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## **PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT**

**Abstract:** The article is devoted to documenting factors of discrimination of women and men in Moscow's labour market, related to the presence of parental responsibilities and to the analysis of the opinions of Moscovites on the possibility of combining parental and professional responsibilities. The empirical basis for the research were semi-structured interviews (61 semi-structured interviews, 28 cases of discrimination are described, 22 of which are related to the presence of parental responsibilities) taken between 2013 and 2016 in Moscow, as well as interviews with experts. The types of discriminatory behaviour of employers towards pregnant women and women with small children have been identified ("requests" to resign at their own accord; the payment of "fiat" money only from declared salary; payment of "protection" money for dismissal; agreement on early departure from childcare leave; creation of conditions for women to be extruded after returning to work; enterprise restructuring and using this as an excuse to deny the provision of the corresponding position), as well as discriminatory practices in relation to fathers with small children when their desire to perform parental responsibilities manifests itself and discrimination of young women in employment (as workers with perspective parental responsibilities). Downward trends in the social protection of pregnant women over the past year and a half due to the economic crisis have been noted. Positive legislative changes to reduce discrimination and increase the opportunities for women with children in the labour market (adopted in 2013-2014) have been found to be insufficient to create an enabling environment for employees with parental responsibilities. A study on the attitudes of women and men towards gender roles in the labour market and in the family, the actual possibilities of combining parental and professional responsibilities, has also revealed that discrimination of parents in the labour market was based on widespread gender stereotypes (of employees and employers) that constitute a barrier to the harmonious reconciliation of the professional and family roles of women and men. Employers' inclination to discriminate workers with parental responsibilities depends on age and the presence of children (employees with small children are in the worst position, in the best – those with children of a senior age as compared to childless, as the most reliable and responsible), which underlines the traditional nature of the structure of gender attitude.

Among the young educated informants, there have been (so far rare) cases of modernized attitudes towards the family-work balance, based on a belief in the possibility of full and highly professional female employment combined with motherhood (as opposed to traditional Russian gender attitudes on "the need to have a job that does not interfere with family matters"). The most modernized area is

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the information technology sector, to a lesser extent — the finance industry. The most traditional one is the sector of education (services). At the same time, the IT industry has barriers and opportunities to combine professional and parental responsibilities.

The majority of female informants demonstrated a combination of traditional gender attitudes and employment orientation. The origins of this combination are the memory of generations or the “habit of working”; insurance behaviour in the face of the economic crisis and demographic losses; modernization processes; the “dream of a housewife”; renaissance of patriarchal relations in the Russian society.

**Key words:** discrimination against parents in the labour market, parental responsibilities, gender stereotypes, family-work balance, modernization and traditionalism

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## Introduction

The tasks of reconciling professional and family roles are today the objectives of state social policy [On public policy..., 2014]. In our view, a comprehensive and deliberate policy to create a family-work balance<sup>1</sup> can be a new and powerful step in the state family and population policy (“present time” instead of “present money”). This will correspond to the way of life and the desire to combine work and family responsibilities of the highly educated middle class more than insignificant benefits. One of the three whales of such a policy (along with the social upbringing of children and the participation of fathers in the economy of care) is a friendly atmosphere in the labour market in the areas of legislation, workers and employers attitudes, and the existence of supportive practices for parents with small children. In this regard, it is important to understand how workers themselves assess the compatibility of professional and family responsibilities and what discriminatory practices exist in the labour market in relation to workers with small children. What type of social policy is needed for Moscow parents — either policies to create a family-work balance, or policies of opportunity and nudging to create a family-work balance, depends on the answer to the question on the situation of discrimination and the types of gender attitudes of Muscovites.

A lot of evidence of discrimination in the labour markets of different countries has been accumulated in relation to a number of characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity or race, language proficiency (and accents), appearance (height, weight), family status, marital status, social status, sexual preferences, area of residence (neighbors), religion, parental responsibilities (pregnancy and the presence

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<sup>1</sup> In this article the term “family-work” balance is synonymous to the term “combination of family and professional responsibilities”.

of young children)) [Das, 2013]. We shall consider only one characteristic – presence of parental duties.

