

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management



Diploma Thesis

**Maternity and Parental Leave and Alternative Ways of
Working**

Markéta Votrubová

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DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Markéta Votrubová

Economics and Management

Thesis title

Maternity and Parental Leave and Alternative Ways of Working

Objectives of thesis

The aim of this thesis is to find out how companies can support women to harmonize their personal and working life. If there are any possibilities and opportunities how to avoid radical choice between career and family. And what are women's attitudes to work during maternity leave.

Methodology

At first theoretical data will be gained from literature connected to the chosen topic. After literature studying practical data will be gained by questionnaires and interviews in the chosen company.

The proposed extent of the thesis

Approx 60 pages

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maternity leave, policy, working from home, home office, full-time job, part-time job, glass ceiling, gender differences, time management, quotas

Recommended information sources

Armstrong, M., Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice (12th edition)

Baker, M., Milligan, K; Maternal employment, breastfeeding, and health:

Evidence from maternity leave mandates; Journal of Health Economics 27 (2008) 871 887, available at <http://tinyurl.com/l72h7pb>

Hashimoto, M et al; The Long and Short of It : Maternity Leave Coverage

Hashimoto, M et al; The Long and Short of It : Maternity Leave Coverage and Women's Labor Market Outcomes; IZA Discussion paper series, No. 1207 (2004), available at <http://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/20460/1/dp1207.pdf>

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The Diploma Thesis Supervisor

Ing. Richard Selby, Ph.D.

Supervising department

Department of Management

Electronic approval: 15. 10. 2015

prof. Ing. Ivana Tichá, Ph.D.

Head of department

Electronic approval: 11. 11. 2015

Ing. Martin Pelikán, Ph.D.

Dean

Prague on 28. 03. 2016

Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my diploma thesis titled “Maternity and Parental Leave and Alternative Ways of Working” by myself. I declare that my diploma thesis does not break copyright of any third party.

In Prague on 30th March, 2016

Markéta Votrubová

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Maternity and Parental Leave and Alternative Ways of Working

Mateřská a rodičovská dovolená a alternativní způsoby práce

Summary

This diploma thesis concerns with maternity and parental leave in the Czech Republic on one side and it deals with alternative ways of working on the other side. The aim of the thesis is to find a possible way of cooperation between a company and women who left on maternity and parental leave and to find out if both parties are interested in cooperation during that time.

The thesis consists of two parts, a theoretical and a practical. The theoretical part is based on a literature review, what enable the researcher to gain an overview about the topic and thus proceed with the own research. The research is presented and discussed in the practical part. It focuses on a company's and women's points of view whether they would like to cooperate together during maternity and parental leave or not. The thesis is concluded by proposals based on the findings from the research.

Keywords

Maternity leave, parental leave, alternatives, flexibility, human resource management, childcare, glass ceiling, gender stereotypes

Souhrn

Předkládaná diplomová práce se zabývá mateřskou a rodičovskou dovolenou v České republice na jedné straně a na druhé straně se zaměřuje na alternativní způsoby práce. Cíl diplomové práce je najít možnosti, jak může firma spolupracovat se ženami, které odešly na mateřskou a rodičovskou dovolenou a zjistit, jestli obě strany mají o nějakou spolupráci během této doby zájem.

Práce je rozdělena do dvou částí, teoretické a praktické. Teoretická část je především literární rešerší, která umožňuje autorovi získat přehled o tématu práce a poté udělat na téma vlastní výzkum. Výzkum je zahrnut do praktické části. Zabývá se pohledem a zájmem firmy a ženy na společnou spolupráci během mateřské a rodičovské dovolené. V závěru práce jsou zveřejněny návrhy založené na získaných informacích z výzkumu.

Klíčová slova

Mateřská dovolená, rodičovská dovolená, alternativy, flexibilita, řízení lidských zdrojů, péče o dítě, skleněný strop, stereotypy založené na pohlaví

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1 Introduction

The diploma thesis deals with maternity and parental leave in the Czech Republic. The aim of the thesis is to find out what are alternative possibilities of working during the maternity and parental leave and if women and companies are interested in the cooperation during that time. The diploma thesis is divided into a theoretical and a practical part.

In the theoretical part general overview and knowledge connected to maternity and parental leave in the Czech Republic is introduced. Maternity and parental leave and alternative ways of working during that time are the main topics. Moreover, other related topics are presented as well. The theoretical part starts with the introduction of the demographic and labour situation in Europe. This is followed by topics such as human resources management, securing employees, day care possibilities or harmonizing family and working life. The loose translation of the Czech law is included and defines the whole structure of maternity and parental leave. Moreover, the education system for pre-school children and the social system in the Czech Republic are introduced.

The following practical part is the own research. The aim of the own research is to find out whether women and companies are interested in cooperation during maternity and parental leave. The idea is to interconnect these two standpoints and find the most suitable solutions for both sides. The point is that due to maternity and parental leave the employers lose experienced employees but in the same time they keep the position for this employee during the leave. On the other hand women are expected to lose their skills and knowledge during their leaves as the parental leave in the Czech Republic lasts 3 years for one child in the average. It arises a difficult situation for a company and especially for a woman when she comes back to work after few years.

Therefore, the goal is to find out how the company and the woman can cooperate already during maternity or parental leave and especially to find out if there is an interest in this cooperation from both sides. On the basis of findings, the thesis is concluded by suggestions and recommendations.

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The main objective of this thesis is to find out how women and companies can cooperate during maternity or parental leave and if there is an interest in this cooperation.

To achieve the main goal, partial objectives were set:

- to gain theoretical knowledge especially of legal perspective of maternity and parental leave in the Czech republic
- to analyse women's approach towards cooperation by executing a questionnaire;
- to analyse company's approach towards cooperation by leading an interview;
- to interconnect these two attitudes in SWOT analysis; and
- to propose solutions based on the research.

2.2 Methodology

Theoretical data for the thesis will be gained from literature that is connected to the chosen topic. As this topic concerns more aspects, the theoretical part needs to touch more areas such as Czech legislative, human resources management, time management, glass ceiling and gender stereotypes, school system etc.

The practical part will be focused on gaining information that need to cover two points of view – company's point of view and women's point of view. Information will be obtained from questionnaires that will be prepared for women and from interviews with HR department and manager of the chosen company.

Questionnaires and interviews should answer following research questions:

- Are women interested in working during maternity/parental leave? What is their attitude to other activities beside childcare during maternity/parental leave?

- What do women consider as a valuable support from an employer? What is their ideal vision in case of working during maternity/parental leave?
- Can an employer offer to women on maternity or parental leave cooperation during their leave? What is his opinion about any kind of cooperation?
- What are the steps when women come back from maternity or parental leave and what employer thinks about parental leave in the Czech Republic?

Questionnaire used for this research consists of series of questions which are prepared in advance and respondents are asked the same fixed questions. Questionnaire is mixed, it includes open-ended and close-ended questions. Open-ended questions are used for questions that needs substantiation to gain reasons behind previous answers and are also used for questions where it is necessary not to be limited by researcher's mind. Questionnaire was tried out on 5 women before it was published. The reason was to prevent misunderstandings of the questions. [4]

Research interview is used to obtain information and understanding connected to the general and specific goals of the research. Interviews differ in extent how interviewee can influence the content of interview. In the most structured interviews interviewer do not give the space to interviewee to influence the flow and they follows exact and direct questions. In this research semi-structured interview was used. The scope and questions were prepared in advance but interviewee was allowed to add own inputs to the content. Interviews were recorded and were utilized afterwards. Researcher marked only basic notes to follow the scope of interview. Interviews were taken after analyzing questionnaires to be able to tie it up together. [6]

As the last part of the own research there is SWOT analysis included and there are few strategies suggested. SWOT analysis evaluate the situation at the employer side on the basis of information from the questionnaires and the interviews that are interconnected. Suggested strategies are meant to support strengths, use opportunities, minimize weaknesses and avoid threats.

3 Literature Research

In today's Europe parenthood and childcare is crucial topic in shaping European social system. The reasons are demographic changes in the EU perspective. In 2050 the forecast says that more than 9 billions of people should live on our planet and about 95 % of this increase should belong to African developing countries. On the other hand European population is increasing at the lowest level in comparison to other continents and the prediction is to start to decrease in 20 years. The reason is really low birth-rate that is on the level of 1.5 child in the European average. In the Czech Republic the average is even lower.

Europe is getting older and it brings a lot of economic and social issues and huge risks. According the forecast 48 million people should be missed on the European labour market in 2050. Today's effort is to increase share of working seniors and also women but this is not a total new. Women can study and work from the 2nd half of the 19th century but at this stage as it is today a new question turns up: how to balance family and working life. This is becoming an issue and a big decision making. Even though it is a personal question a government should offer and secure good conditions for families with special respect to young parents. Opinion poll shows that there is a significant difference between a number of children that Europeans have and a number of children they would like to have. The goal of policies should be to increase the number of new-born children and to increase the number of women on the labour market. [8]

3.1 Human Resources Management

The European Commission pays attention to employing people and aims to fulfil goals for 2020. The goals for 2020 deal with the employment rate of people between 20 and 64 years. The rate should increase from 69 % to 75 % besides other things by involving women, older workers and integration of migrants. Talking about employing people we are getting to topic of Human Resources Management and securing employees. HR policy represents philosophy of a company and its values. The overall policy defines how a company fulfils social responsibility towards employees and how people should be treated. The policy of employing people regulates human resources planning, promoting, work life balance, equal opportunities, quality of employees etc.

3.1.1 Securing Employees

The very first expectation is that human resources management policies are respected during the process of securing employees. When searching for a new employee it is important to exactly define the needs for a vacancy – describe the position, what are needed skills and experiences or education and also what characteristics should that person be. The next step is to attract applicants. There are different sources where to search - search externally but also internally. Both sources have advantages and disadvantages. To find and choose the new employee is often a difficult and costly process. But crucial is to choose the right person.

When the person is chosen, adaptation process follows and is not less important. The aim is to speed up the integration of the new employee into the organization and to manage working demands at the best level. The adaptation is going on at working and at social level. In this process employees' expectations and concrete job requirements get to balance. The social adaptation includes also the engagement in a working group and social relationships within co-workers. This is the other aim of the adaptation – to involve the new employee into the team. The working adaptation will influence the worker's performance, motivation and satisfaction with the position. And it will show the perspective of a professional and career growth of the chosen person.

HR managers need to really think about the work life of the applicants to offer suitable jobs for them. The HR worker needs to secure this match of the life style, the characteristics and the demands as it would be costly and lose of the time for the company and the co-workers when choosing the wrong person. To do the right matching is the only way how to attract people who bring the productivity and gain to the company. Actually as there is more and more people with university diplomas, good language and IT skills, the major difference is in personal characteristics of people. The HR worker must consider how the applicant will fit into the company's values, match with the potential co-workers in the team, with the potential responsibility on the offered position etc. The characteristics and the matching are more or less what decides nowadays. [1] [11]. Let's introduce different Generations of people whose life style, values and motivation, HR managers need to understand and consider.

3.1.2 People of Generations

The first generation to mention is called Baby Boomers that defines people born roughly between 1946 and 1964. It is about twenty year's period after the end of the Second World War. It is a term for American generation where Baby Boomers grew up in a relatively safe time and economic prosperity. Most of these people work and really want to work. The reasons are for sure financial but also they like it. They are happy to be a part of the team and they are afraid of a retirement. They want to feel they are needed and have some responsibility. They are loyal to the employer, motivated to the team work and want to be rewarded for working attitude and long hours at work.

Secondly there is Generation X that covers people born approximately in 1965-1982 from western countries. These people do not trust in institutions and do not feel good in big corporations. They are individualists and do not care much about the society, they are much less loyal. On the other hand they work hard on themselves, they are well employable and interested in gaining new skills. They like to have their place certain, they do not search for changes and do not mind to work overtime. They do not like conflicts and talking about privacy with superiors. They postpone starting a family and then often resign for a career. Money are a very big value. They are not willing to borrow money and want to stay as much indebted as possible. They lay stress on a good working position but they are also aware they are not so good with new technologies.

At last, people born since 1976 are called Generation Y (this generation is sometimes divided into two parts till millennium and after). Characteristics of Generation Y are well comparable to Generation X. These people are ambitious and they want to have a good job full of challenges and freedom. They require higher standard of living, they feel the responsibility for their social security. They have specific requirements on the labour market. They work effectively, are flexible and have the time for their hobbies, friends, sport, relax etc. Flexibility is an important term in this generation. They have a lot of new ideas that want to make real. They want to get individual approach and enjoy coaching that helps them to find the right way for their working and personal life. Big motivation is the work which they like and which develops them. They are creative, tell what they think and want to reach results. Money are a tool but not the value as in Generation X. These people use loans and mortgages, they change positions when it is

advantageous and changes are a natural part of their life. Starting a family is also postpone but they do not resign on their career. They want to harmonize it. Modern technologies are also really natural part of their life. It influences their attitude to world and work. People want to be on-line all the time and communicate. In their life they prefer relationships, social contacts or working in teams. How is Generation Y seen as employees?

Generation Y wants everything and offer everything. Harmonizing working and personal life is very difficult due to needed leadership or time. But when the employer agrees then gets loyal and flexible employees who want to develop and gain new experience. Generation Y lay stress on long term effect in all parts of their life. This generation appreciate its time and they are able to work flexible, work from home, coffee bar or train but refuses to work overtime. On the other side sometimes they are not able to manage big work load, in their solutions are weak points and they are not so self-governing. For these young people company's commitment is also important, especially commitment to social values or sustainability. A workplace is also important – to have the effective workplace with good transport connection, with entertaining or social space, with good facilities such as showers, changing rooms etc. and good community facilities. [1] [21] [26]

3.2 Alternative Ways of Working

Flexible forms of working offers a better balance between the personal and the professional life. From the employer point of view it brings higher productivity, lower indirect expenses and direct impact on higher turnover. An independent study shows that 67 % of Czech firms got the higher productivity due to flexible working processes and 63 % of firms believes it increased also their turnover. About 56 % of the respondents stated they have more energy and higher motivation thanks to flexibility. The flexible ways of working improved working attitudes as well as health of the employees. It became an important tool for keeping the good employees and rewarding them and also for attracting the new people. 85 % of the respondents answered they expect more people who will decide to work part-time in the certain moment of their career. The flexible working environment is also a very good opportunity for the working mothers. The employer shows understanding and openness and the employees-mothers can be more

productive and less stressed. This was also a part of the companies' strategy how to fight against a financial crisis – to offer part-time jobs to the mothers coming back from maternity or parental leave. But study from 2011 showed that only 36 % of the companies included the working mothers into their strategic plan. [9]

There are different mechanisms of working considered as alternatives to full-time job. It means there is some kind of flexibility in each alternative. Flexibility allows people to harmonize and organize the working and family life according their needs and the work can be flexible in the time, the workplace or working conditions. Unfortunately, the alternative ways of working are not much spread among the employers and it is getting very slowly into the practice. When negotiating with the employer, it is important to know why the employer should be motivated to agree on any alternative. It really much depends on the culture of the company and its openness towards the alternatives. Generally this can be advantageous for both sides as the employees gain the alternative and the employer get the loyalty and verve. But it is crucial to clearly state what are the demands and the expectation so that nobody misuse this benefit.

