experience more and more time pressure (Lewis and Cooper 1989, White, Cox and Cooper 1992): some of them feel tired, stressed, and complain about burn out. When the job cannot be finished at the office and work has to be taken home, these kind of feelings might be the result.

For the eastern part of Europe it is more difficult to say. It might be that we are facing here a typical western phenomenon, feeling stressed, facing combination pressure might be related to the fact that men and women explicitly strive for double career families. It is true that in the former communist regimes, women used to have a full time paid job and due to their households obligations, they were at least as busy as their western counterparts (Van der Lippe 2001). However, paid work of women used to be more out of economic necessity than based upon ideological reasons. Nowadays they still often have fulltime paid jobs. Men, although not very much engaged in household tasks, still have large fulltime jobs. However, we do not know whether some kind of combination pressure is also actually felt by men and women in the Eastern part of Europe.

The focus in this contribution will be on an explanation of the experienced work-family balance of men and women in Eastern and Western European countries. It is our aim to give more insight in the way men and women experience nowadays the multiple claims on their time; and to understand the differences between European countries therein. Are we able to draw a sharp line in the experience work-family balance between the eastern part and the western part of Europe? The gathered data in eight European countries (the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania) makes it possible to study these differences between countries. First of all, expectations will be formulated based on the individual level: to what extent do work related and home related factors influence the experienced balance in work and care. Next, expectations will be formulated based on the institutional level. The different policies and backgrounds of countries will influence the way men and women will experience the balance in work and care. Work home balance will be studied here only for couples where both have a paid job, since in these cases combination pressure is most likely to occur.

2. Theory and hypotheses

Individual level

Although we study work-home balance, it is important to unravel home related and work related factors, since they will influence in a different way the work home interference (Voydanoff 2002, Moen & Han 2001). Most of the time, home and work related factors are studied additionally, independent of the home situation the work situation will effect the work home interference. According to Voydanoff (2002) the household situation can also be a mediating factor or there can be an interaction between the work and home situation: the household situation strengthens or weakens the effect of the working situation on the experienced work family balance.

With respect to the work situation, it can be argued that the more time is spent on the labour market, the less time is available for care and leisure time. This expectation is based on a scarcity argument (Hiller 1984; Van der Lippe, Tijdens & de Ruijter 2003). Because a day has 'only' 24 hours, time for one activity implies obvious less time for another activity. Such a scarcity argument, which has to do with the actual time, can also be applied to the experienced time: if men and women spend more time on the labour market they will experience to have less time available for family obligations and this will increase combination pressure. According to some, work/family conflicts for mothers and fathers are becoming increasingly similar (Coltrane

& Adams 2001). However, it is well known that time spent on the labour market is more a constant factor for men than it is for women, especially in Western European countries. We therefore expect that the number of paid working hours will be more important for the work-home interference of women than of men, and especially for women in Western European countries. Not only the time spent on the labour market is important but also if one is working overtime. In general flexible work schedules, like the right to choose own begin- and endtimes of work would have a positive effect on the balance in paid and domestic work. On the other hand flexible work schedules might form a threat for having a stable relation at home (Presser 2000). Working in the evening or in the weekend, not working on standard times, could provide stress and tension. The 'business as usual' at home cannot go on anymore, like eating together or spending leisure time with the family. This can form a threat to the experienced balance in work and care. So working overtime can thus increase combination pressure for both men and women.

According to the demand hypothesis (Coverman 1985), the more care is needed at home the more time will be invested in the house. The demand for care is first of all dependent on the size of the family and the ages of the children. The bigger the household and the younger the children are the more time is needed to care. It can be expected that this will imply more combination pressure as well. The one who takes care of the largest part of the household will experience also more combination pressure. It is well known that women often take care of the extra time needed in the household. That women take care of most of the household obligations can be explained using the exchange perspective. The division of tasks can be seen a result of implicit negotiations between spouses about the inputs (financial resources) and output (who takes care of the household) (Greenstein 2000). Groenendijk (1998) shows that the unequal division of household tasks in combination with a paid job is stressful for women. Next to the division of household tasks the demand also depends on the number of hours the partner has a paid job. The more hours the partner works, the less time he or she has available for domestic duties; pressure upon the balance between work and care is taken care of by the wife or by the husband of the partner. It can be expected that they face more combination pressure. We do not expect a difference here between men and women.