Of all the types of discrimination in the labour market that we have presented in table 1, we will investigate only cases of illegal discrimination in employment and dismissal from work (based on actual or prospective parental responsibilities) for employees. In part, we shall touch upon illegal discrimination of such workers with parental responsibilities in promotion (in the context of setting forth conditions to waive (part of) parental responsibilities under the threat of a “broken” career) and payment of “maternity” money.

**Table 1.** Types of discrimination in the labour market

Type of employment	Areas of discrimination		Legal status of discrimination
Employment	Movement of workers	Hiring	Legal
			Illegal
		Promotion	Legal
			Illegal
		Dismissal	Legal
			Illegal
	Valuation	Wages (and other payments)	Legal
			Illegal
	Non-core functionality	Sexual harassment	Illegal
		Use of labor for personal purposes	Legal
		Illegal	
Self-employment	Limited access to profitable markets, credit, information	Legal	
		Illegal	

**Source:** composed by the author

The Russian Federation has a well-developed legislative framework and is actively participating in international treaties prohibiting discrimination in employment. Apart from prohibitions on specific professions for women, Russian legislation has no discriminatory articles. However, illegal discriminatory practices in the labour market throughout the post-soviet period in Russia have been widely spread. The topic of discrimination against employees with parental responsibilities in the Russian labour market has been popular in scientific literature for decades. Discrimination in hiring (statistical discrimination against women as potentially burdened by the family), direct discrimination in promotions, dismissal from work [Mezentseva, 1993; Rzhانيتsyna, 1998; O. Voronina, I. Kalabikhina, N. Shvedova et al., 2004; Roschin, 2005; Rimashevskaya, 2008; Kalabikhina,

2008; Kalabikhina, 2009; Zhitnikova, 2010; Equality..., 2011; Karabchuk, Pankratova, 2013; Discrimination, benefits..., 2014; Rzhansitsyna, 2014] were documented. Part of the economic work is devoted to the decomposition of the gender wage gap in the impact of human capital, labour market segregation and direct discrimination. The unexplained balance of the gender wage gap was recognized as a discriminatory part of the gap [Ogloblin, 1999; Arzhenovsky, Artamonova, 2007; Oschepkov, 2008], representing a third to half of the total gender gap of 30%.

Beyond this article there is a discussion on to what degree the accumulation of human capital itself and a worker's productivity, as well as horizontal and vertical segregation phenomena on the labour market are based on discriminatory practices in education, in the household, in local communities. Since we shall consider only direct discrimination of workers with parental responsibilities.

And the most important issue is the existence of discriminatory practices against pregnant women, women on maternity leave, women who work after maternity leave, since the elimination of these discriminatory practices is quite slow even in countries with developed anti-discrimination legislation and enforcement practices [Russell, Banks, 2011; National Review..., 2014].

In developed countries, gender policy has significantly mitigated gender discrimination and inequality in the labour market, particularly, it has led to the reduction of the gender wage gap from a third to 10-20% [Foubert, 2010]. Despite difficulties in promoting egalitarianism and participation of fathers in parental leave [Doucet, McKay, 2017], a study on the related "worker-firm" data reveals a typical for traditional societies dilution of the fathers' premium after childbirth in the late 1990s [Wilner, 2016]. However, research on qualitative and quantitative data from the second half of the 2010 's demonstrates the re-traditionalization of gender relations and return to the male "breadwinner" model in the context of precarization in the labour market [Hrženjak, 2017]; increased risk of discrimination against pregnant women and young mothers, which requires increased attention during the period of political transformation [Strain, 2017] and economic crises [Karamessini, Rubery (ed), 2013].