For sure the alternatives can make harmonizing the working and the personal life easier. But it is necessary to use this opportunity effectively and be honest with ourselves. After answering these questions we should know if we can use this freedom properly and make the right decision. Do we want to work on our careers? Are we able to manage our time effectively? Are we self-disciplined? Do we need personal contact with our colleagues? Do we have a suitable space in case of home working? When we decide to go for alternative way we can gain more time for our family, be able to react to family's needs, save time and money and manage our time. [13] [15]

3.2.1 Alternative Possibilities

One of the most common alternatives is a part-time job when parents save this time for their families. Part-time jobs are pretty common in many countries but there are two opposite stands. The first stand says that human resources are underused and it is wasting of human capital. It is a pity especially when women are well-educated. On the other hand without part-time jobs these women most likely would not work at all because they would have to choose between full-time and zero. Researches show that people

working part-time are more productive than their colleagues and it is up to 20-30 %. The part-time employees usually want to use this shorter time really for work (without breaks for coffee and chatting with colleagues etc.). On the other hand there is a threat that the employer can hardly evaluate how much work this employee should do and it can happen that the part-time employee has as much work as a colleague working full-time. In addition working part-time usually also means that the employees do not get any other benefits and also career growth is much more complicated. [3] [15]

As a next alternative is flexible working hours. Usually it means that working hours are divided into two parts – fixed working hours and flexible working hours. Fixed working hours can be for example in time from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the rest of flexible working hours is up to ourselves when we work. But the main point is to fulfil our total working hours. This possibility helps parents with organization of walking children to kindergarten or school and picking them up as they are tied to opening hours. Another alternative that is also a kind of playing with working hours is compressed working week. It means that employee do not need to necessarily work all working days but work for less days but longer hours. As an example usual working week can be 8 hours from Monday to Friday and compressed working week can be 10 hours from Monday to Thursday.

Another not so common alternative is job-sharing. This lies in sharing one position within two people. This is a very specific alternative and it belongs to one of the most complicated. Job-sharing can work only when these two employees are able to perfectly communicate and it is hard to organize for their superior. There are two forms of job-sharing. The first is sharing one position within two persons. Here it is necessary to set the rules for handing and taking over the work. The second form is not sharing the position but sharing the working place (e.g. an office desk) within two employees who take turns in a working day or a working week. This saves money to the employer but on the other hand the employer must secure whole organization and outputs. [15]

Not to forget the next more common alternative - distance forms of working. It means that the employees work somewhere else than at the workplace. Teleworking is the way of working when the workers are not at the same place and they use information technologies for long distance communication and cooperation. It can be done from

offices, customers, co-working centres, trains or buses, hotels, restaurants etc. Teleworking is a concept that works all around the world, especially in international companies within international teams. The companies use a lot of different kinds of virtual supports such as videoconferences, chats, sharing information in clouds. Email and phone calls are still the most used ways of communication and due to all these alternatives is possible to contribute to efficiency and comfort of communication. Homeworking is a part of teleworking but is a little bit different. In most cases it is a combination of working at the workplace and at home but it is not applicable for all positions. Homeworking has advantages but also disadvantages for the employee and the employer. There must be clear set rules between them. The workers need to be motivated, know technologies and have suitable home conditions. There is important to have experienced working habits and to be fair to yourself if homeworking can be suitable and manageable. Some people are simply not ready for this kind of freedom in working. People who use any kind of teleworking can feel social isolation since they are not in personal contact with the colleagues. But on the other hand they have top flexibility in harmonizing their personal and working life. [12] [15]

The last alternative is working out of the usual employment contract. There are two possibilities with different conditions – Agreement to Complete a Job and Agreement to Perform Work. The Agreement to Complete a Job is mainly typical for one-time tasks. This agreement counts with 300 working hours per year and if income is up to CZK 10,000 then neither employer nor employee pays health and social insurance. The Agreement to Perform Work is different as is based on works that repeat on the regular basis. When working on this agreement, the employee can work more than 300 hours but in the average it cannot exceed half time job which makes 20 hours per week. The limit for paying health and social insurance is CZK 2,500. [24] [15]

3.2.2 Companies' Motivation

A study in a financial company Česká Spořitelna shows that it costs CZK 117,000 to train the new employee in their company and about 80 % of the employees-mothers do not come back after maternity or parental leave. Then it really makes sense to spend time on searching for the new ways how to offer the suitable jobs for the working mothers. Alternative ways are not advantageous only for the big companies. Another company DM

drugstore has good experiences with shorter working hours offered to the mothers on maternity or parental leave or after their return. The point is to cover long working hours and with flexibility of more employees working part-time it can be done. [9]

3.3 Gender Stereotypes

Pink for girls. Blue for boys. Differentiation on the basis of genders starts already from the childhood. Girls should wear pink or purple clothes and boys should wear blue or other darker colours. The difference is visible in a toy-shop where toys are divided into girls' and boys' sections. Toys for girls are usually dolls, babies or little household articles such as kitchens, vacuum cleaners or irons. That aims to roles of taking care of somebody or household or just looking good. On the other hand boys can find toy cars, warriors, robots or construction sets which are good for search for knowledge and for technical and logical thinking. Some people say that these characteristics are already determined after birth – by gender. But other people say it is caused by surroundings where children grow up and what they see around. Some characteristics are perceived as women's and some as men's. For women is typical to be gentle, passive, taking care, emotional, women are also worse in driving cars or technical knowledge. Men should be typically rational, aggressive, and decisive, think logical and be able to orient in maps. This is a very simplified idea of gender stereotypes but the point is that these stereotypes can lead to discrimination. And discrimination based on genders (or maternity) is hard to prove.

As already mentioned discrimination based on being a parent can also occur. Especially after maternity or parental leave when women do not go back to their previous job and they need to find a new one. The applicant can face prejudices especially when it is the mother of little children. There are mentioned most often prejudices: the woman lost her qualifications, the woman is not time flexible, she refuses overtimes and business trips, the woman is all the time at home with the sick child, the woman is not fully focused on work as she thinks of her child and what to cook for dinner. These prejudices are closely connected to discrimination due to gender and family situation and it is forbidden to ask such personal questions at job interviews. But even though it is forbidden it is more or less possible that this kind of questions will be asked and it is necessary to be prepared what to answer. [10]

3.4 Glass Ceiling and Quotas

Glass ceiling is a term that was popularized in 1980s and it symbolizes barriers for women in upward mobility within the company. Word glass is meant to represent invisible barrier that is still there. Studies that devote to glass ceiling effect focus on identifying reasons and here are some examples of their findings. The reasons are mostly gender stereotypes, lack of women mentoring or an opinion that masculine characteristics make better leaders. And of course the other important reason is family demands connected to a female social role. [7]

Woman's potential to be a manager according her age:

- 20-29 pretty high proportion of women in management, women are not limited;
- 30-39 proportion of women in management substantially decreases, women are limited by childcare and leaving for maternity and parental leave, men continues their career growth;
- 40-49 proportion of women in management increases, care for children moves to school institution and with increasing child's age, children are more independent;
- 50-59 pretty high proportion of women in management but with higher age women sometimes use the opportunity to leave to retirement earlier;
- > 60 most of women in retirement, low proportion of women managers.

In the European Union discussions are going on about needed quotas for women as there is low proportion of women on top management positions. The question is if the reason is to balance genders to gain equality or because of economic reasons – a study shows that with at least three women in top management companies are more profitable. Another calculations show that if every tenth woman on maternity leave works it would decrease a pension deficit by CZK 10 billion per year. But there is a support from state needed. State should support opening of new kindergartens and nurseries and having higher capacity and flexibility. When the employee leaves the company there are big costs connected to it – it makes a lot of direct but also indirect costs such as productivity, time, experience, administration, searching for the new person and the training. [9]

3.5 Situation on Labour Market

On the labour market there is still a big gap among men and women but getting the balance is already in the process. It is a big challenge but the real balance is supposed to come in some time. Here comes few examples that could be an issue. The first is the question of a full-time job. Lots of women are not interested in fixed 8 hours job for 5 days, jobs that are customized are much more interesting. There is a lot of possibilities that fit to individual needs such as part-time jobs, flexible working hours, working from home etc. The second issue is availability of childcare. It is general problem not only in the Czech Republic. It causes that mainly women need to shorten their working hours or to leave the job because there is no other possibility how to take care of the children. The life style went through a significant change in the last 20 years and generally men and women are considered to be real partners in this time. On the other side there is still a traditional concept of a family where the man is responsible for family financial situation and the woman for taking care of the children and household. And this is the last issue especially for the working women that they have double work – to take care of the family and to work.

Women who have children are disadvantaged on the labour market. In the most productive age they are losing at least two years with one child and they are not able to catch up. Moreover with higher age is usually coming higher income so they are also financially handicapped. Current system of parental allowances counts with approximately the same amount of money for all women in total. But in the same time there is a disadvantage that some women are forced to stay on parental leave for longer time than they would like to. It causes an increase of a dependence on the husbands or partners. Or it can have serious impacts on a single parent woman or in non-functioning partnership. Even though women can choose the length of parental leave they still usually have no choice. Because to stay at home for shorter time than 3 years is not possible as there is no available day care for 2 years old children. And private care is financially unavailable for the majority. In addition the labour market is not flexible enough nowadays, in particular due to the employers who are not willing to offer part-time jobs or partial working from home. [8]

When we look at society's view on parenthood it seems that situation on the labour market is pretty bad for parents especially for the mothers. Generally it can be true but it is necessary to look more into details. Let's divide the mothers into three groups according to their positions.

The first group includes positions where special knowledge and skills are not needed, incomes are low and there is a high fluctuation of the employees. The mothers working on such positions usually go back to work but then it is too hard to get used to working regime again. There are usually big changes on the employer's side, the women are stressed and they are not able to find the balance between work and family life. Usually they leave again for maternity leave or to labour office. As their income is not high then there is not such a big loss on incomes as they get allowances from the state. Due to high fluctuation on these positions it is not efficient for the employer to invest money and time for some kind of support for the mothers and motivation for them to come back and stay.

The second group makes positions that need knowledge and skills but are easily replaceable. Mothers working on such positions (usually administrative positions) are aware they are replaceable so they usually want to stay in touch with the employer and especially they do not want to lose any skills and knowledge. It means they often try to educate themselves and work on their knowledge etc. In this case the employer usually offers alternative ways of working, it can be even part-time job already during parental leave and the employer wants to support the women to get back. Indisputable advantages are that the women are in contact with the company. They use their knowledge and skills and they can adapt much faster to usual full-time job after parental leave. Then advantages are on both sides and it is easier for the mothers to balance their family and working life when it is done in short steps. The employers already invested time, money and education to these women so they are for sure interested to have them back. Also in some sectors there is much higher percentage of the working women than men so it is important for the employer to pay attention to it and think about some support not to lose these employees.

The third group is more specific because it covers women working on managerial positions. This group can be also divided into two types. The first is made by younger women who are willing to continue in their career growth even though they have a little

child so they want to get back as soon as possible - usually right after maternity leave or already during. In this case the employer is really happy not to lose the valued employee and willing to help the woman as much as possible. The second type are the mothers who have children later (35+) and are on the top so they do not need to work harder on their careers. They just want to enjoy parental leave and take care of their children. In this case the employer is in a bad position because it is not much possible to motivate the women by money to get back to work as they are mostly financially secured. The role of the employer is to find some motivation tools for these mothers or they just need to wait till her parental leave is over.

To sum it up the group is not a deciding factor, it is always up to individual woman and her employer. Good employers are aware they can gain loyalty by pro-parental approach and the employees appreciate the human attitude. Also the employers can be more valued on the labour market. As an example there is a competition on the Czech labour market called “The company of the year: equal opportunities” which is organized every year by non-governmental non-profit organization Gender Studies. [15]

3.6 Style of Working

Experts say that the society started revolution in working culture. It is caused by socio-demographic changes in the society. The needs of the companies are developing and new technologies enable alternative ways of working. One of substantial change are the “new” women/mothers who have high potential for the companies. The age of having the first child is higher and the women-mothers are well-educated, they already gained professional experiences and reached success. They have a really high potential but they do not want to choose between the family and the career. Then the concept of few years lasting parental leave is not suitable. Most of these women would rather start working part-time during their leave and continue in that regime after the end of parental leave. Studies also show that alternative ways of working are motivation to change the employer even for lower income. The companies already know about the opportunity of gaining the efficient and loyal employees as working mothers and some of them offer developed programs for them – mostly the international companies. But this is a very good opportunity also for the smaller companies as they can use qualified and experienced workers. If they offer alternatives like part-time jobs they can gain workers with higher

competences or proficiency thanks to that. Also the company can be more flexible and change the work load according their needs. [9]

3.7 Legal Frame in the Czech Republic

The legal frame in connection to maternity and parental leave is stated in the Act no. 262/2006 Coll., The Labour Code. All sections that are connected to maternity and parental leave are presented below:

§ 195 Maternity Leave

(1) In connection with a birth and care for a new-born child the woman employee has the right to go on maternity leave for 28 weeks; in case she gave a birth to two or more children at once, she is entitled to go on maternity leave for 37 weeks.

(2) The employee starts her maternity leave usually 6 weeks before the expected birth date but not earlier than 8 weeks before that date.

(3) If the employee used less than 6 weeks from maternity leave before delivery date because the birth came before given date from the doctor then the employee has the right for the maternity leave from the day of her start until the expiration of the period specified in paragraph 1. However, if the employee used less than 6 weeks from maternity leave before giving birth for another reason, she is entitled to go for maternity leave until the expiration of 22 weeks after the childbirth, or 31 weeks in case the employee gave a birth to two or more children at once.

(4) If the child was born dead, the employee is entitled to go on maternity leave for 14 weeks.

(5) Maternity leave in connection with the birth must not be shorter than 14 weeks and it cannot be terminated or interrupted before the expiration of 6 weeks period from the date of the birth (§ 198 paragraph 2).

§ 196 Parental Leave

In order to deepening childcare, the employer is obliged to provide the employee (woman or man) with parental leave. Parental leave is usable for the mother of the child after

maternity leave and for the father of the child from the date of birth. That is in the extent of their request, but no longer than until the child reaches the age of 3 years.

§ 196 Maternity and Parental Leave When Adopting a Child

(1) The employee (woman or man) who took the child into substitute care, on the basis of the decision of the appropriate authority or the child whose mother has died, has also the right to go on maternity and parental leave; the decision of the appropriate authority means a decision that is considered as a decision on custody of the child to substitute parental care for the purposes of state social support.

(2) Maternity leave under paragraph 1 is appointed to the employee from the date of adoption of a child for 22 weeks, and if the employee took over 2 or more children, it is for a period of 31 weeks, but no longer than the day when the child reaches the age of 1 year.

(3) Parental leave under paragraph 1 is from the date of adoption of the child until the day the child reaches the age of 3 years; the woman employee who uses maternity leave in accordance with paragraph 2 goes on parental leave after the end of maternity leave. If the child was taken over after reaching the age of 3 years and up to age of 7 years, parental leave is set for 22 weeks. When taking the child before reaching the age of 3 years, so that the period of 22 weeks expired after the age of 3 years, parental leave lasts until expiration of 22 weeks from the date of adoption of the child.

§ 198 Common Regulation over Maternity and Parental Leave

(1) The employees (woman or man) are allowed to go for maternity and parental leave at the same time.

(2) If the child was taken into the care of infant or other medical institution for health reasons and the employee (woman or man) start working in the meantime, maternity or parental leave are interrupted by this start; its unused part can be used from the date of re-taking the child from the institution, but no longer than until the child reaches the age of 3 years.