Finally we want to add to the explanation a different factor which has been proven to be important in feelings about the balance between work and private life (...). Whenever partners agree more on important but also daily household issues, they are likely to face the balance of work and care less as a problem. When partners have a busy life, but it is going in mutual agreement, the experience will be less negative. When one has continuous conflicts with each other, pressure will be perceived much more in a negative way (Voydanoff, 2002).

Contextual level

Combination pressure is likely to depend not only on household and work related factors but also on the country where men and women live. Countries may differ in the way social policy is institutionalised, and a number of typologies have been developed pointing out main differences in ideology, functioning and outcomes between welfare states (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1998; Lewis 1992). When thinking about combination pressure especially two country level mechanisms come into mind (Strandh & Boje, 2002). The first one is the *family friendly policy* in a country. Extensive programs like the presence of childcare facilities and rights of paid leave make the combination of work and care better possible. It would imply that the more a family friendly policy is elaborated in a country, the more likely that households experience less combination pressure. The other mechanism is the *culture* towards combining work with care. Feminist academics have pointed out that social policy contexts are not gender neutral but also representations of systems of gender relations which can vary between countries (Lewis 1992; Duncan 1996). We agree, but even when policies have the same content in a country, the cultural background of these countries can differ; stated in another way, it would imply that the general norms and values in a country towards combining work and family can result in different standards and normalities towards work family arrangements. When the problems of combining work and care are not an issue in society, combination pressure is less likely to be expected.

Family friendly policies How are family friendly policies visible in the countries under study? Sweden represents a welfare model that uses strong state intervention aimed at enhancing the individual's independence from the market and the family. The state has taken an interventionist and regulatory approach to the labour market and gender/family-related policies in order to facilitate the successful combination of work with family responsibilities. Programs include rights such as full time paid parental leave for 480 days, the right of paid leave when children are ill, the right to go down to 6 hour days while the children are younger than 8 years and the public provision of full time day care facilities for both young and school age children (Esping-Andersen 1990, Strandh & Boje 2002). These policies form part of conscious measures directed towards providing conditions ripe for increased gender equality, and are very much aimed towards making it possible for married women and mothers to stay on the labour market (Lewis 1992, Sommestad 2001). Nevertheless in practice, Swedish women predominantly make use of the right on extensive parental leave and the universal right to work part-time during the first seven years of a child.

The Netherlands and the United Kingdom are comparable with respect to the amount of family friendly policy they have. In both countries the government has only started extending family friendly policies the last years. In the Netherlands there are still relatively few interventionist programs directed towards enhancing the possibility to combine work and family. There are rights for six months unpaid parental leave at the same time as there is little provision of full time childcare facilities outside the family (Jager 2002). Also in the UK, with a largely deregulated labour market and little public provision of services, there is consequently little done by the government in order to facilitate the combination of work and family. Parental leave regulations were introduced only in 1999 and were then limited to the directives minimum requirements of thirteen weeks unpaid leave. Childcare is viewed as a private responsibility, and to be solved through market mechanisms. Although there is a commitment to equal opportunity in the United Kingdom the state thus does very little to facilitate the outcome, and the result could be labelled a strong male breadwinner model where women's incomes are secondary to men's (Esping-Andersen 1990, Lewis 1992, Cousins & Tang 2002). Somewhat mitigating these gendered effects, however, has been the rising availability of part time work over the last 15 years in these both countries. These short hour jobs entail the same employment protection and much of the same social rights as full time jobs have principally been directed towards married women and mothers (Esping-Andersen 1990, Lewis 1992, Jager 2002).

The five East European countries face a different situation. They are in a situation of rapid change in the labour market and in the institutions surrounding it. During the socialist regime all citizens of working age were guaranteed a job, and comprehensive social insurance systems were available (Zemfir 1997). In general in Eastern European countries the priority used to be and still is to restructure the labour market in the interest of economic efficiency. The family friendly policies that helped women in Eastern Europe to the labour market under the former regime are dissolving. Still, there may be continuities in such public support for the previous regimes. Now in many studies welfare state development in Eastern Europe are over-generalised as it were uniform all over Eastern Europe (Makkai 1994, Fodor, Glass, Kawachi & Popescu 2002). In our Eastern European countries under study at least a distinction can be made between two kind of countries, based upon the speed of the transformation of state socialist planned economy towards a capitalist model. Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic changed their economy much faster than Romania and Bulgaria. The related economic development in the last two countries is still not on level in comparison to the other two countries (Deacon 1992, 2000). Especially Slovenia recovered rather well from the recession in the 1990s (Sicherl & Remec 2003).

In Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic family friendly policy will be developed much more than in Bulgaria and Romania leading to less combination pressure. For Slovenia the share of women in employment is one of the highest in Europe and most of them work fulltime. Their situation is helped by generous benefits, maternity leave, kindergartens and employment regulation that support working mothers. Unlike in other former socialist regimes these facilities have not been cut (Sicherl and Remec 2002). Slovenia is also seen as “Sweden of the south” (Cousins and Tang, 2002). In the Czech Republic, a series of reforms is going on into the direction of Western European countries. Childcare facilities and maternity leaves are still there, but job security and earnings are increasingly based on profits and job performance (Vecernik & Stepankova 2002). Some women no longer employed in undemanding jobs are finding it more difficult to combine work and family (Heitlinger 1996). In Hungary, leave facilities for especially women are still extensive; all women with children benefit and they can work part-time after the first birthday of their child. Childcare facilities come into play only after the child reaches the age of four, before women are expected to be on paid maternity leave (Medgyesi 2002).

In Bulgaria and Romania many families have returned to the family economic gender model (Pfau-Effinger, 1996) in which both gender contribute to the survival of the family economy. Family and individual survival strategies are more important than work and family balance. Due to its underdeveloped economy, Romania does not have the financial resources to create extensive programs for the combination of work and care; most of the financial resources for economic development. State support for families significantly dropped in Romania since 1989 (Stanculescu and Berevoescu 2002). Maternity benefits are among the lowest in these five Eastern European countries. Bulgaria can be understood more as an example of late modern market economy; somewhat more facilities are proved to keep the balance between work and care (Kovacheva 2002). In conclusion based on family friendly policies it can be expected that especially in Sweden and Slovenia and to a lesser extent in Hungary and the Czech Republic the extensive family friendly policy will lead to less combination pressure than in the Netherlands, the UK, Bulgaria and Romania.

Cultural background With respect to the cultural background, the prevailing ideology towards combining work and family life, a different expectation can be formulated. In Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom the problem of combining work and care is present in society. Men and women are socialised with the idea that this is a major issue in present day society, and it can therefore be expected that they are more open to reaction of a negative balance in work and care. They have the possibility to lighten their combination pressure by adapting their

working hours or working schedule; the welfare context eases the choice by reducing the social consequences. In the former socialist regimes on the other hand, policies were aimed at getting women into paid employment and not so much at combining work and care. In other words, the problem of the work-family balance was not so much an issue in the former socialist regimes. After the velvet revolution more attention has been paid to the economic restructuring of society than to making the combination of work and private life easier. Provisions are not so much motivated from an emancipatory view, but they rather build on old communist policy (van der Lippe & Fodor 1998). We therefore expect that based on the cultural background of the countries in Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom there will be more combination pressure than in the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Hungary.

Data and methods

For the analysis we make use of a large comparative data set collected within the ‘Household Work and Flexibility’ project (HWF) financed through the European Union’s fifth framework program (Wallace 2000). The HWF survey used a common questionnaire on random samples in eight participant EU and transition countries (The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden, Slovenia, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania). The questionnaire was designed to cover the combinations of paid and unpaid labour among household members and included forms of work such as housework, voluntary work, casual work along with the various kinds of regular employment, as well as attitudes and tensions between the work and private sphere. The survey was conducted in 2001, using face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews with men and women aged 18 to 65. The response rates vary between countries, being particularly low in the Netherlands but high in Eastern European countries. However, for all countries the samples are representative. For our analyses we make use only of couples in which at least the respondent has a paid job. The total N for our analyses is 4622 men and women.

Dependent variable. We constructed a scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .071$ for the whole sample) measuring the experienced balance between paid work and family life – in the past three months – from four items. These items consider both the influence of work on family life and vice versa. It is important to acknowledge that the experienced balance may vary over time, and even can vary from day to day (Pittman, Kerpelman & Solheim, 2001). The question reads: how often have you experienced the following in the last three months (ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (always))? 1. My work makes it difficult for me to do some of the household’s tasks that need to be done. 2. My work makes it difficult to fulfil my

responsibilities towards my family and other important persons in my life. 3. My responsibilities towards my family and other important persons in my life prevent me from doing my work adequately. 4. I have to take work from my employment home to finish.

