

Welcome Address

by Caren Marks, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Family
Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

on the occasion of the 62nd International Conference of the International Commission
on Couple and Family Relations "CHANGING TIMES: IMPACTS OF TIME ON
FAMILY LIFE"

"Time for Families, strengthening Partnership"

Berlin, 22nd June 2015

Check against delivery!

Ms Berger,
Dr. Schöningh,
Dr. Bergmann
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
I.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the start of the 62nd Conference of the
International Commission on Couple and Family Relations here in Berlin.

First of all, I wish to thank the organisers of this conference!

You have done an excellent job. A great number of participants and speakers from all
over the world have made their way here to Berlin.

For the next days, you have committed yourselves to an ambitious and multi-faceted programme that is connected, in many ways, to the work done by my ministry.

Tomorrow's presentation 'Tempus fugit – Adults have watches, children have time', by Prof. Dr. Vanhee from Belgium, will be drawing our attention to the great importance of the topic "time".

Here in Germany, time is also a major topic for family policy.

I am sure that, in her contribution, Prof. Allmendinger of the Berlin Social Science Centre (*Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin*) will be giving us new inspiration for utilising the scarce time available to families in their day-to-day life.

I know her to be a creative woman, full of good ideas and concepts that often are able to build a bridge between science, policy and practical implementation.

The main topics of this conference show that the discussion about time policy, and the question of how family and working life can be better reconciled to create more time for the family, is gaining importance.

This is the case, not only in Germany, but also in many other states.

One of the rules we go by in the context of family policy in Germany is: Families need money, infrastructure – and time.

With the topic 'time usage', we touch a nerve in many people, especially in families.

Many families manage, daily, the balancing act between career advancement, on the one hand, and their children and relatives in need of care, on the other.

However, we find that it is mostly women who have to shoulder the double burden of family and work, and have to live with both the shortage of time and a bad conscience.

I am sure that, in your discussion groups, you will be posing the question of what can be done to improve equality between women and men in this area.

I believe we will succeed, if we manage to get especially the working world – and not the families – to become more flexible!

Gainfully employed mothers and fathers need good framework conditions to achieve reconciliation, if only because two jobs are necessary to secure the family's income.

However, it is also a question of equal opportunities for both women and men.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
in the meantime, the reconciliation of family life and work has already made inroads into the business world.

In one of my ministry's important projects, the business programme 'Success Factor Family' ("Erfolgsfaktor Familie") we are seeing that it is possible to reconcile having time for one's profession and time for the family as well.

With this programme, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth joins with the central associations of German business and the German Trade Union Federation to advocate making family-friendliness a trademark of the German economy.

The business programme pools information on the topic of family-friendliness in businesses. It provides information on best practices, as well as first-hand reports from companies practising family-oriented personnel policies with the aid of innovative measures.

In firms that are members of our 'Success Factor Family' network, there are already many good, practice-oriented examples to show:

- almost-full-time jobs, of 30 to 35 hours per week, that are also an option for management staff,
- working time accounts,
- greater control over one's time when providing services, by means of team agreements.

Just take a look around the internet.

There you will see that Germany's businesses are very active; there are few businesses left that have taken absolutely no measures to make the workplace more family-friendly.

At the same time, of course, policymakers also have a responsibility.

For the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, the question to focus on is: What do families want?

And, how can policymakers best support them in achieving those desires?

From current studies, we know that young people's desires are changing. Today's families wish to live in a partnership of equals. They want to share the responsibility for both, income and child-raising.

Time policy is therefore not simply an abstract concept of 'more time for families'.

Our aim is to support the trend that seeks to achieve a fair and equal distribution of time between mothers and fathers.

Many fathers want to work less hours, so as to have more time to spend with their children.

Many mothers want to increase their working hours and become more involved in the working world.

In the process, we must be especially attentive to the 'rush hour of life' in which family formation and professional advancement come together.

In the first years after the birth of a child, families often fall back into traditional role allocations:

- Fathers work just as long, or sometimes even longer than before.
- Mothers fall into the 'part-time trap' and remain there.
- These are precisely the cases in which the course is certainly not being set towards a partnership approach.

The result is that parents do not, and are unable to, live in the way that they would really like.

This is why we need a totally new culture.

- Part-time work must be available to both women and men and, of course, also to executive staff.

- Moreover, we must make it possible for both partners to pursue jobs in an almost full-time capacity.

This is also a question of equity between women and men.

The fact that women more often work part-time, or leave their jobs completely for a period of time, leads to a situation where the gross hourly wage of women in Germany is 22% lower than that of men.

Taken on its own, this is bad enough.

However, the problem continues into old age where pensions depend on the contributions made in the course of a person's working life.

Partnership-based reconciliation of work and family life is, in this regard, not only a family topic, but also one of social policy.

In Germany the 'Parental Allowance' is a great success. In just a few years, it has become a highly popular family benefit across all income and population groups.

- It is aimed at providing financial security for families after the birth of a child and giving those parents the possibility of taking a break from work to take more intensive care of their newly born child.
- It is currently paid for a maximum of 14 months, after the birth of a child, and covers some 65% of the previous net income.

It is already making a contribution towards the concept of partnership.

The partner months allow fathers to assume more of the childcare responsibilities and support the mother's pursuit of gainful employment.

This year we have introduced the 'Parental Allowance Plus':

- Any person who works part-time during parental leave will be doing so under improved conditions.
- We have also introduced a partnership bonus. Couples can rely on additional support if both mother and father work part-time, for 25 to 30 hours per week, and share their child-raising commitments. Any couple who chooses this partnership-based model will receive an additional four months of Parental Allowance Plus.
- By the way, single parents can also take advantage of the new provisions.

The Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Ms Manuela Schwesig, has committed to further developing Parental Allowance Plus so that it ultimately becomes a family working time benefit.

We would like to enable the parents of young children to arrive at partnership-based reconciliation solutions on equal terms, in keeping with their desires.

Here, it is a question of reducing working hours and not of taking a break from work. Different organizations support this idea.

We have taken another step in the form of the 'Act to improve the reconciliation between family, caregiving and work responsibilities'.

An earnings replacement benefit is now available for the first 10 days, once acute caregiving needs arise.

It is the same arrangement that applies when children become ill.

A legal right to be able to pursue part-time work for the purpose of providing long-term care now exists, as well as a right to return to full-time work after a period of family caregiving leave.

It is also possible to obtain an interest-free loan to compensate for loss of income.

As a result of demographic change, here in Germany, we are experiencing a rising demand, on the part of employees, for measures to reconcile work and caregiving commitments.

Correspondingly, businesses are also increasingly showing interest in this topic, and offering solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There can be no partnership approach without childcare.

Good quality and needs-oriented childcare is also important.

Since the 'day-care summit' in 2007, there has been a dynamic growth in the number of childcare places for children under three years.

- In the meantime, the Federal Government has launched several investment programmes to expand childcare facilities.

- Since 2013, parents have a legal right to a childcare place, from the child's first completed year of life.
- Since 2008, the number of childcare places has almost doubled! We are talking here about almost 300,000 additional places in six years!

In order to offer businesses incentives so that they commit to providing childcare for their employees, we are making concrete financial support available in the form of the 'Employer supported childcare' funding programme.

I am sure that you discuss about this topic in the next days.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish us all that we learn a great deal from one another in the coming days.

And I hope that you will also be able to take some pleasant impressions of Berlin back home with you.