(3) If the employee (woman or man) stops to care for the child, and the child was entrusted to a family or institutional substitute care from that reason, as well as the employee (woman or man) whose child is in the temporary care of the infant or a similar institution for another than health reasons, the employees are not entitled to go on maternity or parental leave as long as they do not care about the child.

(4) If the child dies when a female employee is on maternity or parental leave or male employee on parental leave, maternity or parental leave still last for a period of two weeks from the date of death of a child, no later than the day on which the child reached the age of 1 year. [16]

3.8 Social System in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic the families are supported by social system during maternity and parental leave. Here comes an important question, what is the difference between maternity and parental leave?

As seen in the chapter Legal Frame, maternity leave lasts 28 weeks. In that time the mother on maternity leave gets the financial support in maternity that is paid out of a sickness insurance and it makes 70 % of daily assessed base (calculated from incomes in the previous 12 calendar months). The mother who gave a birth to more children at once receives the financial support in maternity for 37 weeks. The woman can start taking this allowance 6 weeks (or maximum 8 weeks) before estimated date of delivery. The woman is entitled for the financial support in maternity in case she has worked for 270 calendar days in previous two years. In case she has no right for the financial support in maternity but she is insured for sickness, she gets sick pay for 6 weeks before estimated delivery date and in puerperium (postpartum period).

Parental leave starts right after the end of the financial support in maternity or sick pay. In case the woman is not entitled for this financial support she goes directly on parental leave. During parental leave families are supported by government that provides them with parental allowance. [23] Parent is entitled for parental allowance in case he or she cares for the youngest child personally and all-days. The total amount for allowances makes CZK 220,000 that can be used till the child reaches 4 years the latest. Usually parents can choose the amount of monthly parental allowances, it means they can choose

the period for how long they get this allowances. The allowance is set according daily assessed base but the highest possible allowance is CZK 11,500. In case it is not possible to set daily assessed base for parental allowance, then parental allowances are automatically divided into monthly payment in following 4 years and parent gets CZK 7,600 till the child reaches 9th month of age and then CZK 3,800 monthly. [25]

3.9 Pre-school Education in the Czech Republic

In recent years kindergarten directors face much more requests from parents who want to enrol already two years old children to the kindergarten. From the legal point of view there is stated that kindergartens are established usually for children in age from 3 to 6 (or 7). It means there is no official bottom age limit which children are allowed to be accepted to kindergarten in. The only rule is that children who are about to start primary school in following year are entitled to be accepted in preference to younger children. It means that director can accept two-year old child.

Nowadays parents are allowed to make some extra money during parental leave. There was a law change about the state social support so that children older than 2 years can attend kindergartens and parents do not lose the parental allowances. It does not have to be the kindergarten, the point is to secure all-day care for the child so it can be also grandparents or other possibilities. In case the child is younger than two years, parents can use the kindergarten or other day care just for 46 hours per month not to lose parental allowances. According the Czech School Inspection 25 % of the children who attend the kindergarten are 2 years old – unfortunately, it is not specified if these children just turned 2 years or if they will turn 3 years during the school year. Day care possibilities for the children younger than 3 years are under big criticism not only internationally, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is working on regulation regarding 2 years old children. Proposals on taking 2 years old children into kindergartens emerged as one from more actions how to support the families. But securing day care for children under 3 years old is not the only problem, in kindergartens there is also the problem with accepting even already 3 years old as there is much lower capacity in kindergartens than number of children; this results from higher birth-rate in recent years – in short-term. In long-term as already explained the birth rate is at low level in the Czech Republic.

The goal of such regulations is to support families and make it possible for parents to harmonize their personal and professional life. As other examples are the support for establishing company's kindergarten or the support for fathers who are now allowed to go on parental leave. But there are some issues regarding proposals to accept 2 years old children to kindergartens. One of them was already mentioned that there is no capacity even for older children. In case of applying regulation about taking 2 years old into kindergartens, there is a need to decrease the number of the children per one class. Other points are changes in the daily regime, psycho hygienic requirements, more teachers and non-pedagogic employees but maybe also changes in school educational program etc. But it is directly mentioned in the proposals that there is no possibility how to make it happen without increasing financial resources of a state budget.

The supply of day care for children younger than 3 years does not fit to demands of parents. There are different reasons why parents want to shorten the parental leave but one of the most reasonable issue is financial aspect when woman's income can really influence the economic situation of the family. Earlier young parents were often supported by grandparents because they were retired, but as the age of going into retirement increased, grandparents are still fully employed and are not able to help with childcare. Thus, parents search for another type of childcare for the time when they need to work. Unfortunately, nursery schools that were established for younger children were cancelled and today's nurseries are considered as paid service. [22] The monthly pay can be CZK 5,000 depending on the frequency and hours spent there but it can be also CZK 15,000. Obviously these amounts are really deciding as current median of wages in the Czech Republic makes CZK 22,531 so it would not be beneficial for many families. [18]

3.10 Family and Work

At first the important point is that no manual can prepare anybody for all possible life situations. But at least it is good to get inspiration how to harmonize the family and working life. In the Czech Republic it is not as usual that women work when they have a little child. And plenty of people would say that if they work they are "bad" mothers because they do not pay enough attention to their children. But everybody has different individual needs and this is really crucial to realize and not judge. There are women who

want to stay at home for the whole time and there are women who feel they want to do also something else, not to take care of the child only. But there can be also women who planned to stay at home but situation has changed and they can be forced to go back to work earlier e.g. for financial reasons.

Maybe the woman thinks that to take care of her child at maximum is the only thing she wants to do or should do. She may think that is the best way but she may find out that she is fixed to her child and resign from all other activities. She may already know that she has a lot of hobbies, work, friends etc., so she does not want to forget about all this after her child is born. Maybe she does forget. As was told before it is really individual and it is up to everybody. However, it is satisfying to do something just for herself even though it is once a week. In many researches there is described “the problem that has no name”. This problem is the feel of frustration which women can face when they are on maternity or parental leave and doing nothing else than taking care of children, husband and household. But recommendation is to believe in herself, her feelings and instinct.

For sure there are many circumstances that influence the planning. But it is important to ask herself what she wants, what she is filling with, what her financial situation is and when she wants to get back to work. If it is soon after the childbirth then the question is who should take care of the child. But in addition to all these questions her partner’s idea is very important. Partners need to discuss and plan together, understand each other, share and have similar visions on harmonizing family and working life. Discussion and planning is crucial also at work. If the woman is employed then she discusses everything with her manager and the results depend on general perception throughout the company that she works for. Attitudes to the mothers are really different – some companies are very open but some companies do not even keep the law as minimum what must be provided. On the other hand when the woman is self-employed, it is all up to her. She needs to plan precisely. Women entrepreneurs have advantages that everything is up to them and they can decide how they feel it. But there is also one big disadvantage that the business rely on them and usually they cannot just go on maternity leave and “take a break”. They still have to care of their business also. So they need to choose one of this or better to harmonize it as much as they can.

Before going back to work women should ask themselves if they really want to or need to. Because if the woman is not sure, determined and motivated it will be visible very soon and would not help her and not even her child. The second very important point is that the woman needs support from her partner or family. Then the woman needs to be sure that she has a good and reliable babysitter otherwise she cannot apply for long term contract and she can have also problems with concentration at work. The last point is also to think over how to solve the child's illnesses. Of course there is paragraph for these situations but if it is used just by the mother (not the father) and it happens often, the employer could be really disappointed. [10] [13]

Already before going on maternity and following parental leave there should be a meeting of three people – expectant mother, superior and HR representative. On this meeting future plans should be cleared and also some possibilities of cooperation during maternity and parental leave should be discussed. During maternity and parental leave some employers offer different types of contact with the employee. It can be in form of some web pages where the company inform regularly about actions in the company, about vacancies or discussion forum. Some companies publish magazines and send to parents at home. Or they organize company's events and always invite parents on parental leave or organize events for children. Just try to keep in touch with the employees and the employees with the field. When comeback to work is near there should be another meeting with above mentioned three parties and the output should be the strategy of coming back, time plan or alternative ways of working.

These days there is more and more employers helping to the employees to harmonize their family and working life. The companies do not offer "only" alternative ways of cooperation but sometimes they are also motivated to support day care of the children. It is pretty hard to find kindergartens even for already three years old children and it can cause that women cannot come back to work due to not available day care. Therefore, the idea of company's kindergartens arises and some companies established their own kindergartens. This is the most expansive support from companies by which they can help the employees and their families. The motivation is especially in the companies with high number of women that could be lost due to that. This option is not only expensive but it is also a lot of work with administration and of course there are strict

conditions for kindergartens. In addition there is no support from state to the companies willing to establish kindergartens. These factors usually cause backing away from that idea. Even though there is not such positive background there are the companies which established their kindergartens or they pay external company for that. Another way is also to have agreement with some private kindergarten and contribute or pay places for the employees' children. Another day care can be kind of children's club which does not need to fulfil so much conditions but it cannot be use regularly and for long hours. It is mostly just for occasional short-term babysitting. [2] [13] [15]

3.11 Day Care Possibilities

Except the mother being on maternity and parental leave there is more possibilities how to secure care for children. The very first to mention is the father on parental leave. In the Czech Republic it is not very usual. There is just 1 % of the fathers who officially stayed at home for parental leave for few months. There is more reasons and the biggest is that men earn more money than women so it would negatively influence a family budget if the woman would go back to work instead of the man. Another reason is Czech society which is conservative and still perceive the father on parental leave as something weird. Usually it goes in hand with the idea that the woman is "bad" mother when the man "must" stay home. On the other hand most of the fathers who were on parental leave think it had been a positive experience and they have closer relationship with the child. In some foreign countries (e.g. Sweden) there is even quota for the fathers that they should go on parental leave for some time. If they do not use this opportunity they will lose this time from the total amount of parental leave.

Grandparents are also one of the variant of care for the children but this will be probably less and less usual as the age of going to retirement is increasing. Thus, grandparents will be mostly still working.

A nanny or au-pair is not very spread option in the Czech Republic and it is also one of more expensive possibilities. It means it is more used by women who have high incomes or their husbands have. Also Czechs do not like to let somebody stay at their place without any control. So it is really important to spend some time by searching for the right person.

A nursery is an institution for children under 3 years and nurses or other “aunts” take care of the children. There is a kind of hangover from the past that nurseries are not suitable. But people who say that probably took over this idea from communist period and it is not valid for current nurseries. In foreign countries nurseries are perceived as very good for child’s development, for socializing into the group of the children and communication. In the Czech Republic there is a very low number of state nurseries so usually parents have to pay pretty high charge for private nursery.

Mutual parental assistance is not an official service in the Czech Republic. The point is that one mother on parental leave with her children also babysit the children of another mother. It is cheaper variant than the nursery or the nanny but on the other hand it is not “professional care”. On the other hand the child is in group of the children and also in home environment of the guarding mother which is almost like usual visit. A disadvantage is most probably again the same as with the nanny if it is not woman’s friend. The mother is a stranger, thus parents need to meet the woman and find as most information as possible and also check her home environment etc. Plus parents need to prepare food for the whole day.

A company’s care is the last mentioned option and is not very common. But some bigger companies are able to provide the mothers with day care in the company or somewhere nearby. It is a kind of childcare where is a room for the children and there is the nanny for them. The mothers can share expenses for one nanny or it may be provided by the company. [10]

3.12 Time Management

Time management is a tool how to achieve higher efficiency and better life. It is a discipline that all of us consider as valuable but almost none of us follows it. In this topic two types of the time are considered – objective and subjective. The objective time is not changeable and regularly repeating in the same rhythm. On the other side is the subjective time that depends on the approach to the task. In the subjective time a person can influence amount, realization and efficiency of what he or she is doing. The aim of time management is to harmonize everything what the person needs and to finish what he or she wants. The basic advice is not to do everything at once and take only such amount

of tasks that is possible to manage. What is really helpful is to set the priorities. It is not easy as it is influenced by lot of circumstances but then the advantage is visible. The point is to use the time to fit the personal goals and needs. Also it is necessary to be able to say “no” to other people but also to itself or to other things that waste your time. It is about setting the right balance. Another crucial point which can help with managing big task is to split the task into small pieces and fulfil the task by small steps. To manage one big task at once is pretty complicated and sometimes even not possible. By using shorter time stretches is really helpful and it is much easier to start working. [5]

Time management when speaking about the mothers and childcare: all mothers would like to have much more time but when they have the child they are not a master of their time. Time is the most valuable thing in the world and people have to treat it like gold. At first they have to know how they are spending their time and then they can find out how to save it. The key is to choose and centralise the attention. They have to think what they do during a day and when it is not productive just start to do something else. Set down their priorities and do what is matching to the priorities. Stop doing what is not important and what wastes their time. If they do not know how exactly they want to spend their time, it will flow away. Orderliness saves the time, when they want to start something, at first they have to finish the previous task. They all have a tendency to postpone the tasks but in reality by postponing it will take much more time than to do it right now. There are seven aspects that influence the time organization- impatience, sense of guilt, no barriers, wrong expressing, greed, one-sidedness and lack of concentration. There is a lot of solutions for these seven issues and it depends on the person only. [14]

4 Own Research

The main goal of the thesis is to find out the way of possible cooperation during maternity and parental leave between a woman and a company. At the beginning of the thesis this main objective was divided into few partial goals. The first goal of getting theoretical knowledge especially about legal perspective was fulfilled in the literature research. Following partial goals will be researched in the coming part that is called the own research and represents the practical part of the thesis. The next partial goal will be fulfilled by executing questionnaires with the women whose opinions will stand for a general opinion. The third partial goal will be done by interviewing one HR employee and one manager in the chosen company. The fourth partial goal to interconnect these to researches together will be fulfilled in SWOT analysis followed by suggested strategies for the employer. The last remaining partial goal is to suggest solutions based on the research and this will come in the next Chapter no. 5.

4.1 The Questionnaire's Analysis

As explained before the women respondents are not from any particular company, therefore their opinions are not distorted by one single company and its environment. Women could take part in a questionnaire's research during three weeks in October 2015 when the questionnaire was published at web page www.vyplnto.cz. The questionnaire was adjusted to three specific groups of women that are defined in the next Chapter 4.1.1. The research questions surveyed by the questionnaires are as follows:

1. Are women interested in working during maternity/parental leave? What is their attitude to other activities beside childcare during maternity/parental leave?
2. What do women consider as a valuable support from an employer? What is their ideal vision in case of working during maternity/parental leave?