Independent variables. The working situation comprises of several features. Firstly the actual number of hours in paid work; secondly the overtime people do in their job. In our analyses two items are included, namely working (overtime) in the weekend and during the evening, since it is interesting to see on which moments of the day-week working (overtime) is causing combination pressure. The household situation also consists of various items. As has already been said only respondents with one partner from the opposite sex are included. The household situation is measured using the following variables: the presence of children younger than 7 years old, the presence of children between 7 and 14 years old and the size of the household. Other family-variables include the hours of paid work by partners as well as the person responsible for domestic work in the household. This variable is based on who is mainly taking care of cooking, cleaning the house, doing the laundry and the daily shopping. The care for children is not taken into account, since not everyone has children. Furthermore a scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$) is added to the model representing the (dis)agreement within the household (ranging from 1 'always disagree' to 5 'always agree') and consisting of items on household finances, allocation of household (domestic) tasks, the amount of time spent together and the amount of time spent at work (in employment). These questions were not directed specifically to the partner, so answers could refer to other members in the household. In our analysis we assume that answers mainly concern the partner. Finally age and educational level are included as control variables.

Table 1 shows that there is a large difference in working hours of women in The Netherlands and the United Kingdom compared to the other six countries. In these two countries women spend on average less than 30 hours to their paid job, whereas in the 5 included countries in Eastern Europe women spend on average 40 hours per week on their paid job. Sweden is in between these two, with women working 37 hours per week. The differences between men in working hours per week are much less between the countries under study. Another remarkable but maybe well-known figure is that men in all countries are doing more overtime in the weekend and during evenings than women. We can further see that it are still the women who are responsible for the domestic tasks; especially in Eastern European countries the division of household tasks is rather unequal; taking of course into account that women in these countries on average work 40 hours per week in a paid job as well. Eastern Europe is known for its unequal division of household tasks (Van der Lippe &

Fodor 1998); equal gender policies in the former socialist regimes aimed only at gender equality on the labour market. The total paid and domestic workload is larger for women in the five Eastern European countries than in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and to a less extent in Sweden. We have to see whether these figures go together with more combination pressure in Eastern European countries. It can be noted further from this table that the households in Eastern European are more often bigger; it is more common in Bulgaria and Romania to live in with your parents than in countries like the United Kingdom and Sweden. One last remarkable finding from this table, which has however nothing to do with our study is that the educational level of women in the three western European countries under study is lower than that of men whereas in Romania and Bulgaria it is vice versa.

<Table 1 about here>

Results

Differences in combination pressure between countries

We start with analyzing whether there are differences between countries in the work-family balance before explaining the balance for both men and women in the countries under study. Table 2 presents the evaluation of men and women of the items with respect to work-family interference. People are busy, doing paid work, domestic tasks, taking care of the children and participating in social events. However, table 2 shows that the respondents do not experience a severe violation of their work obligations by family responsibilities nor vice versa. One way or the other most people are able to reconcile both life spheres. We cannot conclude that these people do not experience time pressure at all. Our items are specifically focused on the interferences of both life spheres and stated quite firmly. Looking in greater detail at the figures, a larger percentage of men and women in all countries agree to the items with respect to work obligations influencing home obligations than the other way around. If there is any work-home conflict, the direction is from work to home and not vice versa. The situation can be such that the home situation is not adjusted to unexpected but important deadlines at work. The interference of work to home is experienced more for domestic tasks than responsibilities to family members. This finding is confirmed by the fact that some 10% of men and women are often likely to take work home. Interesting to note here is that in the Western European countries under study, men are more likely to take work home, whereas in Eastern European countries women are more likely to take work home.

Table 3 presents a test of the differences between countries and between men and women with respect to combination pressure. This table is a result of a combination of the four separate measures for work-family balance, and reports the percentage of men and women facing some kind of combination pressure. As can be seen from this table only in Slovenia and Hungary differences exist in the perceived work-family balance between men and women, women in these two countries more often face combination pressure. In the other countries there are no differences between men and women in combination pressure. We do not know yet whether work-family conflicts are becoming increasingly similar for men and women as stated in the beginning (Coltrane and Adams 2001), but we do know by now that there are no differences in the experienced balance between the sexes.