In Russia since the early 2010s the issue intensified as there was a deterioration in the situation of discrimination against women in the Russian labour market — cases of non-payment of "decree money" became more frequent, which even provoked mass protests by women [Dekretofobia, 2012].

Labour rights specialists advocate a fundamental shift to a system of direct payment of benefits from the Social Insurance Fund of the Russian Federation to eliminate cases of discrimination involving non-payment of maternity benefits [Discrimination, benefits ..., 2014]. But the legislators have opted for a gradual improvement in the situation: in 2014, amendments were made to Federal Law No. 255-FL of 29.12.2006 "On compulsory social insurance for temporary incapacity and maternity", concerning the procedure for the appointment and

payment of benefits to the insured person by the authorities of the Social Insurance Fund of the Russian Federation in the event of the court's recognition of the termination of the policyholder's activities, insufficiency of funds or inability to locate him. A decision was also adopted by the Resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the RF of 28.01.2014 No. 1 "On the application of legislation regulating the work of women, persons with family responsibilities and juveniles", which reinforces the protection of pregnant women against dismissal, including cases when the employer had no knowledge of her pregnancy. Direct payment of benefits from the Social Insurance Fund of the RF has been experimented since 2015. It currently involves over 20 regions (Moscow is not included).

Discriminatory practices are based on gender stereotypes and attitudes of workers and employers on the gender roles of men and women, on women and men's professions [Antill, Cotton, 1988; Heilman, 1995]. Gender bias is manifested in different ways in relation to men and women under the conditions of different organizational structures and different levels of information and motivation of the decision maker, but the existence of such bias based on gender stereotypes, is present in labour market decision-making [Koch et al., 2015]. The gender-specific nature of economic activity and career aspirations of young parents takes place in the context of the implementation of gender stereotypes in Russia as well [Toksanbaeva, 2014]. In comparison with European (French) parents, the social norms regarding the roles of men and women in the labour market and domestic work in Russia are more traditional, despite the usually high employment rate of Russian women [Paye, Sinyavskaya, 2010].

In Moscow gender discrimination in the labour market and difficulties in reconciling work and family responsibilities were also recorded [Savinskaja, 2011; Baskakova, 2014]. In particular, discrimination against women in relation to motherhood and women and men in relation to their family responsibilities is recorded in Moscow within a study on the execution of the rights of Muscovites [Report by the Commissioner..., 2013]: 5.7 per cent of women with young children were told that they had been offered "to resign at their own accord" "the moment when the executives learned of their pregnancy. 12.3% of the women who were supposed to be given maternity leave did not receive it. Some were dismissed, others were told that they were working "on a temporary contract" or "in a private firm". Of those who were able to obtain the formalization and granting of maternity leave (88%), almost 8% claimed that the leave was not fully paid, and another 7% lost their job at the employer's initiative. Thus, only 72.5 per cent of women have officially been granted maternity leave during pregnancy, were fully paid and have retained their place of work. In employment, women were four times more likely than young men to be asked about the family situation, the presence of children and plans to give birth in the short term; 2.5 times more often they heard from the employer what characteristics of the applicant are undesirable (pregnancy, state of health, presence of children, appearance);

every sixth girl was placed under conditions regarding her future marital status and the birth of children.

Discriminatory practices are often of dormant nature, and stereotypical judgments about gender roles need examination of the depth of conviction and variation of interpretations of judgment, and life trajectories need in-depth interpretations [Wrench, 2007]. This predetermined the extensive use of qualitative methods in the study of discriminatory practices against parents, their views on the possibilities of combining family and work and the trajectories of such combinations [Elizarov, Zvereva, Kalabikhina et al., 2003; Kalabikhina, 2004; Discrimination in the labour market ..., 2014; Isupova, 2015; Doucet, McKay, 2017; Hrženjak, 2017].