4.1.1 Limitation of the Questionnaire's Research

Before starting an analysis of the answers from the questionnaires there is a need to identify possible limitations of a researched sample. In total there is 138 women respondents from different age groups. The women who are up to 30 years old make

43 % of the respondents, 45 % of women belong to age group 31-40 years and the last age group consists of women older than 41 and it makes 12 %. In 2014 there was 2.03 million women in the Czech Republic belonging to age group from 20 to 44 years. [17]

In the researched sample 42 % of the respondents achieved secondary education and 58 % reached tertiary education. In comparison to statistics from 2014, in age group 25-34 years there is 60 % of women with secondary education and 35 % of women with tertiary education in the Czech Republic. In age group 35-44 years it makes 73 % of women with secondary education and 22 % of women with tertiary education. Tertiary education was increased by 13 % at younger age group of women. Women in group 15-24 years old are not fully taken into consideration as they can still attend school, but there is already 8 % of women who achieved tertiary education in 2014. [20]

In the sample of women 63 % of them already have children and 36 % are on maternity or parental leave in the time of answering the questionnaire. According statistics since 1950 to 2014 there have never been such a high average age of a mother having the first child as it is today. In 1950 the average age was the highest and it did not overstep 24 years of age. Since 1965 till 1993 the average age was about 22.5 years during the whole period but since then it started to grow very fast. In the last 20 years since 1994 till 2014 the average age increased from 22.8 up to 28.1 years so this is the highest number in comparison to data since 1950. In this research 71 % of women who do not have children are up to 30 years old and the rest of women who do not have children is over 30 years old (29 %). [19]

The comparison with statistics was done to show that there are some limitations of the researched sample of the women. There can be also limitation due to location even though it cannot be proved by gained data. For this research women were contacted via social media, HR departments in two companies in Prague and via private contacts of the researcher. Due to that it is expected that the women are mostly from Central Bohemia - they lived, worked, studied or were in other contact with this region. It means that women from other parts of the Czech Republic are not taken into consideration and it might have an influence on the final results. Limitation is also visible especially when it comes to the

highest achieved education. There is a big difference in education when comparing women respondents to the total situation in the Czech Republic.

4.1.2 Structure of the Questionnaire

As already mentioned above the questionnaire is adjusted to three groups of the women matching to the three groups of the questions. The first group, accounting for 51 of the respondents, are the women who do not have children. They are potential mothers, thus their ideas and opinions will be considered as valuable data for future plans, attitudes and a development within the company. The second group of the women are mothers who work or worked during maternity or parental leave. The number of the women in this group is 45 respondents. In the third group are mothers who do not or did not work during the leave and there are 42 women who took part in the research. These two groups of women who have children will show opinions and attitudes about being a mother and a worker at the same time.

The first section of the questions is the same for all women and is based on identifying the women respondents. The identification questions gain information about the age, the highest achieved education, an employment, and a family situation – if the women have or do not have children and if they are on maternity or parental leave in the time of answering the questionnaire.

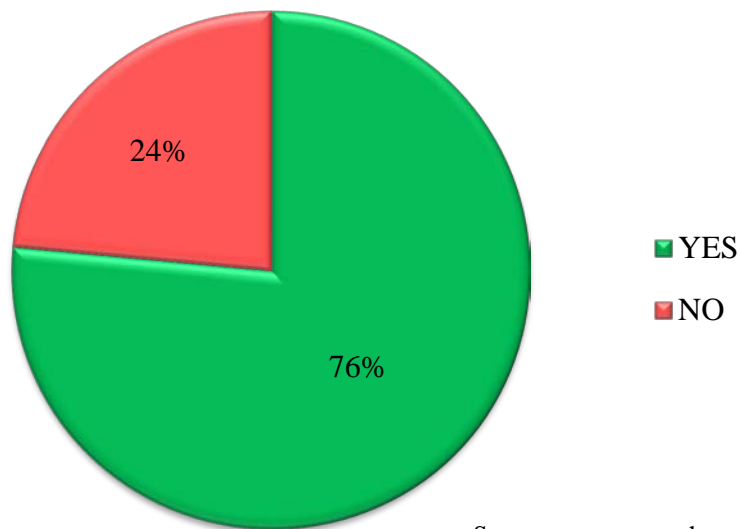
The following sections of the questions are more specific for particular groups of the women. The women without children answered the questions about their opinions if they would like to work or not to work during maternity or parental leave and why. The researcher's aim of this question is to find out how the future situation can look like. Questions for the women who have children are more connected to their reality, not just to their opinions. If they work (or worked) during maternity or parental leave, the questions should answer under what conditions they work, what their reasons and motivation for working are and what the daily reality of the working mothers is. In case of the women who have children but they do not work (or worked), the questions are directed to their reasons, opinions and attitudes. At the end of the questionnaire all three groups of the women were asked two voluntary open questions. These final questions should shortly define women's ideal vision of combining their working and family life

and what the women consider as a valuable support from their employer. The women who were not interested in working could also comment these questions and add their opinions. The questionnaire is placed in the Attachment no. 1.

4.1.3 Women in Group 1

The women included in the first group do not have children. They are mostly up to 30 years old (71 %) and they reached tertiary education (71 %). The employed women make 72 % of respondents, 6 % of the women are self-employed and 22 % are students. No respondent is unemployed. The key question in this group is if the women would like to work during maternity or parental leave and why. The results say that the majority of the respondents (76 %) would like to work during maternity or parental leave and the remaining respondents (24 %) would not. This proportion is shown in the Chart no. 1.

Chart no. 1: Intention to Work during Maternity/Parental Leave

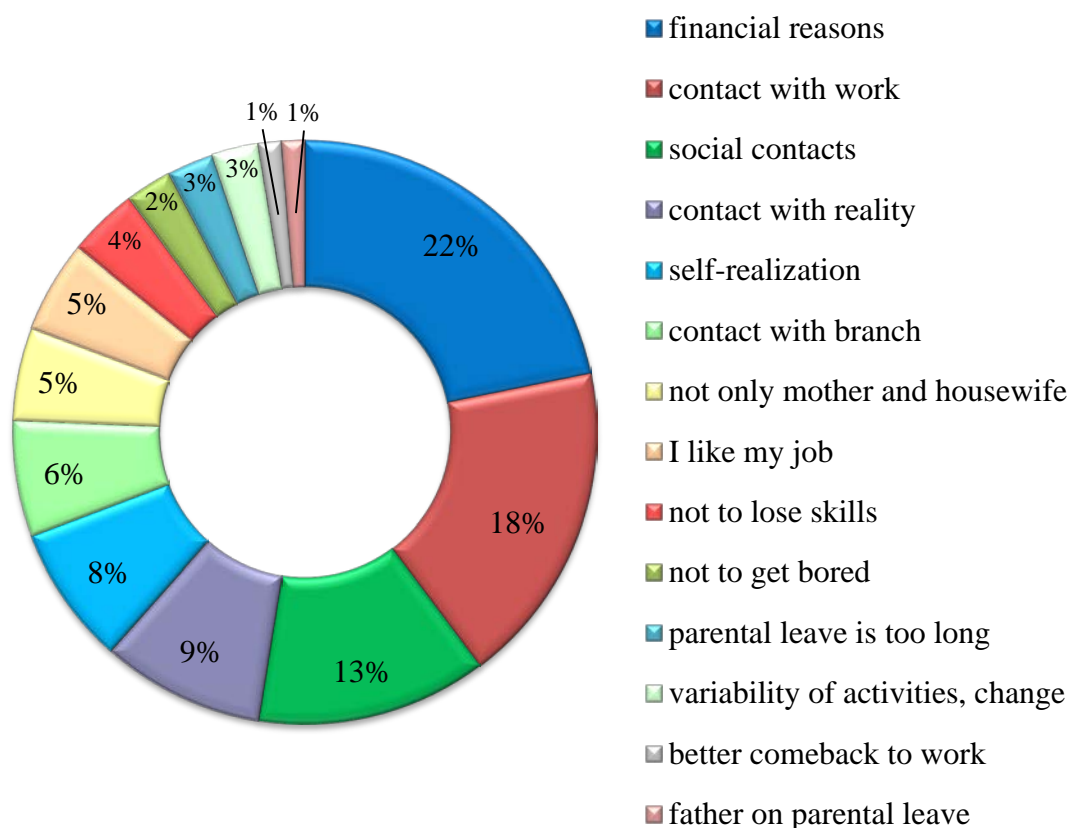


Source: own research and processing

The reasons why the respondents would like to work are mainly connected to finances, socializing and being in the contact with their work. These women do not want to lose the contact with the working environment and they want to realize their potential not only as mothers and housewives. They want to be in the contact with other people, get new inputs from outside of home and change surroundings sometimes. They do not want to lose especially their language skills but also skills from their branch. The common answer is also they like their job thus they do not want to leave it. One woman expressed

that she cannot imagine not to work saying that it would destroy her. Two respondents also mentioned they do not want to get bored during their leave. As already mentioned finances are also a big reason. The women think about extra money for their family or for the future of a baby. Also because they can have mortgages or they think they should be financially prepared for unexpected happenings. These women also think in advance about their comeback to work. They think it is easier when they stay in touch with work regime and “working” way of thinking. One respondent commented that her branch is quickly changing and due to long leave it would be hard to get back. One of the answer was also that husband wants to go on parental leave so somebody needs to earn money. From this list three most common answers were: financial reasons, contact with work and social contacts. All answers were summarized and presented in the Chart no. 2.

Chart no. 2: Reasons for Working in Group 1



Source: own research and processing

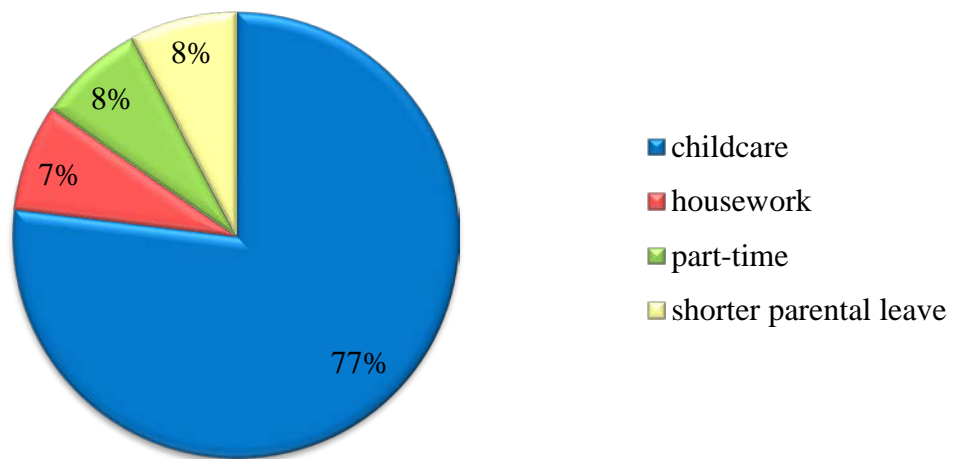
The following questions were connected to the ideal vision of the women who would like to work during the leave and to support from their employer which they would appreciate. One of the important comments is that the answer is different for every woman - but it is good to work partly during parental leave if possible. The reason is that the women do not lose their qualities and professional self-confidence and these factors are important when going back to work. These women would like to harmonize their professional and family life. They would appreciate a support from their husband/partner or from their parents. One woman mentioned she would need her husband's support especially when she needs to go on a business trip. The women want to manage their work but on the other side to be a good mother. They do not want to miss important dates of their children because of a job. Home office, part-time job, flexible working hours – all these alternatives are perceived as good tools. Regarding part-time jobs there is a big difference in time which women are willing to invest into work. Some women consider about 25 % of their time as ideal and some of them 75 %. Therefore, the perceptions are very individual. They also mentioned that work should not be tied to deadlines. One woman named administrative position that would not have deadlines in few hours as ideal. She could do her work flexibly - when a child sleeps. Two women would suggest to do their own business. One of them commented more – if she would not be able to do own business she would like to work part-time, have flexible working hours and have the opportunity to work from home. The ideal vision for her would be participation of the father on taking care of their child and also household. She thinks that a support from parents would be suitable. In case it is worthy for a woman to go back to work she would hire somebody for clean-up of her household once a week and then they can enjoy time as a family during the weekends.

Summarizing all information obtained from the respondents, the ideal ways of working are: to be flexible in the time and place, work partly and have the support from husband, sometimes parents. What would be appreciated from the employers are especially flexible working hours, home office and the possibility to work part-time. Another suggested alternative is to work part-time at least at the end of parental leave or after their return to work (at least at the beginning) – it is good to get used to working regime for mothers and especially for children. In case there is no possibility to cooperate partly then at least some contact with the employee is valuable – to be invited to

company's events etc. And the last but not least mentioned supports are understanding and respect of personal time of the women and also helpfulness and openness from the husband's employer.

The rest of the women answered they do not want to work, it was 24 %. However, two respondents answered they might have some part-time job or shorter parental leave. Percentages in the Chart no. 3 are misrepresenting as there is low number of the respondents. Almost all of these women agreed on the same reasons; they want to dedicate their time fully to a childcare. They want to enjoy the leave, spend the time with children, see them growing up and make progresses. The reasons for not working are represented in the Chart no. 3.

Chart no. 3: Reasons for Not Working in Group 1



Source: own research and processing

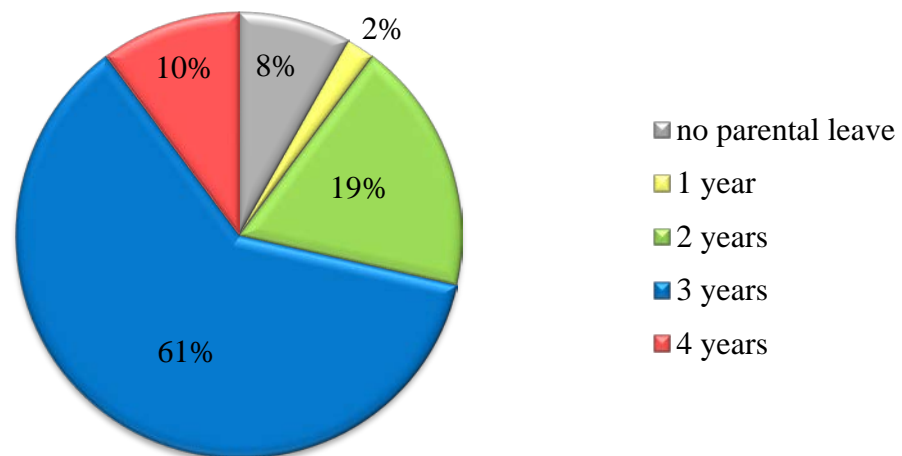
Some of the women who do not want to work during maternity leave share also their ideal ideas. One woman thinks that a family and work should not be combined and women should fully focus on a childcare. Other woman thinks that 30 % part-time job could be an option if there is a possibility to leave children in nurseries or a kindergarten. The other women suggested home office, part-time job and companies' kindergarten as a good option. The last woman says that mothers could earn some extra money doing her own business from home. Other question was what these women would welcome as a good support from an employer. In the same proportion, answers are company's

kindergarten and part-time jobs. One woman suggested financial benefit for a child. Other woman would appreciate just helpfulness from an employer.

4.1.4 Women in Group 2

Group 2 covers the women that have children and work or worked during maternity or parental leave. Their average age is higher than in previous Group 1. There is 24 % of women up to 30 years. The majority of the respondents (67 %) belongs to the age group between 31 to 40 years and 9 % of the respondents are older than 41 years. The highest achieved education in this group is divided almost in a half. Results show that 49 % of the respondents gained secondary education and 51 % of the respondents achieved tertiary education. Majority of the respondents are employed (78 %). The rest of the respondents is self-employed (11 %), unemployed (9 %) and there is also 1 student. It is important to say that the women who are on maternity or parental leave in the time of answering questionnaire, they should answer the question about employment according their situation before going on maternity leave. It means when a woman left on maternity leave from her job, she answered employed. According the answers 42 % of the women are on maternity or parental leave in the time of answering and 58 % of the respondents were on maternity/parental leave before. In the Chart no. 4 is showed what length of parental leave these women chose.