The differences between countries in combination pressure are significant; the largest percentage of respondents facing combination pressure is found for Slovenian women. In Slovenia many women state that their work often makes it difficult to fulfil responsibilities towards the family (table 2). In Sweden combination pressure for both men and women is high. Here also the highest percentage of all respondents facing combination pressure is found. It would imply that the extensive programs for child care facilities and parental leaves do not help in diminishing combination pressure, but even might increase it. Since combining work with family life is an issue, feeling stressed and hurried has become part of the culture. Also in the Netherlands a rather high percentage of women faces combination pressure, especially given the fact that the amount of paid working hours in the Netherlands is rather low for women. For the Netherlands we reason that this is partly due to the shortage of child care facilities and other programs; in comparison with Sweden, the Netherlands started quite late with organising child care facilities; and still societal life is not adjusted to working women and their working schedules. In the other Eastern European countries, with the exception of Slovenia, combination pressure is less than in the Western countries under study, indicating that indeed balancing work and family life is not an issue in their culture. Remember that this is despite the fact that the paid and domestic workload is heavier in Eastern Europe. Going back then to the expectations formulated at the country level, it seems as if the culture towards combining work with family life is more important than the facilities making this combination possible in understanding combination pressure.

<table 2 and 3 about here>

Explaining combination pressure in eight European countries

To test the influence of the work and home situation on combination pressure, we performed separate regression analyses for men and women in the respective countries. We find ample evidence supporting the availability hypothesis. Especially for the Western European countries, working long hours is a stable factor in explaining combination pressure and so in doing overtime. With respect to working hours the results are unexpectedly not very different for men en women. For the Eastern European countries the results are somewhat mixed; and especially in Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania the results are contrary to our expectations. Working long hours does not seem to be important in experiencing combination pressure (with the exception of Bulgarian women).

With respect to working overtime, for women overtime in the weekend is giving them more combination pressure than overtime in the evenings. For men this is the other way around. Exceptions here are again Bulgaria and Hungary: overtime in the weekend gives Bulgarian men more combination pressure and overtime in the evenings Hungarian women. That women in general face more combination pressure when they are working overtime in the weekend, might be indicating that the balance in jeopardy for men is mainly a balance between paid work and leisure or social activities and less between paid work and care at home. Doing overtime in the weekends puts the time spent with the partner and/or children under pressure. Maybe men view weekend work as personal time, knowing that family life continues without their active interference. This impression is most valid for the Netherlands since the difference in the appreciation of evening and weekend overtime work in relation to combination pressure between men and women is most sharp here.

With respect to the household situation the size of the household seems to be important especially for women in the three western European countries. The more persons living in the household, the more care is needed and the more pressure women feel. This is independent of the age of the children; we even see for the United Kingdom and the Netherlands that children have a negative effect on combination pressure. In the Eastern European countries under study, the household size is not important; people are used to big households and a grandmother living in can help in taking care of the children, and relieve the double burden for women in this way. Another household factor, especially relevant in Eastern European countries is the responsibility for domestic tasks. Although women take the responsibility for domestic tasks, they do not feel pressed hereby; the more responsible they are for domestic tasks the less likely that they experience combination pressure. This is a rather unexpected finding. It might be the case that they feel independent because they are managing the household and can organise everything the way they want. So they feel not

pressured by the combination of work and care. A strong factor in the experience of work-family balance is the level of agreement between partners about household matters. In case of agreement, couples are more able to cope with combination pressure. Finally the level of education is important in all countries under study. Higher educated people always experience more combination pressure. The idea that higher educated men and women have more control in their paid job and therefore would experience less combination pressure is not correct.

So far we have assumed that work and home related factors are additional in their explanation of the work-family balance. In final instance we have analysed as Voydanoff (2002) argues interaction effects between work and home related factors. However, no systematic picture emerges and therefore we only want to spend a few words on the results; for Dutch and Swedish women agreement with their spouse decreases the effect of working long hours per week on combination pressure; having young children appears to be important in interaction with paid working hours for Swedish men and Slovenian women.