### Data and method of study

The study is based on the methodology of “grounded theory” [Strauss, Corbin, 1998] using the semi-structured interview method. Between 2013 and 2016 a study of factors of discrimination against male and female employees, in particular the identification and description of model cases of discrimination against women (and men) in relation to the fulfillment of their parental responsibilities. Actual possibilities of combining professional and parental responsibilities of employees in the context of existing gender stereotypes about the social roles of women and men were also studied.

The empirical basis for the study were semi-structured interviews, as well as expert assessments. In 2013, 56 semi-structured interviews were taken. The respondents described cases of discrimination in employment that had occurred with them, their relatives, colleagues or acquaintances in the 2000s in Moscow. As a result, 26 cases of discrimination in the labour market were described. Among those interviewed, 40 were women and 16 were men, aged between 21 and 58 years, from the budget and commercial sector. Interviews were given by men and women from three areas of employment: finance, services (education and healthcare) and information technology (IT). The choice of the areas of employment by researchers was dictated by different levels of feminization of these areas (according to Mosstat) and the availability of remote employment opportunities, which are more broad in the area of information technology, which is important in the context of the conversation on possibilities of combining parental and professional responsibilities<sup>1</sup>. One tenth of the informants were senior managers, and two thirds were not managers. Four fifths of the informants have higher education. Half of the informants live with their spouse. Slightly over half of the informants have children (two thirds of them have one child). In 2016, a further five gender-structured interviews were taken with young women,

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<sup>1</sup> The “parental responsibility” and “family responsibility” are synonyms in the text. Although the latter term covers a broader range of responsibilities in ageing societies.

who were documenting parental leave in 2014-2016 (using the same guide to examine the effects of a crisis on employers' reactions to employees with parental responsibilities<sup>1</sup>). Informants with stoppage of work experience due to maternal status were selected. Two interviews contained stories of discriminatory practices against employees with parental responsibilities.

Three female informants reported that they had not returned to work by their own choice because they were dissatisfied with the working regime or conditions of employment after childbirth.

At the end of the interview, it was suggested to confirm or refute a set of stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men in the family and the labour market.

The study was conducted in the capital, one of the most modern cities in Russia [Zubarevich, 2010]. Most of the informants had higher education, belonged to the younger generation of Muscovites. It was expected that we would be able to identify examples of well-founded criticism of gender stereotypes among the informants — young residents of a modernized city with higher education.

### Cases of discrimination related to parental responsibilities

The cases of discrimination we have identified can be roughly divided into several categories:

- 1) direct discrimination of women in relation to parental responsibilities,
- 2) statistical discrimination on the basis of sex (related to the employer's stereotypes of female employees as inefficient workers with family responsibilities),
- 3) discrimination of men on the basis of sex in "women's" occupations and in the reconciliation of professional and family responsibilities;
- 4) direct discrimination of men when combining professional and family responsibilities;
- 5) discrimination of women and men by age.

Most of the cases of discrimination identified were pregnant women, women on maternity leave, women and men with young children. On the basis of 61 interviews, 28 cases of discrimination in the labour market were identified. 22 cases referred to the characteristic of having parental responsibilities.

We shall describe in more detail the cases of discrimination related to parental responsibilities<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Labour Code of the Russian Federation was added by a new Chapter 49.1 "Peculiarities of Regulation of Remote Employment" (introduced by Federal Law 05.04.2013 No. 60-FZ).

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted here that discrimination arises if the employer puts pressure on a pregnant woman, even in cases when she plans to resign at her own accord. Other violations — non-payment of "decree" money, dismissal against one's will and other — are certainly of discriminatory nature.

Despite the fact that the dismissal of pregnant women is a violation of labour laws, such cases occur, for instance: *“The time has come to take leave,...management wasn’t pleased, she was fired”* (F, 33, S<sup>1</sup>); *«...If a suitable candidate is found and by the time you return from your leave there is no position (for you), don’t be surprised”* (, 40, u); there is a *“need to optimize the size of the division and a pregnant woman was chosen..., professionally she seemed to be quite effective, should not have been made redundant, but she was”* (M, 30, F). “Requests” behalf employers to resign at one’s own accord may be accompanied by promises to accept for a job after parental leave, but these promises are not later fulfilled (F, 35, F).