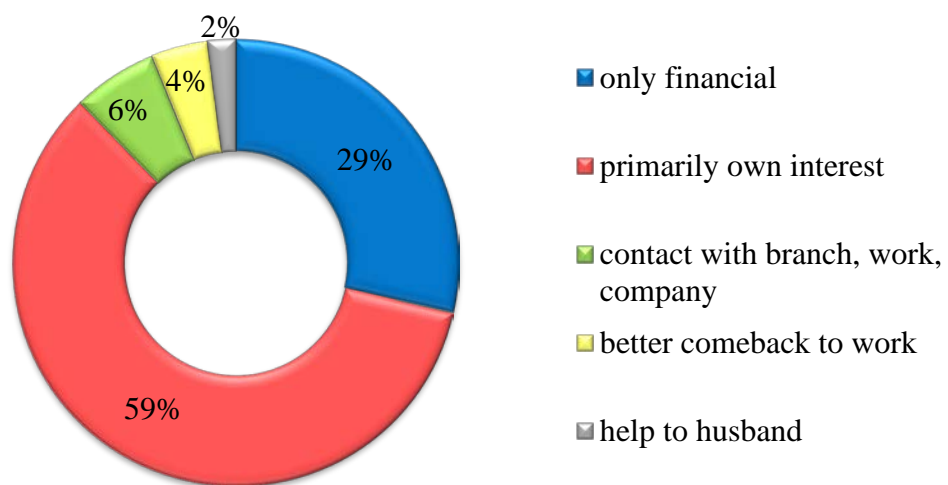
Chart no. 4: Chosen Length of Parental Leave in Group 1



Source: own research and processing

As already mentioned these women work or worked during their maternity or parental leave. A half of the respondents work for the same employer as before maternity leave and the other half work for a different employer, except the women who are self-employed. The majority of the women (78 %) have flexible working hours and remaining 22 % of the women work in fixed working hours. Working places differ, the results show that 44 % of the women work at their workplace, 41 % work at home and 9 % combine both options. The rest of the women work in some co-working places or outside of the working place (they called it terrain). The key question aims to discover the reasons why the women work. They got two closed options in the questionnaire – the reason is only financial or own interest. The second option – own interest – was commented that the women want to realize themselves apart from home and extra money are just plus. The third possible answer was opened and the women also had the opportunity to add their own response. The proportion of the answers is represented in the Chart no. 5.

Chart no. 5: Reasons for Working in Group 2

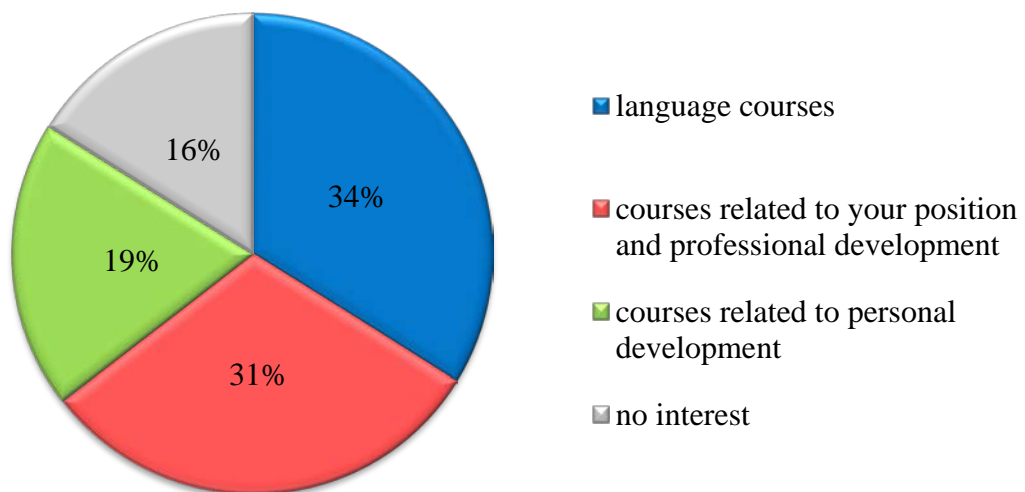


Source: own research and processing

The research question was also connected to other activities and not focused only on childcare. The question was about taking courses during maternity or parental leave. The researcher expects that the women interested in working are also more interested in taking different kinds of courses. The researcher wants to find out if the expectation is true thus it brought this question to the research. The result was that 30 % of women attended some courses during maternity or parental leave. One woman studied university

in that time. Other courses were language courses including summer intensive conversation courses, personal development courses, driving school, massages, nail or crocheting courses, courses related to professional qualifications such as accounting and taxes, email marketing or PC courses. One woman attended course how to integrate back to working process. In the questionnaire there were offered three types of courses – language courses, courses related to personal development or courses related to professional development. In total 78 % of the women would be interested in attending courses, the rest of 22 % is not interested. Some women are interested in more types of offered courses at once thus the projection of percentages in the Chart no. 6 is different from the total proportion.

Chart no. 6: Interest in Courses in Group 2



Source: own research and processing

All respondents have experiences with working therefore their ideas comes from everyday reality. There were many different answers but three main answers to ideal situation of working totally win – part-time job, home office and flexible working hours. One of the answer was that part-time job is perfect because a woman is not so stressed that she cannot manage all her work and on the other side she still has enough time to take care of her child. Even when a child is sick it can be manageable with part-time job and working flexible hours in short-term. She says that the woman can work early or late hours and take turns in care with her husband. The women had different ideas about the scope of part-time job, but mostly it was from 40 to 60 %. But in a lot of the answers the

scope was not specified. Home office was also often listed as ideal option. And it was also mentioned in the connection to a sick leave. It is better to work home when a child is sick and not to take the sick leave. And this option would be appreciated even after full return to work. Few women answered that home office and going to work could be combined. Flexible working hours were the third most common answer. The reason is that the women can plan their time according their needs. They can work when husbands are at home from work or when grandparents can babysit. The other mentioned possibility is to work not only in the evenings but also at the weekends. With flexible working hours the women can organize work by themselves what would not affect the child.

Above three most common answers were introduced, results continue with the rest of answers. The need of babysitting when the women work was the fourth most common answer. In the previous answers women already mentioned that husbands or partners are a very important support. It was also mentioned already in the literature review that partners must agree on the whole situation when a woman wants to work. Actually one woman answered that “functioning” husband or grandparents are a must for being able to work. Most women answered that the best would be babysitting within their family. But on the other hand few respondents answered they would like to have a nanny. One woman explained it would be a good option for her but naturally the costs cannot exceed her income. In case women have some possibilities of babysitting they could also manage some work outside of home and they do not have to necessarily work from home. There was also mentioned that ideal would be e.g. 4 hours babysitting at work. Even less common answers were as follows; one woman answered that a very convenient option for her would be to take her child to work. Another ideas were not to go on business trips, use possibilities of a long distance communication, not to have tight deadlines, be paid by work done. Few women would rather start their own business and not to be employed anymore. One respondent was more specific, she would like to have a little business at home with her own production.

The subsequent topic was the support from the employer which the respondents would welcome. It is naturally connected to the previous question about the ideal situation thus the usual answers are to offer part-time jobs, home office and flexible working hours. One woman pointed out that it is not very usual nowadays to offer part-time jobs. She

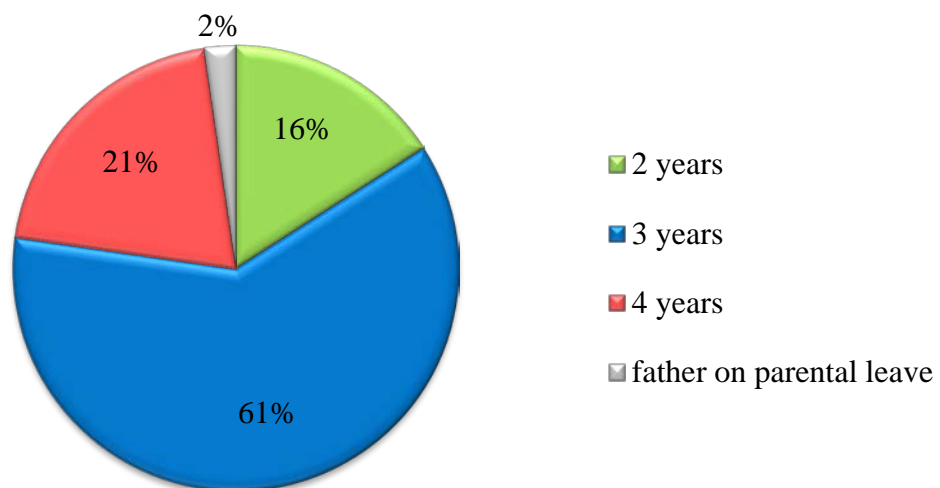
also thinks that a woman working part-time usually works harder than a full-time employee because a part-time employee esteems this possibility. Another woman brought up that the employer should be happy that the woman stays as an active employee even though it is not full-time. But she mentions that when the employer employs the woman on maternity or parental leave all charges like social or health payments are the same. So she would expect more support from the state towards the employers to motivate them, not the opposite. One woman would like to work part-time but for the same money. In addition to already named supports, there are some new suggestions. As a first, HR department could support more with information about vacancies and communication could be better in general. Pretty common answer was that the employer could secure the childcare in a way of establishing a kindergarten, a kind of a child club or something similar. One woman usually working at home says that when she needs just shortly go to work to deal with something she needs to solve what to do with her child. As it is not easy she would really appreciate company's child club. Another woman explains that they are a big company and they do not have this opportunity. But in addition she says it would be enough to have at least more understanding from the employer in general, e.g. when parents need to go to a doctor with their child. Other answers are also connected to the employer's approach, e.g. helpfulness, thoughtfulness towards what time is or again when a child is sick. Also trust that the woman will work fully-fledged even though she works at home and is not under control would be appreciated.

4.1.5 Women in Group 3

The women who belong to Group 3 also have children as in Group 2 but they do not work or worked during maternity or parental leave. The age composition is little bit different from Group 2. This group consists of 29 % of the women up to 30 years old and 45 % of the women between 31 and 40. The last group of the women older than 41 makes 26 %, this is the highest proportion of the women over 41 years old in comparison to the previous groups. We can identify that 63 % of the women who are older than 41 years have children who are already older than 10 years and 37 % have children who are still under 10 years old. Regarding the highest achieved education, exactly the half reached secondary education and the other half gained tertiary education. The most of respondents are employed – it is 74 %; 5 % of respondents are self-employed and there is nobody

studying. But there is the highest percentage of the unemployed women in comparison to the previous groups, it makes 21 % of the respondents. The women should answer the question about their employment according the situation before going on maternity leave. To imagine when woman was unemployed before starting her maternity leave, she answered unemployed. There was not an option to answer maternity or parental leave. In time of answering the questionnaire, 57 % of the women are on maternity or parental leave, remaining 43 % of the respondents were on maternity leave before. The Chart no. 7 shows what length of parental leave these women chose.

Chart no. 7: Chosen Length of Parental Leave in Group 3

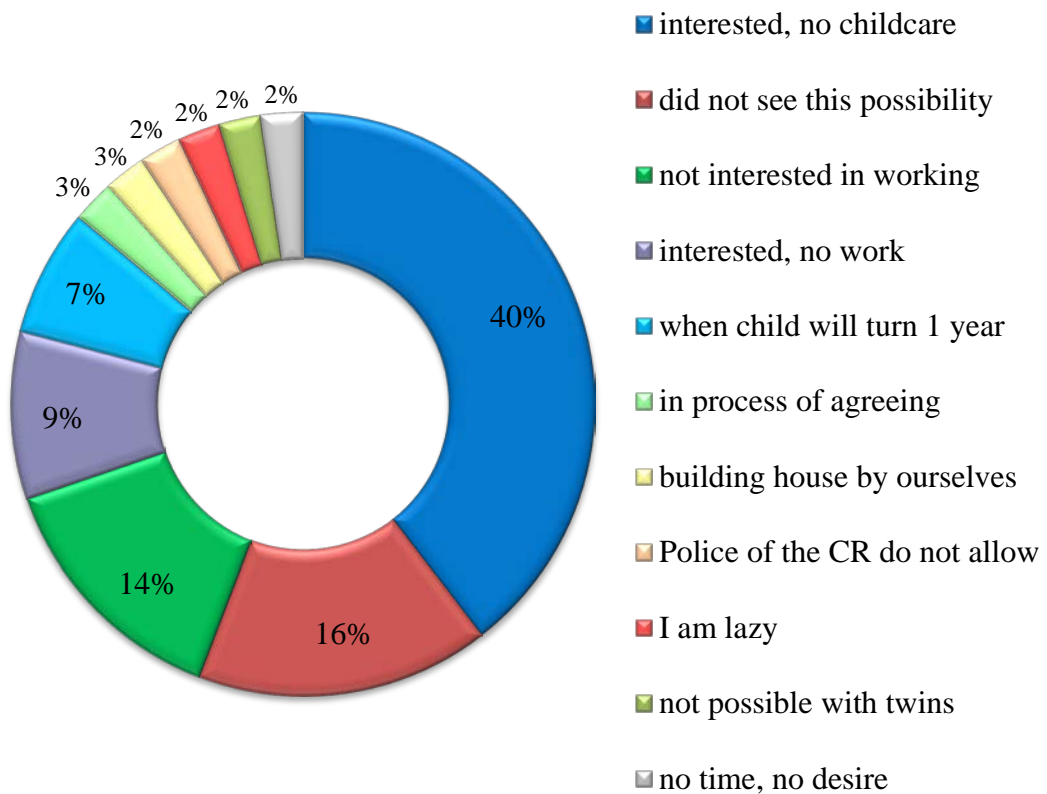


Source: own research and processing

The women do not or did not work during maternity or parental leave and the key question is why. The answers which they could choose in the questionnaire were that they are not interested in working or it didn't even come to their mind. Other possibilities were that they are interested but they do not have any childcare possibilities or there is no suitable position for a mother on maternity or parental leave. The last possible answer was opened and the women could answer whatever their reasons are. Few women answered that they would like to work but after their child will turn 1 year. There was also an interesting answer that the Police of the Czech Republic do not allow extra income. It is allowed just when it is in accordance to the law so it is not easy. One couple was building a house by ourselves during woman's maternity and parental leave thus it was a lot of work with the house and a garden and in addition no childcare was available

in their case. Another woman is just in the middle of a discussion about her job with potential employer so she might move to Group 2. Another woman admits that she is too lazy to work and other woman says she has no time and desire for working. One woman was on maternity and parental leave with twins so she was not able to manage it. To sum it up almost a half of the women would be interested in working but they cannot find the solution for childcare or no job fulfil their needs. The reasons for not working are represented in the Chart no. 8.