<table 4 about here>

Conclusion and discussion

We started our paper with describing some typical dilemmas of modern life; pressure and misbalance. In assessing combination pressure as a feature of modern society in which life spheres of work and private life are more and more interwoven, one might expect higher pressure for all Western-European countries, or at least lower pressure for the Eastern European countries. Our data do not support a clear east-west distinction, at least not on the level of combination pressure. Does a social policy context that facilitates the balance between work and care via family friendly policies lead to less combination pressure? We were inclined to think so. However, quite to the contrary analyses show a number 1 position for Sweden on combination pressure; Swedish couples are relatively most stressed and so are Slovenian women. People in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania are least pressed. So the presence of a family friendly policy is not a guarantee for a better combination of work and care. The prevailing ideology towards combining work and family life seems to be important. When the combination of work and family and the accompanying organising has become an issue in society, feeling stressed and experiencing work home interference becomes part of normal life. Since in Eastern European countries focus has been on the restructuring of the labor market, there has been no attention for some work-family balance.

We cannot conclude though that Swedish people feel less happy. Garhammer (2002) speaks about the time-pressure-happiness-paradox to feature modern Western European societies. The feeling of being rushed through simultaneous tasks and role overload as well as the sense of stimulation, associated with novel experiences is common in the lives of people in Western Europe. With the Danish, the Dutch and the Swedish probably are the happiest people in the world. Progress in life, generating flow, mobilising resources, being active as features of modern society, it all generates happiness. Time pressure is the other side of this. According to Garhammer (2002) people in modern societies learn to cope with time pressure. And we assume with combination pressure as well. Roughly spoken the British and the Dutch have found better solutions to deal with combination pressure than the Swedish, otherwise combination pressure would be higher in these countries as well. Women work part-time and also Dutch men work shorter hours as compared with the Swedes. Moreover, we think the Dutch differ from the Swedish in this respect that they do not translate a liberal gender ideology in a strict equal share of everything: it is easier not to. They resemble the Swedish in translating an egalitarian view in a desire and a need for harmony in the family situation. This leads to the assumption that although there is a strong relationship between combination pressure and the actual circumstances people are in (in particular the time spent at paid work) there might even be a stronger relation between combination pressure and people's subjective attitudes - coloured by the cultural context - which leads them to make certain decisions.

In all countries the work situation seems to be interfering more with the household situation than vice versa. Working long hours and doing overtime clearly leads to combination pressure for both men and women. The household situation contains elements, which especially for women leads to more combination pressure. Dutch, English and Swedish women face more combination pressure when there are more family members present in the household. For women in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania, being responsible for the domestic tasks implies less combination pressure. That education has such an important effect on combination pressure asks for further explanation. In our study no attention has been given to the position men and women have on the labour market. Definitely, it is not only the working hours that are relevant, but also the importance and the status of a job. Maybe education is an indicator of the position men and women have on the labour market. However, it is also possible that education is an indicator of the ideology with respect to facing combination pressure as an issue. More research is needed to unravel the importance of education found in this study.

In conclusion, although men and women do not suffer from a severe violation of their work obligations by family responsibilities nor vice versa, combination pressure is present in Europe.

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Table 1 Means of the independent variables used in the analysis

	Netherlands		United Kingdom		Sweden		Slovenia		Czech Republic		Hungary		Bulgaria		Romania	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	women	men	women	men	Women
Paid hours	41.13	24.40	45.28	27.39	43.07	37.02	45.54	40.39	45.96	40.98	47.31	42.07	40.99	39.51	47.41	41.62
Overtime evening	3.77	3.02	-	-	3.28	2.61	2.32	1.79	2.54	1.78	3.28	2.77	2.68	2.00	2.13	1.83
Overtime weekend	2.56	2.23	2.66	2.06	2.36	2.15	2.58	2.34	2.54	1.99	2.91	2.20	2.94	2.25	2.28	2.16
Paid hours spouse	25.73	40.98	32.22	44.09	36.90	42.59	39.47	43.39	29.42	45.14	42.37	47.37	40.59	42.05	36.81	45.13
Responsible domestic tasks	1.14	3.00	.99	3.25	1.07	2.88	.76	3.43	.40	3.54	.39	3.68	.50	3.33	.36	3.37
Youngest child 0-6	.33	.24	.25	.24	.27	.23	.20	.29	.23	.17	.23	.14	.23	.14	.26	.15
Youngest child 7-14	.27	.30	.36	.35	.36	.28	.34	.39	.36	.36	.29	.35	.27	.35	.39	.35
Size of the household	3.32	3.10	3.26	3.23	3.23	3.09	3.72	3.88	3.29	3.30	3.63	3.58	3.71	3.68	3.95	3.73
Agreement	16.53	16.31	16.15	15.70	16.55	16.67	15.42	14.78	15.13	15.25	15.13	16.01	18.56	18.37	18.44	18.03
Education	3.71	3.57	3.14	2.56	4.04	4.02	3.24	3.27	3.00	2.95	2.96	2.97	3.26	3.61	3.43	3.54
Age	42.18	39.49	42.13	41.75	42.54	40.77	43.88	39.68	42.51	39.90	44.96	41.78	41.99	41.22	43.46	40.20
N	297	277	170	222	459	450	194	164	377	296	242	221	357	338	297	261