Forcing a pregnant woman to resign often ends in quick triumph of the administration in cases where “fiat” money is paid on the basis of a formal contract and under-the-counter wage schemes are not taken into account. *“When went into maternity leave, they wanted to pay me... only within the framework of official salary, not all the money received”* (F, 41, S). *“There was no difference, to withdraw my workbook or not to withdraw it (very small payments on the basis of official salary)”* (F, 40, S).

Of the six cases of discrimination of pregnant women identified, three respondents, either through the courts or lawyers before court, defended their rights. However, the risk of a woman being forced from the workplace remains even in the case of a triumph in court: *“She was not good at work (at this enterprise),... she still quit later”* (M, 30, F).

Two revealed cases of discrimination in documenting pregnancy-related maternity leave during the crisis period (we suggest that the crisis began in 2014) ended with the dismissal of women and the payment of a one-time “settlement” sum. Cases of discrimination were recorded at large international corporations (in finance and services). After negotiations with the administration, forcing the pregnant women to resign, the women made the decision to resign. The one-time payments were comparable to an annual salary, and the amount was determined by the administration. It was stated that it would be meaningless to remain at work, since if a woman refused to resign after returning to work, she would immediately be made redundant or the division would be disbanded. The negotiations included calculations of the impact of inflation on the amount of funds paid during the crisis (F, 27, trading company; F, 31, financial company). In one case, the division was disbanded during the negotiation process, and once a woman was dismissed the division was immediately reconstituted.

During the crisis (the crisis began in 2014), the pressure on pregnant women becomes more “argued for”. The employer enforces either to accept his conditions, threatening with deterioration of the situation in the future as a result

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<sup>1</sup> All the quotes of the informants in the text are labeled as follows: the first letter indicates gender, number it is for age, the second letter – employment (F – finance, S – services, I – information technology).

of the crisis (lowering the real amount of allowance, difficulties with employment, etc.), which our later interviews revealed.

There are, it turned out, various schemes for dismissal of women following childcare leave: *“Although a woman on maternity leave cannot be dismissed, it is possible to find a way”* (F, 35, F). One of the schemes relates to attempts to “catch” the worker being late on the performance of formal requirements: women were fired following return from maternity leave on the grounds that they *“did not extend their licenses, they simply did not manage to do their license on leave”* (F, 35, F). Another scheme relates to the creation of conditions under which a woman is forced to resign: *“After return from maternity leave, she was not considered a full-fledged staff member”*; *“They weren’t fired, but they worked for ridiculous money. They were simply placed under conditions that made them resign themselves”* (well, 29, and); *“Psychological pressure was exerted: “There is another person in your position, and he will not resign, if you don’t like it - resign”* (F, 35, F). Another way is to restructure the enterprise: *“Until the child is three years of age, they cannot legally dismiss her.” But the company’s structure changed ... They (taking advantage of this) did not transfer her to the new structure, she had to resign”* (F, 28, S).

It is a common phenomenon to come to a so-called oral contract with business executives for early return from maternity leave (“being allowed to babysit” for a period of no more than a year or a half year). In the event of a refusal, there is no support in qualifications upgrading and blending in following actual return to work with career obstructions.

Discrimination of women with small children in employment has acquired a sufficiently “habitual” status, including requests for abandonment of family plans: *“Do you promise not to take maternity leave in the next six months?”* (F, 43, S) *“Some categorically reject, some write in announcements that women with children under 5-7 years of age are not considered, some immediately ask: “What if the child becomes ill?”* (M, 30, S). *“As soon as they found out that the child was three, that’s it, they instantly simply “cast you away”, without even an explanation of the reasons. Probably fearing that the child might become ill, with no one to babysit... that the mother will babysit”* (F, 35, F).