Chart no. 8: Reasons for Not Working in Group 3

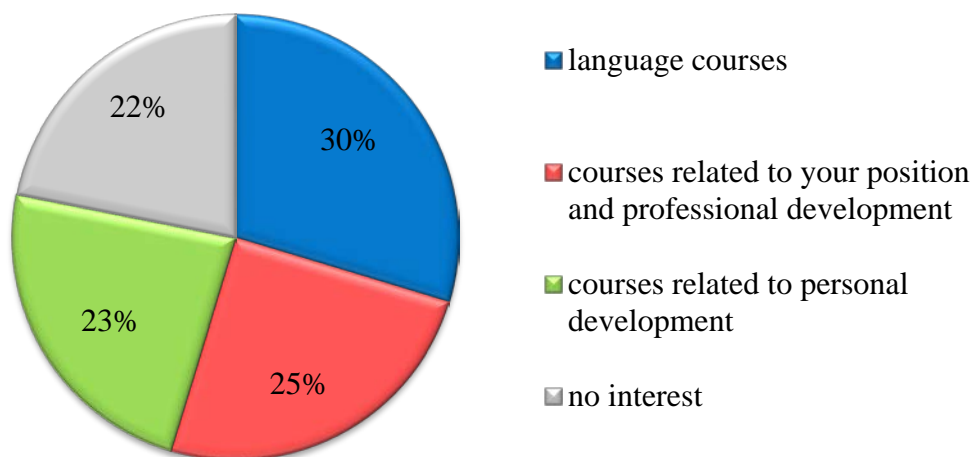


Source: own research and processing

To get more information about the women's interest in any other activities not connected to childcare they were also asked the question about attending courses. The questions were divided into two parts. The first was if they attended any courses during maternity or parental leave and 19 % of respondents answered that they did. They named some courses which they took part in and they were as follows: language courses, courses

about accountancy, economy and management, courses connected to some physical trainings or crocheting. The rest of the respondents did not attend any courses. The second part of the question was not aimed to the reality but to the potential interest in courses. The results say that 33 % of the respondents would not be interested in any kind of courses. On the other side 21 % of the women would like to attend all three offered types of courses. Due to multiple answering percentages in a chart are different than in total. In total numbers 33 % of the respondents are not interested and 67 % of the respondents are. The results are seen in the Chart no. 9.

Chart no. 9: Interest in Courses in Group 3



Source: own research and processing

The women were also asked what their ideal idea is about working or not working during maternity or parental leave. The most common answer was to work part-time, then to work flexible hours or work at home. Few women mentioned they would like to work after their child turns 1 year. One woman says specifically she would work 20 % since her child is one year old and after one more year she would like to increase it up to 40 % - she refuses to work at home or in the evenings. Another two women would appreciate home offices but just in case they need to finish some work or when their child is sick. Other two women would like their company to have a kindergarten. Some women were against working during maternity or parental leave. One woman explained that maternity and parental leave is supposed to be for taking care of a child, not for working. In addition her husband has time consuming job and they have no possibility of childcare. One

woman would work just in case that her mother would go to retirement and maximum for 25 %. But as she says it is not probable and she would not give her child to a nursery because the child is too young for it and she would not give it to any stranger. Another woman would go to whatever work but unfortunately she has no childcare. And the last answer to mention is that one respondent wants to start her little business at home. She is about to agree business with handmade and painted toys from Hungary that she would like to sell in the Czech Republic. In her opinion this is a kind of the best work on parental leave.

These women also suggest few possible kinds of help from an employer. Again there are mentioned part-time jobs and home offices. And there is also opposite idea that homeworking is not so good due to missing social contacts. One woman says it would be good to work flexible and be paid from work done, not to work for fixed hours. Plus there is also a request for sick days when a child is ill or at least more understanding from the employer's side. More answers are connected to nurseries, kindergartens and child clubs. One woman is a nurse and according her there are always nurses needed. She would like to go back to work but she has no childcare. They have possibility to have children at company's kindergarten but it is too expensive for her so she would appreciate cheaper conditions. Another woman says she does not need any support during the leave but after the leave. She would like to have a child in the company's kindergarten and she would appreciate adjustment of working hours – not to work in shifts. More answers are also connected to adjusting working hours. One woman mentioned she would like to attend courses and trainings at work during the leave to stay in contact with company.

The very last answer was very rich, one woman explained the view of an employer because her husband has a little firm with few employees. One of his employees left on maternity leave and according the law her husband must keep this place for her. This respondent says that to keep the place is a sufficient support because it brings a lot of compromising and limitations for the employer. She is also on maternity leave and she appreciates parental allowances and consider it as enough. Of course she can imagine to get higher allowances but as she says it is just rhetorical question. She thinks it is not nice and fair to expect even bigger support from an employer besides keeping the position for the employee, especially when it is allowed to earn some extra money during the leave.

As she is on maternity leave too, she admits it would be nice to have more support but she says that fortunately lawmakers look on both sides and keep the fairness. To compare it with other countries, she named social systems in Netherlands, England, Norway and United States, where the state and employers are not so openhanded. But in the Czech Republic the women can stay at home, get allowances, can earn extra money and the employers still keep the places for them, even for 4 years and it is not a short time.

4.1.6 Summary from the Questionnaires

Lastly there is a summary of the answers. At the beginning of the questionnaire there were the identification questions that showed that the women respondents were from the different age groups, with the different highest achieved education (except primary) and from the different situations regarding their employment and children. There were a big mixture of the women even though there were some limits of a researched sample which were introduced in the Chapter 4.1.1. The key points of the questionnaire were to find out if the women are interested in working during maternity or parental leave and what are their ideas about the most suitable work for them. The women were divided into three groups. The first group of the women was childless and results show that 75 % of the women would like to work during maternity and parental leave. The second group were the women who work during maternity or parental leave and they shared their personal reasons for working. The reasons were mostly their own interest (59 %) but also finances (29 %). The other question was if they are interested in attending some courses during the leave and 78 % were interested. The third group were the women who do not work during maternity or parental leave. There were mainly two types of women. The first type of women who do not want to work (34 %) and the second type of women who would like to work but they do not have the childcare or did not find a suitable job (49 %). In addition to the second type there were the women who are shortly on maternity or parental leave and they would like to start working after their child turns 1 year (7 %). The women were also asked if they are interested in attending some courses during their leave and 81 % of the women were not interested. It is the opposite situation than in the group of working mothers.

In total numbers 79 % of the women would like to work during maternity or parental leave and remaining 21 % would like not. The women who left on parental leave

chose 3 years long parental leave in 66 %, this was the most common answer. Regarding working during that time there was a huge mix of answers why to work or not to work and what would be the best option and the best support from the employer. The following answers were mostly answered by women interested in working. The most common answer for ideal way of working during maternity and parental leave was flexibility. Number one in the answers was the offer of part-time jobs, this was the most wanted alternative. The second place was taken by the possibility of home offices. And on the third position flexible working hours were placed. Possibilities of the external childcare were closed to the third place. It means kindergartens, child clubs or nannies. The most common answers about the appreciated support from the employer were almost equal and they just confirm the ideal perception of cooperation. From the top answers it was the offer of part-time jobs, home offices, company's kindergartens or any other childcare provided by the employer and flexible working hours. Worth to mention is that the women would also appreciate understanding and helpfulness from the employer.

4.2 The Interview's Analysis

The second part of the practical part is aimed at the interview's analysis. The interviews were held in the chosen company in Prague. The goal was to find the answers on the research questions and relates information from the interviews to already gained information from the questionnaires. The research questions that are connected to the interviews are as follows:

1. Can an employer offer to women on maternity or parental leave cooperation during their leave? What is his opinion about any kind of cooperation?
2. What are the steps when women come back from maternity or parental leave and what employer thinks about parental leave in the Czech Republic?

4.2.1 The Company

Firstly there is a need to introduce the chosen company which will be called "The Company" in the following text. Originally the Company is Scandinavian company but nowadays it is a well-known international company which is spread all around the world. The Company has a long history and its values keep it together. It is a very diverse group

of people who work there and team spirit and working together is one of the most important values of The Company. The Company has two different organizations in Prague – one is Purchasing organization and the other is Retail organization. Both parts function separately and have different HR departments. Before interviewing there was a pre-discussion about both organizations. Retail organization covers the region of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. Retail organization is positioned at the beginning of a supply chain and its responsibility is to bring great shopping experience to final customers. Their aim is to offer better products at lower costs and also make shopping possibilities more accessible. On the other hand Purchasing organization is at the end of the supply chain. Geographically one part of organization covers the region of Central Europe and the other part takes care of whole Europe – depending on products. Purchasing organization is responsible for supplies thus employees are in daily communication with suppliers. They develop relationships with suppliers and support them. When comparing these two organizations from HR perspective, Retail organization has a more elaborate system of benefits. Due to that the research was done in Purchasing organization as it can bring more merit to them.

Purchasing organization counts 126 employees in Prague office including supporting positions such as HR department. Interviews were held in November 2015 and January 2016. The first interview was done with HR Specialist Marie who has been working for Purchasing for three years. The second interviewee's name is Tomas. Tomas has been working for The Company for about 25 years and he was a part of many different teams in different countries and he also led more teams in his past. Nowadays he is a manager of the biggest team in Prague which counts 14 people. He is also responsible for 3 people in the USA and 3 people in Russia.

4.2.2 Interview no. 1

The first interview was taken with Marie and the whole transcription is added as Attachment no. 2. The interview was started with a general question how it works when a woman leaves on maternity leave. According Marie's experience a woman usually announces her pregnancy after the 4th month when risks for a child are not as high as at the beginning. *“There is no deadline and we are not allowed to ask. They mostly announce that after four months which are more risky.”* When the woman announces that she will

leave Marie needs to find out for how long the woman plans parental leave and they discuss it together. Before her leave HR department wants to secure a replacer to be able to hand the work over. This replacer gets a contract for the period of maternity and parental leave – not specified by dates. *“Actually during the first 6 months there is no contact with the woman from our side and after these 6 months we are starting communication with her if she really wants to come back according what we agreed before or if she wants to change it”*. In last three years there was only one woman who changed parental leave from two years to three years. It is not usual to change it nowadays especially after the amendment of the Czech law that the women can work also during maternity leave. The only condition and difference from working on parental leave is that the woman cannot return to her previous position. In Purchasing organization there is not usual to come back right after maternity leave but there are two women nowadays who came right after these six months.

In The Company the women usually leave for two years and they use nurseries or private kindergartens to secure a day care of their children. The Company does not help with the childcare or not contribute to payments, this is up to employees themselves. Unfortunately, there is higher number of the women who do not come back to The Company after parental leave. *“To be honest I think that our girls do not have much chances to come back because almost all employees are travelling a lot and there is not much administrative work”*. *“Often happens that girls have the second child right after the first one so the return is postponed – it can make 5 or 6 years”*. Other contacts with the women on maternity or parental leave are invitations for collective events such as St. Nicholas day for children, Christmas party or before summer there is a Family day. But there are no other contacts from HR side. There can be some contact from their working team but it is not also very common. *“I have an evidence of girls when they should come back so I usually contact them 3 months before that time and ask them how it looks with them and if they want to come back.”*

The next part of the interview was connected to possible alternatives of working, part-time jobs are discussed as the first option. *“I do not have children yet but I know that I am a person – I don’t know 100 % that after six months – but I think that after one year I would like to come back to work for sure, probably not for full-time but comeback for*

sure.” As mentioned above there is not much administrative work which could be done as a part-time job but still there are few positions. Therefore luckily, some women can come back even for part-time jobs. In case there are part-time positions it is usually about 70 or 80 % so it is not a big difference from full-time. It usually means free Fridays or working for 6 hours every day. “It can happen that some teams have some urgent administrative work so in that case we contact girls on maternity leave if they would like to help with it. But when it happened it was a work for example for one week. So there can be some kind of crash job but very little.”

Other most common alternatives mentioned in the questionnaire were flexible working hours and home office. For all co-workers there are the same working hours and they are partly fixed and partly flexible. It means that employees should be at work from 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. and the rest is flexible. And the same conditions for all workers are with home office – all can use 10 days of home office in one year and 1 sick day. *“But I think it is possible to adjust it with your own manager but I think that managers are not willing to have it often. It can be for some period but I think...but I know that in Retail organization they have one day of home office in a week but it should not be Monday or Friday to prolong weekends, or exceptionally. But it is possible and I think it is cool.”* For work in Purchasing it is important to be in a daily contact with co-workers due to needed communication within the teams. Marie also feels this need even as HR Specialist who is not included in purchasing teams. *“When I take one day home office it is crazy how all people search for me and call me so I rather work at the office.”* Job-sharing is not very possible in Purchasing because employees are responsible for their suppliers and communication cannot be divided easily into more people. Earlier there was more possibilities of home offices than nowadays, it seems that managers are pushing employees back to the office.

Lots of answers from the women respondents contained companies' kindergartens as appreciated support. In Purchasing there was also an idea few years ago that they could secure the childcare for their employees. *“It was in a discussion due to taxes and depreciation but it would be very expansive for the company. And as it should be for all organizations of The Company which are also in different parts of Prague and the Czech Republic then the place of the kindergarten was hard to solve.”* One time it was even a

global project within The Company for supporting the women but at the end it was not possible to realize it. The kindergarten is still in a discussion in some periods of time and lastly there was also a discussion about the kindergarten during summer holidays. There are of course different conditions for some kind of a child club and for the kindergarten especially in hygienic rules so it should be the child club for sure. *“But it is simply unbelievably expansive.”* There were also discussions about hiring nannies. The idea was to hire two girls for ten children but there was again the problem with the location. Earlier there were summer camps organized by The Company for employees’ children for 14 days and it was even for 2 years old children. So it was a good help with the childcare from The Company within summer holidays. *“Then even the summer camps were cancelled which I think they were fine during the summer. And the employee did not pay anything. But it was finally cancelled but I do not remember reasons. But it was seven season which is pretty good, it was a nice activity.”*

As a following topic was expectations from the women coming after maternity or parental leave. The woman is considered as a newcomer so she is a part of introduction trainings but as she already worked in The Company it is usually faster. There are usually changes in IT systems etc. so the woman gets trainings for that also. Regarding the expectation of losing self-confidence on maternity or parental leave, Marie does not think that the women coming back lost it. When she remembers the last woman who came back there was no change, no problem. But she believes it can be visible at interviews when the women do not come back to their previous employer. *“I have to say when we had some assessment centres where the women said they had been after parental leave that is right they were shier and let’s say more in background, just waiting. So the return might be harder for them.”*

In the last part of the interview, Marie was asked what she thinks about the length of parental leave in the Czech Republic. She thinks that the Czech Republic is a country with the longest parental leave and she likes it. *“I think it is good but I think that mothers do not have much chances to choose.”* She mentions that there is not much part-time jobs and this option is not very spread in the Czech Republic. Few international companies can enable it but she believes that comeback from parental leave is little bit difficult in case that the women do not want to work full-time. Marie also mentioned maternity leave

in the U.S. which lasts six weeks and after that time mothers go back to work. She thinks that a child is too small thus parental leave in the Czech Republic is fine. But she also says that on the other hand the women would like to work at least partly and there is not much possibilities to earn extra money or it is not paid very well thus it is not advantageous.

4.2.3 Interview no. 2

The second interview was done with Tomas and it started with the question about his history of being a team leader. He got his first team leader position in 1993, since that time he was not only on managerial positions but he was responsible at least for two team members. When he led a big team within four countries - Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic – it was 20 people. Nowadays his team already reached a number of 20 people also. In total it is for the third time he is in the role of the team leader.

The next question was connected to the topic and was about his experiences with the women who leave on maternity leave. *“Every year it happens. When a person has a team of 20 people so let’s say that 50 % of the team are women in average, so once per year. We are a company who employ very young people, men or women, so sooner or later when somebody starts in 20 then in the first 5 years somebody usually leaves for maternity leave. Hard to say but once per year.”* One woman who comes back from parental leave started at administrative position in Tomas’ team. She started to work 50 % and she mostly worked from home but later Tomas offered to her logistic position for full time and she accepted. Tomas hired another admin support for 80 %, this girl was not a mother but a student. In Tomas’ team is one another woman who came back from parental leave. She started to work full-time from the beginning. Both women were employed by The Company before maternity and parental leave but they worked for different teams. *„As an example from autumn 2015 there is one more girl. She was hired to my team and in an extremely short time she got pregnant, it was in three or four months, and she left on maternity leave. Then after 8 months she was interested in going back for 20 % to support the student girl with administrative work from home but it was not functioning very well. She was not able to work regularly due to not reliable childcare so we had to finish this cooperation.”* Tomas thinks that the average of going back from parental leave is shorter than 2 years – between 6 to 12 months.