Table 2 A comparison of the work-home interference of men and women in 8 European countries (in percentages, with 'often' as the answer category)

		NL	UK	SW	SLO	CZR	HUN	BUL	ROE
My work makes it difficult for me to do some of the household tasks that need to be done	Men	16.7	23.5	22.9	11.3	14.3	14.0	9.8	15.2
	Women	15.3	18.9	28.1	20.1	12.5	14.9	15.1	10.0
My work makes it difficult to fulfil my responsibilities towards my family	Men	7.5	11.8	15.3	13,4	11,7	12.4	7,0	12,2
	Women	4.7	11.7	16,3	17,8	7,4	7.2	10,4	8,0
My responsibilities towards my family prevent me from doming my work adequately	Men	0,7	4,7	1,7	1,5	1,3	2.5	0,6	2,0
	Women	1,1	3,7	1,3	1,9	2,0	1.4	1,2	2,3
I have to take work from my employment home to finish	Men	13,1	16,5	17,6	6,8	9,5	6.7	1,7	5,2
	Women	11,3	11,0	12,5	11,5	10,8	11.0	5,9	8,9

Table 3 Percentage of men and women feeling some kind of combination pressure in eight European countries

	All	Men	Women	Significant difference between men and women in a country
	**	**	**	
The Netherlands	25	26	25	
United Kingdom	27	30	24	
Sweden	34	35	34	
Slovenia	32	23	41	**
Czech Republic	24	25	22	
Hungary	21	20	23	
Bulgaria	15	11	20	**
Romania	23	24	22	
	25	25	26	

Table 3 Regression analysis to explain the work-home interference of men and women in eight European countries

	Netherlands		United Kingdom		Sweden		Slovenia		Czech Republic		Hungary		Bulgaria		Romania	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	women	men	women	men	women	men	Women
Paid hours	.16**	.21**	.32**	.21**	.18**	.28**	.18*	.16*	.21**	.06	.09	.08	.06	.20**	.06	.08
Overtime evening	.12*	-.05			.16**	.07	.11	.11	.27**	.17**	.09	.22**	-.01	.12+	.07	-.06
Overtime weekend	.10	.26**	.13+	.18**	.10*	.13**	.11	-.01	-.05	.22**	.03	-.02	.27**	.12+	.03	.19**
Paid hours spouse	-.02	-.01	-.10	.01	-.07+	-.03	.00	.06	-.04	.04	-.01	-.06	-.06	-.05	.14*	-.01
Responsible domestic tasks	-.01	-.06	.01	.02	.00	-.01	.03	-.13+	.07	-.12*	-.08	-.06	.05	-.12*	.09	-.13*
Youngest child 0-6	.12+	.07	.11	-.20**	.09+	.02	.06	.11	.03	-.14*	.08	-.07	-.04	.00	-.03	-.08
Youngest child 7-14	.03	-.20**	.13	-.10	.07	.02	.12	.03	.13*	.10+	-.03	-.05	-.07	.08	.06	.03
Size of the household	-.01	.22**	.09	.37**	.03	.14*	-.06	-.02	-.08	-.09	.03	.13+	.06	.08	.03	-.02
Agreement	-.23**	-.21**	-.11	.00	-.23**	-.19**	-.16*	-.21**	-.07	-.21**	-.20**	-.27**	-.16**	-.21**	-.21**	-.24**
Education	.20**	.26**	.14*	.30**	.16**	.23**	.26**	.29**	.19**	.27**	.29**	.34**	.03	.09+	.20**	.30**
Age	.01	.04	.04	-.07	.03	.04	-.05	-.02	-.09	-.11+	-.09	-.15*	-.16**	-.12*	-.06	-.04
Adjusted R-square	.18	.32	.23	.27	.26	.29	.20	.18	.18	.30	.15	.25	.11	.19	.13	.18