The situation worsens when a woman raises her child on her own: *“A single mother... She has a child, she might have problems. Does our enterprise need such a problem person?”* (F, 58, F). Even when the childcare issue is solved by hiring a babysitter (F, 40, S).

Discrimination against fathers with young children if they declare their wish to perform parental duties should separately be noted. *“There were situations when my husband took a leave to care for the child. His boss sharply noticed that he did not take it himself, but to care for the child”* (f, 40, y).

In addition to direct discrimination against pregnant women and parents with young children, statistical discrimination of young women in hiring is docu-

mented. It occurs when all women in a young reproductive age seem to be “unreliable” because of the high probability of family and reproductive plans implementation, and these plans may not even be asked of: *“She will someday go on a maternity leave, go on sick leave with her children”*; *“a girl of childbearing age will say: — I’m going to get married and will have a baby! Do as you please.”* The employer ... shall pay attention to this, because he invested some funds into this employee and he needs a return. *“And the girl is a specimen that can twist one’s tail”* (F, 29, I). *“(my daughter) was told directly that a man is needed”* (F, 51, S). *“they (young women) can become pregnant, start a family, (it’s better to take a man)”* (F, 35, F).

If you try to estimate which area - services, finance, IT - the risk of gender discrimination is higher, it is possible to conclude that women risk being discriminated in the labour market in Moscow in any of the three areas studied. However, currently the exclusively male-dominated IT presence has begun to fade, both with respect to the sustainable stereotyping of “information technology is traditionally masculine” and the actual presence of women in this area. The destruction of the stereotype was demonstrated by the young informants: *“the boundary between the sexes is erasing... a woman in IT is not a woman, but an IT pro”* (F, 28, I), *“I was free from such prejudices (not to take a female specialist)”* (F, 26, I). The growing interest on the part of women in IT has been recorded by the recruitment portal [Superjob.ru](http://Superjob.ru). From 2008 to 2013 the share of women’s résumés for the information security specialist position increased from 2 to 12 per cent, for the IC developer - from 15 per cent to 21 per cent. By number of women’s résumés the leading vacancies are those of software testers, web-designers and ERP-system consultants (39%, 37, and 41% of résumés in the SuperJob platform are for these vacancies) [Women are practicing male professions, 2013].

Why could IT be considered more promising in reducing gender discrimination in the labour market? Firstly, the age composition of workers is relatively younger and the younger generation is less susceptible to stereotypes. Secondly, the specificity of employment in this area contributes to the maintenance of the family-work balance without a loss of the wage level (there are opportunities for remote employment). Thirdly, increased presence of women in this promising branch of the economy will contribute to reducing gender issues in the lives of women, their families and the economy as a whole.

What are the risks for women in this area? Firstly, this area requires continuous upgrading and the use of the full period of parental leave is to “drop out” of the profession: *“When the person is absent for three years, there are many things that can change”* (F, 29, I). Women could not afford to be on parental leave for more than a year. *“She quickly returns from parental leave, it’s literally a year”* (F, 32, I). Secondly, a woman must postpone childbirth in order to develop professional skills and establish oneself in the profession: *«...yes, it will be harder (when a child is born), but... women who go to IT, they take maternity leave later”* (F, 32, I).

Thus, model practices of discrimination against workers with family responsibilities (pregnant women, women with young children): “requests” to resign at one’s own accord; payment of “maternity” money only from the official part of the salary; payment of “settlement” money; agreement on early withdrawal from childcare leave; creating conditions for extruding women (reduction of wages, denial of access to prospective directions of work, psychological pressure, stringent requirements for timely execution of formalities outside the context of the state of the employee); restructuring of the company. Discrimination against fathers with young children if they declare their wish to perform parental duties should separately be noted. Statistical discrimination in employment is also widespread (especially for young women, potentially “unreliable” workers) (Figure 1).