The next section of the questions were connected to the alternatives. The first question was connected to part-time jobs. *“Sometimes we hire students for different kinds of projects, for example during the summer to the stores. But here in the office it is a bit different because our base is the team work. And if somebody is not present or works half-time then it has the impact on the whole team. So this is less functioning.”* Sometimes it can happen that a team is responsible just for one or two suppliers so it is something different and there are such teams. But Tomas’ team has a high number of suppliers thus his people also spend more time by travelling. Tomas would say that in teams which are responsible for more than 6 suppliers it is not suitable to have somebody working from the distance. Neither home office, neither part-time. He says it works for some time but in long-term it doesn’t work. If he takes administrative positions or other project based positions it is more possible to work from home, it depends on the goals. When a person needs to do some preparation job or needs to think something up from a zero, it can be done at home. Next alternative for a discussion was job-sharing. *“Sharing one position by two people, I guess we didn’t think about that like this so far, it would be a rare solution.”*

The interview continued with the question about expectations from a woman coming back from maternity or parental leave. Tomas says it really depends who is this woman. It depends how long she was in The Company and on what positions. *“For example when one girl was coming back from parental leave she had a lot of experiences from The Company, maybe 10 years or something. So she had a very much experiences from different departments and different positions. So it was not from a zero. When somebody works like one year then leave and come back after one year then it is almost like newcomer. That person needs to refresh everything because a lot of things are changing considering rules, approaches, structure. The Company changes the structure every third year so this must be refreshed.”*

Tomas was also asked what his experience is with returns to work from parental leave – if it often happens that the women who left are not coming back to The Company at all. His answer is yes. He guess that 70 % of the women do not come back. He doesn’t think that it is because of The Company as such but because of private reasons. His ideas are that somebody wants to stay home after parental leave and perhaps a husband earns

money for the family for example for ten years. It happens usually when the women are older than 35 and are starting a family later then they do not search for a job at all after the end of parental leave. But also there are some women who want to have simple job like come “free” and leave “free”, including also to be the boss of their own time. He thinks that the half from mentioned 70 % starts their small own business like selling something or producing something.

The other question was asked due to answer from the previous interview with Marie. She mentioned that she has a feeling that these alternatives especially home working were more usual few years ago but nowadays managers are pushing employees back to the office and standard ways of working. Thus Tomas was asked about his feeling and the answer was opposite. He says that few years later there were less possibilities that nowadays it is more opened. He really thinks about the woman who is coming back and thinks what she can do. Earlier when somebody was leaving on maternity leave they searched for a permanent replacement. Then when the woman was coming back she was usually offered different position. *“Today we are more looking into possibilities how to get people on the same position or to plan in what time they would come back and so. Earlier it was more black or white.”*

The final question was connected to the length of parental leave in the Czech Republic. Tomas thinks it is generous from the state, there is a lot of countries where the leave is much shorter. He was wondering if longer parental leave comes from historical reasons or what is the root cause but he thinks it is good. It is good for the child as the child has the parents nearby in the first years. He says it is worse in countries where they have the leave shorter. He also pointed out the USA where the women needs to go back to work almost after one month but he says it is for economic reasons that they must work or they would not have money for living. *“So I think here in the Czech Republic it is balanced that here is some possible choice. Those who choose longer parental leave I think it is good for the child. Those who take shorter time they have certainly some reasons behind. I cannot judge because I do not have children but this is my opinion.”*

Tomas closed the interview with his perception of The Company. There are firms which directly say goodbye when a woman leaves on maternity leave and there are firms that secure the comeback to work precisely. The Company is somewhere in the middle.

He perceives that The Company supports families but has a hesitant approach. He says that about 75,000 new employees will be hired worldwide till 2020. He points out that the majority will work within Retail organizations. In comparison to Retail, Purchasing is small organization that has 14,000 employees worldwide, nowadays. Therefore Retail part of The Company definitely has some plan and philosophy about benefits and motivation of the women to come back from parental leave but it is a different concept than in Purchasing organization. Transcription of the interview is in Attachment no. 3.

4.2.4 Summary from the Interviews

At the end there is a summary from both interviews with HR Specialist Marie and team leader Tomas. The aim was to get the answer for research questions and also connect questions to information from questionnaires. At first The Company is divided into more organizations and the research was done in one of them called Purchasing. People are responsible for cooperation with suppliers and they mostly work in teams. This is very important characteristic of positions within Purchasing.

These characteristics influence the possibilities for mothers who would like to work during maternity and parental leave. The Company can offer to the women few part-time administrative positions but unfortunately there is not much opportunities like this. Both interviewees agreed that the possibility of working part-time is useful more or less just for administrative work. Job sharing for other positions is not very suitable due to necessary communication with suppliers and team members. Working from home is alternative that could be used in case that the woman agrees on that with the manager. Usually there is 10 days of home office for all co-workers but the decision about individual adjustment is up to managers. Tomas says that it can work for some period but in long term it is not very suitable. Working hours are partly fixed and partly flexible but again it can be adjusted on the basis of individual needs.

When a woman leave on maternity and parental leave, HR worker, manager and the woman discuss what is the plan for comeback. According this agreement they hire a replacement who gets contract for the period of maternity and parental leave. Marie guesses that the women leave in average for two years, Tomas believes it is shorter nowadays. Both of them agreed that it is pretty often that the woman do not come back

from the leave at all. It is mostly due to characteristic of job positions as they include a lot of travelling. Communication during maternity and parental leave is reduced to invitations to Christmas parties or other social events. When the woman comes back she does not have any special integration plan. It mostly depends on her experiences but definitely she takes part in introduction trainings. When she is experienced she jumps fast into the working process but when she was in The Company for example for one year she is considered to be a newcomer.

The last interest was in interviewees' opinions about the length of parental leave in the Czech Republic. Both of them think that even though it is for sure one of the longest parental leave in comparison to other countries, it is very good especially for the child. They mentioned extremely short maternity leave in the USA and agreed that Czech parental leave is long but in a good way. It is obvious that it is more complicated for the women to get back to work but both interviewees consider this leave as worthy.

4.3 SWOT Analysis

At the end of the practical part there is a need to interconnect all gained information from the questionnaires and the interviews. The main point is to project general women's attitude into the chosen company and find the way of possible cooperation during maternity and parental leave. To remind, the most suitable ways of cooperation for the women were to work part-time and from home, not to work in fixed hours and to have secured childcare. It is necessary to evaluate the situation at the employer thus SWOT analysis is used for defining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of The Company.

Strengths

In The Company are offered administrative positions that are suitable for working part-time. As The Company is international and communication is necessary within all countries they are equipped by tools which can be used also for homeworking. Just as an example it can be the use of emails, internal systems with shared common folders, cloud computing, teleconferences or other programs for easy communication. The other strength of The Company is openness. As seen from the interviews it is possible to agree and adjust the way of working, it depends on the individual needs and a discussion with

the manager. The Company also showed the willingness to provide its employees with the childcare. They did not find the right solution for their situation but they are opened towards it.

Weaknesses

The Company's weaknesses are mostly based on the characteristics of jobs. For effective work it is necessary to work in the teams and permanent communication is important. This cannot be sufficient when working part-time or from home, or just in short term. The other weakness is the location of day care potentially provided by The Company. The childcare should be accessible for all employees from different organizations within The Company. As other organizations are in four different places in the Czech Republic, the location is the problem. The last point to mention is that The Company provides the employee with their equipment such as PC and cell phone or with trainings, working place and some other benefits which are the same for full-time employee and part-time employee. It means there are higher costs for the part-time employee in that way.

Opportunities

The big opportunity is obvious from the questionnaires. Most of the women are really interested to work during maternity or parental leave and the employer can gain loyal and more effective employees. Nowadays alternative ways are not so usual on the labour market in the Czech Republic. The Company can use this opportunity and offer alternative working possibilities. By that, they can get experienced employees who cannot find alternatives at other companies. Moreover, it can bring nice reputation to The Company. There is also opportunity to secure day care for children not by opening own kindergarten but by using private kindergartens and make some convenient agreement from both sides. And the last and important advantage is that the state enable women to work during maternity and parental leave.

Threats

The biggest disadvantage is that the women usually cannot find the childcare. It is caused by low number of nurseries or low capacity of state kindergartens that are not

able to accept all children. It can happen they do not have a space for already three years old child even though in that age children should be accepted. Threat is also that providing an employee by some alternative way of working can cause dissatisfaction of other colleagues or suppliers that cooperate with this person. The last but not least is that especially bigger international companies are aware of the opportunity to capture the women with the offer of alternatives thus the competitive offer of other companies can be an issue.

An overview of SWOT analysis is illustrated in the Table no. 1. On the basis of SWOT analysis there are strategies suggested.

Table no. 1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administrative positions opened - Tools for distance working in place - Possible agreement on individual needs with the manager - Willingness to provide day care for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team work not suitable especially for homeworking - Permanent communication not suitable especially for part-time job - Location of day care - Costs same as for full-time employee (PC, cell phone, trainings, benefits)
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's interest - Loyal and more effective employees - Not many offers of alternatives on the labour market nowadays - Nice reputation - Agreement with private kindergartens - Open legislative towards working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low capacity of state kindergartens - Low number of nurseries - Dissatisfaction of co-workers, suppliers - Competitiveness of other companies in the offer of alternatives

Source: own research and processing

WO Strategy

- ST1: Necessities of permanent communication and team work are seen as complications for working part-time and from home. As understood employees are travelling very often thus the team work is also disrupted. In case the communication and time plan are clear for all team members they can have regular meetings and share needed information. The effectiveness is secured and can be used also in case of working part-time or from home. This strategy can be even supported by the serious interest of the women in working alternatively. These women are perceived as loyal and more effective employees thus with good planning, alternative working could be manageable.
- ST2: As already explained, location of the day care is an issue for The Company. They would like to provide the women by kindergarten or child club but it should be offered to all employees in the Czech Republic at four different places. Thus the opening own kindergarten is not very effective solution. But The Company could use the opportunity to agree on cooperation with some private kindergartens closed to all needed locations.

SO Strategy

- ST3: The Company should attract the women by the offer of alternative ways of working. By that, they would be more competitive as a company on the labour market. They can gain loyal employees who have the potential to stay and also work full-time later when children are older. As there is the individual agreement with the manager possible it could be even more attractive offer for the women.
- ST4: The second SO strategy is connected to ST2 as the employer is willing to provide day care they can get in contact with private kindergarten nearby.

WT Strategy

- ST5: To minimize the weaknesses, The Company should consider changing the structure of job positions. They should think about how to implement alternative working possibilities into their job positions as in the future the interest is here.

As seen from the questionnaire, 75 % of future potential mother would like to work during maternity and parental leave.

- ST6: The Company needs to prepare these alternative possibilities from ST5 in elaborated way to avoid dissatisfaction of co-workers and suppliers.

ST Strategy

- ST7: The last strategy is also connected to previous strategies ST2 and ST4. As The Company is willing to provide day care for children they can turn the threat of low capacity in state kindergartens away. They just need to solve the way how to secure it and the opportunity of agreement with private kindergartens can be used.
- ST8: Nowadays there is not much alternative working possibilities on the labour market. In case that The Company will use the opportunity and offer these possibilities, they can avoid competitiveness of other companies.

5 Proposals and Recommendations

Before final conclusion there are some proposals and recommendations towards The Company to be able to follow demands on the labour market and to work effectively with labour force that they employ. Other points are connected to the whole situation in the Czech Republic.

The employer should consider that approaches of the women are changing and most of them are willing to work during maternity or parental leave and come back to work early. On the other side the women cannot be back 100 % thus the employer could offer more part-time jobs. The employer should consider changing the structure of jobs positions, co-working within the teams or dividing responsibilities into more people. The idea is not only to attract new employees but not to loose the women who are already employed.

As seen from the interview, The Company is opened towards establishing some kind of day care for children of their employees. The problem is that their vision are tied up to establishing their own childcare. If they will consider some cooperation with already existing kindergartens, it could be beneficial agreement for both sides and not to be problematic due to different locations within the Czech Republic.

Both suggestions would make The Company more competitive on the labour market and they would gain better reputation. The Company needs to know the direction of labour force's demands and from the research is visible that demands of mothers are aiming to work during maternity or parental leave.

Following comments are general, not meant to comment the situation in The Company. The state could be more supportive towards employers that employ mothers on maternity or parental leave. State could take an inspiration in benefits for example from employing disabled people. State could also support the employers who provide their employees by kindergartens or other types of childcare. The reason is that state kindergartens are not able to secure day care for all children as the capacity is low, especially in some regions. If state would offer for example tax deductions it would be more beneficial for the employers and it might be cheaper solution for state.

6 Conclusion

To conclude the whole thesis there is a need to go through and remind the goals of the thesis. The main goal was to find out how the women and companies can cooperate during maternity or parental leave and if there is an interest in this cooperation. For the research there was chosen one particular company and the results were implemented and projected in this company.

To achieve the main goal there was few partial objectives set. The first was focused on gaining theoretical knowledge of the topic. There were introduced important facts about Czech legislation, social and school system in the Czech Republic and also theory about employing people, alternative working possibilities, synchronizing family and working life, gender roles or glass ceiling.

Following partial goals were connected to the research chapter. At first the results from the questionnaires were showed. The research says that 79 % of the women work or would like to work during maternity or parental leave. Mostly they would like to work part-time, from home or in flexible working hours. This style of working is perceived as ideal for them. They would also appreciate providing kindergartens from their employers. Their interest in other activities beside the childcare during maternity or parental leave differed. Women who work or worked during the leave were also mostly interested in any other courses for their own development. On the other side women who do not or did not work during the leave were mostly not interested.

The research continued in the chosen company and was done by interviewing one HR worker and one team leader. Both of them agreed that due to characteristics of the job positions there is not many alternative possibilities beside few administrative positions. It was also mentioned that this employer would like to offer day care for children but there are complications such as investments and location. The process of going on maternity leave and coming back was described. When the woman leaves they agree on a time plan how she sees her comeback and replacement is secured for the time of her leave. The woman is contacted after maternity leave if their time plan is valid. Communication during the leave is limited to invitations on company's social events. When there is the time of return, the woman has usual introduction trainings and starting

to work as before. Interviews showed that high percentages of the women do not come back due to characteristics of job positions – mainly due to necessary travelling. Both interviewees consider parental leave in the Czech Republic as OK. They do not think it is too long, they both say it is very good especially for the child.

The final part of the own research was SWOT analysis that interconnect results from the questionnaires and interviews. It represented strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the chosen company. On the basis of SWOT analysis there were few strategies for the company created and final suggestions were also based on SWOT analysis and previous researches. The final suggestions are mainly connected towards the characteristics of the job positions. The research show that the women are interested in working during maternity and parental leave. Thus the employer should consider demands on the labour market and think about changing the structure of working within the company. This could also help with losing the women employees after parental leave. They could also use the opportunity and try to establish agreements with private kindergartens nearby instead of establishing their own. They have issues with investments and with location so this cooperation with private kindergartens could be beneficial for both sides. In case they would offer more alternatives and also day care for children, they could gain better reputation and be more competitive in comparison to the other companies.

Above strategies and recommendations are suggested in order to enable cooperation among the women and the company during maternity and parental leave. The goals of the thesis are fulfilled and research questions are answered.

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8 Attachments

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8.1 Attachment no.1: Questionnaire

Following questions are for all the women.

1. You are a woman in age between:

- a. until 20 years
- b. 21-30 years
- c. 31-40 years
- d. 41 and more

2. Your highest achieved education is:

- a. primary education
- b. secondary education
- c. tertiary education

3. You are:

- a. employed
- b. unemployed
- c. self-employed
- d. a student

4. You work:

- a. full-time
- b. part-time
- c. if part time what is the percentage ...

5. Do you have children?

- a. No, I do not.

- b. I do. I am on maternity/parental leave right now
- c. I do. The youngest is until 10 years old (10 included)
- d. I do. The youngest is over 10 years old

Following questions are for the women in Group 2 and 3.

6. How many children do you have?

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. more

7. What length of parental leave did you choose?

- a. I did not leave on parental leave
- b. 1 year
- c. 2 years
- d. 3 years
- e. 4 years
- f. Father left on parental leave

8. Do you work/did you work during maternity/parental leave?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

Following questions are for the women in Group 2.

9. Do you work/did you work at your employer that you worked before the leave?

- a. Yes, on the same or similar position.

b. Yes, on different position.

c. No.

d. I am self-employed.

10. Your working hours are:

a. fixed

b. flexible

11. You work:

a. at the workplace

b. at home

c. somewhere else: please specify

12. What are your reasons for working during maternity/parental leave?

a. only financial reasons

b. primarily it is my interest – I wanted to realize myself out of home, money are just plus

c. other reason: please specify

Following questions are for the women in Group 3.

13. What are your reasons for not working during maternity/parental leave?

a. I am not interested.

b. It did not even occurred to me.

c. I am interested but I do not have secured childcare.

d. I am interested but I cannot find any job.

e. other reasons: please specify

Following questions are for the women in Group 2 and 3.

14. Do you attend/did you attend any courses during maternity/parental leave?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.
- c. If yes, what kind of courses: ...

15. Would you be interested in attending courses:

- a. related to personal development
- b. related to professional development
- c. language courses
- d. I am not interested.

Following questions are for the women in Group 1.

16. Do you think you would like to work during maternity/parental leave?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

17. Why yes?

Please explain.

18. Why not?

Please explain.

Following questions are for all the women.

19. What is your ideal vision of working during maternity/parental leave?

Please describe.

20. What do you consider as the most appreciated support for the employer.

Please describe.

8.2 Attachment no. 2: Transcription of the Interview no. 1 - with Marie

Please can you describe the process when a woman leave on maternity leave? How is the communication during maternity and parental leave and how the return looks like?

OK, so when a mother leaves on maternity leave so we want to know for how long time she wants to go, how she plans the return. Actually during the first 6 months there is no contact with the woman from our side and after these 6 months we are starting to communicate with her if she really wants to come back according what we agreed before or if she wants to change it. Because here there is not many comebacks after 6 months leave. It is two women otherwise the girls mostly leave for two years.

Do you know what kind of childcare they use when they come back after two years? As kindergartens are usually from 3 years of age.

They use some nurseries, there are few. Or private kindergarten. But we do not care about this, we do not even contribute. But what we know the average is two years in most of the cases. Or then some girls come back for some part-time jobs such as one woman here today. It is work from home. But otherwise the mothers what I have experiences today the girls mostly leave the company. It is too much travelling here, it is not many positions for administrative work thus they do not have the space for coming back.

When they announce they are pregnant, is there any deadline for them to inform you as the employer?

There isn't. There is no deadline and we are not allowed to ask. They mostly announce that after four months which are more risky.

When you search for a replacement. Does this person start before the mother leaves to secure the handover of work?

Mostly yes. When the woman informs us that she is leaving, we start to search and the contract is signed for the period of maternity leave, it is permanent contract but limited as a replacement for maternity leave.

Do you have experiences that the women change the length of parental leave?

In my three years here, it was one girls who prolong it. She announced after maternity leave the length and after another month she called me that she would like to prolong it to three years not two. So this was the only one otherwise the women mostly keep it. And as the law enable that even the women on maternity leave can earn extra money...; it is not limited, there is the only condition that the job mustn't be the same which they left when going on maternity leave; that they can work for example as administrative support and they can earn whatever they want.

And after maternity leave they can work on their previous positions, right?

Yes. It is limited only for maternity leave. Earlier it was forbidden that the women are not allowed to work, they cannot be employed anywhere. So now they did this amendment that the women can...but they cannot work on the same position which they get allowances from. But the girls who are coming back, I know for example that one girl here when she was on maternity leave and parental leave before she came back to the same position. Or the other girl also came back to the same position. She has adjusted employment that she works part-time but it is the same position.

Do you have here more possibilities for part-time jobs?

No, no. It is not much. Here is really this kind of administrative support but not much. Actually that girl who came back from parental leave she has part-time job for 80 %. That is almost full-time. So she works from Monday to Thursday normally for 8 hours and she has free Fridays. But it is part-time, not usual 40 working hours. But otherwise, here is not many chances. I think that in Retail it is little but different. Especially timewise. Here people travel a lot and really it is not possible. And this administrative..., it is not here really. To be honest I think that our girls do not have much chances to come back at all. But often happens that girls have the second child right after the first one so the return is postponed – it can make 5 or 6 years. It is pretty often.

When the woman is on maternity leave you told that you contact the woman after 6 months. You confirm what you agreed, I mean when the woman wants to come back.

Yes, exactly. And then we are in contact with girls on maternity or parental leave – when we invite them for Christmas parties and common events but in the other way I am not in contact with them.

And what about the team? Do you know if they are in contact?

I think it depends on the team but I think not much. It is really for Christmas parties, St. Nicholas day or Family day before summer holiday. But nothing else. And I have an evidence of girls when they should come back so I usually contact them 3 months before that time and ask them how it looks with them and if they want to come back. But not in other cases.

What are your expectations from the woman who comes back from parental leave? For example if you have any kind of program for integration.

Actually it is considered as a newcomer. We gave them first trainings but they jump into the process by themselves.

So it is mostly refreshment...?

Yes. They go through some introductions because for example system were changed but it is not like they are for example two months somewhere due to break in.

And do you see some differences in the women coming back from parental leave? I mean for example changes in self-confidence or skills?

I don't think so. I cannot compare that so much. When I will talk about one girls who is freshly back, I do not think so.

And if it is no your employee but potential newcomer at interview?

Yes, yes. I have to say when we had some assessment centres where the women said they had been after parental leave that is right they were shier and let's say more in background, waiting. So the return might be harder for them a bit.

You have already mentioned part-time jobs but in general do you offer alternative ways of working such as part-time jobs, home offices or flexible working hours during maternity or parental leave?

Not usually, just if there is some emergency. It can happen that some teams have some urgent administrative work so in that case we contact girls on maternity leave if they would like to help with it. But when it happened it was a work for example for one week. So there can be some kind of crash job but very little.

OK. So not much part-time jobs. Would it be possible to share the position for example half and half?

I do not think so. Here the teams take care of suppliers and daily communication is a must. It is not really possible in this kind of jobs.

And what about flexible working hours and home office?

Here we have six hours fixed from 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. and the rest is flexible. Regarding home office we have generally 10 days per year and one sick day per year. Actually one time it was also discussed that home offices would be more allowed. But now it seems to me that it is declining and managers are rather pushing people back to the offices. But I think it is definitely possible to adjust it with your own manager but I think that managers are not willing to have it often. It can be for some period but I think...but I know that in Retail organization they have one day of home office in a week but it should not be Monday or Friday to prolong weekends, or exceptionally. But it is possible and I think it is cool. But actually I rather work here. When I take one day home office it is crazy how all people search for me and call me so I rather work at the office.

What do you think about the length of parental leave in the Czech Republic?

I think we are the country with the longest parental leave so I think it is cool like this. That till three or four years...that you can go on parental leave for three years but you can prolong it and state pays health and social insurance but you do not have any allowances. I think it is good but I think that mothers do not have much chances to choose. And not many part-time jobs are offered here in the Czech Republic, it is not functioning yet. I think there are few companies – international companies that enable this but otherwise I think that return from maternity and parental leave is a bit difficult in the Czech Republic. If the woman do not want to work full-time. This is my opinion. I think that the length is fine that for example in the US they have six weeks and then just...I think that the child

is too young. Here it is fine but I think that during that time a lot of women would like to work but simply the possibilities are not here. Or some extra income during parental leave it is not here, not much. Or for such money that it is not advantageous.

Actually I had a question in a questionnaire for childless women if they think that they would like to work during parental leave and about 75 % of them answered yes.

I also do not have children yet but I know that I am a person – I don't know 100 % that after six months – but I think that after one year I would like to come back to work for sure, probably not for full-time but comeback for sure.

And did you as an employer consider establishing kindergarten or some other day care for your employees?

Yes, we did. It was in a discussion due to taxes and depreciation but it would be very expensive for the company. And as it should be for all organizations of The Company which are also in different parts of Prague and the Czech Republic then the place of the kindergarten was hard to solve. But it was in a discussion. I know that there were summer camps, I was there. It was for 14 days provided by The Company and it was even for very little children like since 2 years of age. So this was one activity for the parents. But otherwise... But I know that the kindergarten is still plus minus in a discussion, it is all the time in some process, I know that we were thinking now about the summer. But it is simply unbelievably expensive. Actually in reality it would not be real kindergarten but rather a child club because there are very demanding rules for equipment and hygienic conditions in kindergartens. So this is not possible. One time we were discussing babysitting for example that 2 teachers or nannies would take care of 10 children but again the location – and to have two locations, that is silly. But I know that some companies have this option.

I was talking to 2 HR workers from other companies and actually they had the same problem that it is too expensive for them.

Actually some time ago it was even a global project but at the end it was cancelled. Then even the summer camps were cancelled which I think they were fine during the summer.

And the employee did not pay anything. But it was finally cancelled but I do not remember reasons. But it was seven season which is pretty good, it was a nice activity.

8.3 Attachment no. 3: Transcription of the Interview no. 2 - with Tomas

How long are you on the managerial position and leading the team?

The very first time when I was a team leader it was in 1993 so you can count it. Later I went also back on lower position for some time. Back then we had a big team responsible for four European countries, we were 20 people. So nowadays I have also already 20 people in the other team. So this is the third time when I am the team leader.

Can you guess how many women from your teams left on maternity leave?

Every year it happens. When a person has a team of 20 people so let's say that 50 % of the team are women in average, so once per year. We are a company who employ very young people, men or women, so sooner or later when somebody starts in 20, then in the first 5 years somebody usually leaves on maternity leave. Hard to say but once per year.

So you have many experiences with that...

Yes. In current team one girl came back from parental leave... and the other one she started to work on part-time for 50 % and she worked a lot from home at the beginning. And then she changed the position in my team and started to work full-time.

After what time do you have experience that women are coming back from parental leave? Do they usually come back to your team or to the others?

We have here one case now. As an example from autumn 2015 there is one more girl. She was hired to my team and in an extremely short time she got pregnant, it was in three or four months, and she left on maternity leave. Then after 8 months she was interested in going back for 20 % to support the student girl with administrative work from home in my team but it was not functioning very well. She was not able to work regularly due to not reliable childcare so we had to finish this cooperation. So she is still on parental leave.

Thus, do you think that women usually come back after 2 or 3 years?

I think that the average is shorter nowadays. From 6 to 12 months, I would say.

From the questionnaires the most common answers from women were that they would like to work part-time or from home. What do you think about this kind of cooperation?

Sometimes we hire students for different kinds of projects, for example during the summer to the stores. But here in the office it is a bit different because our base is the team work. And if somebody is not present or works half-time then it has the impact on the whole team. So this is less functioning. I don't say when some team has one or two suppliers then it is different. And here are teams like that. But in our team we has a high number of suppliers then it is also connected to more often travelling. So I would say that team that has more than six or seven suppliers it is not suitable to have someone working from the distance.

So neither home office nor part-time job?

It can work in short-term but not in long-term. If you consider administrative positions or project positions then it is different. It depends on the goals of the positions what the person should do during the year or more years and a lot of things can be prepared from home when a person needs to be concentrated, think about that and create something from zero like a concept.

Can you imagine that two people would share one position in the team?

Sharing one position by two people, I guess we didn't think about that like this so far, it would be a rare solution.

What are your expectations from the woman coming back from parental leave?

It depends on the person how long she worked in the company and what she did before. For example when one girl was coming back from parental leave she had a lot of experiences from The Company, maybe 10 years or something. So she had a very much experiences from different departments and different positions. So it was not from a zero. When somebody works like one year then leave and come back after one year then it is almost like newcomer. That person needs to refresh everything because a lot of things are changing considering rules, approaches, structure. The Company changes the structure every third year so this must be refreshed.

Do you have the feeling that few years ago The Company was more opened towards the distance working or more opened towards alternative ways of working in general?

No, earlier it was even less. Today it is more opened that we really think about the woman who wants to come back from parental leave, what she can do. Earlier it was more like... when somebody leaves on maternity leave we were searching for permanent replacement. And then when that woman came back she was offered totally different position. Today we are more looking into possibilities how to get people on the same position or to plan in what time they would come back and so. Earlier it was more black or white.

What do you think about the length of parental leave in the Czech Republic?

I think it is generous from the state on one side, there are many countries which have much shorter leave. Here it is longer, I don't know if it is from historical reason or where it is coming from. But I think it is good. It is good for the child that have the parents nearby in the first years, longer time. It is probably worse in other countries which has the time shorter. Respectively in the USA some women come back to work after one month. But it is for economic reasons that in some countries they must work because of their living. So I think here in the Czech Republic it is balanced that here is some possible choice. Those who choose longer parental leave I think it is good for the child. Those who take shorter time they have certainly some reasons behind. I cannot judge because I do not have children but this is my opinion.

Do you have experiences that the woman who left on maternity leave from your team that she didn't come back to The Company?

I would say that maybe 70 % of the women do not come back.

It is pretty high number.

Hmm, yes. It is not possible to say that the reasons are connected to The Company. It is from private reasons. Somebody wants to stay at home and for example the husband works for maybe 10 years. And the woman is then housewife after the leave for example when she is older when having the first child, like 35. It happens that they do not search for any job. There are these cases. But then here are the women who wants to have simple job like to come free and leave free and to decide about their time by themselves. So I

think that a half from these 70 % want to do something on their own. That they will think of their own business for example they sell something or something what is cool nowadays, like Oriflame or candles for example. That you invite some friends to your house and you can do some kind of trade party. So these kind of stuff these women did few years after parental leave.

Would you like to add something more?

It is not much my topic because women have for sure more opinions and is more close to children as I explained. But from the point of the company, I would say that The Company is somewhere in the middle. It supports but in a hesitant way. There are companies which say – Oh, you go on maternity leave, Ciao and have a nice time. But some companies they really take care and secure the comeback in precise ways etc. So I think we are in the middle. We are a company that will hire 75,000 of new people until 2020. Of course that the majority is in Retail so there is for sure some plan and philosophy about this. We are pretty small organization, we are about 14,000 people worldwide or something like that. So we do not follow the Retail's concept so it is better to ask in Retail what their plans are. They are bigger in the number of employees than we are.