### Opportunities for combining professional and family responsibilities

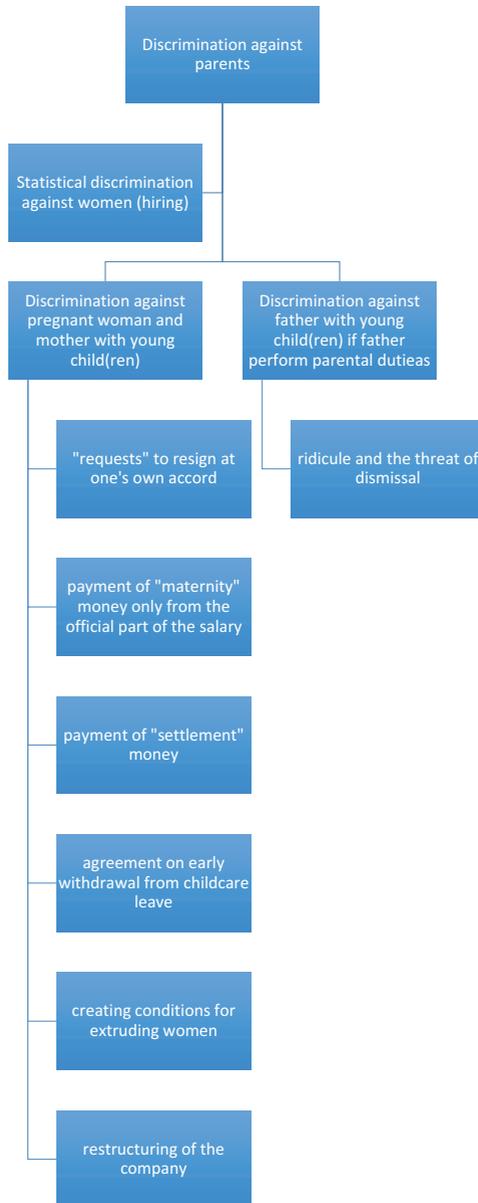
In addition to describing cases of discrimination in the labour market (related to parenthood), we have explored the possibilities of combining professional and family responsibilities, that is, maintaining the family-work balance.

We have previously noted that some informants were pressured by employers to accept the requirement not to have children in the coming years. The attitude of employers towards the subject of children in employment could be described as negative (employer’s fear of the reproductive “threat”). At the same time, the attitude of management towards family responsibilities of hired staff is more loyal: many informants show an understanding attitude behalf executives to the appearance of children. *“They try to cooperate with women who have to take children home from kindergarten at first. It is possible to specify a time, working schedule,... naturally, this affects wages... But there is an opportunity to reach an agreement”* (F, 32, I). Education was cited as the most friendly area for reconciling family and professional responsibilities. *“This is one of the few places where it is perfectly possible to combine a family and to foster children.”* *“Unfortunately, this does not bring a lot of income”* (F, 46, S). Informants from various fields of activity, working at companies of different forms of ownership, spoke of minor (holidays, gifts to family workers) and large (kindergartens, summer holidays) programs at enterprises<sup>1</sup>.

It is noticeable, however, that a friendly attitude to workers with family responsibilities has not yet become standard at Moscow enterprises. Women with young children who want to work “without reproach” often have to prove their “independence” from family responsibilities: *“The management team was not biased towards my having a little child, because I never took sick leave”* (F, 48, I).

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<sup>1</sup> The Government of Moscow has since 2008 held the “Best Enterprise for Working Mothers” competition. Information portals for young mothers ([www.mamanarabote.ru](http://www.mamanarabote.ru)) are being developed.



**Figure 1.** Cases of discrimination of workers with parental responsibilities

**Source:** compiled by the author on the basis of qualitative research

The tendency of employers to discriminate workers with family responsibilities depends on the age of the children. The presence of a worker/employee's young children increases the risk of discrimination by the employer. However, a parent with a middle-aged or older child may be more attractive than childless workers because he needs a stable job to support the family, and his or her reproductive plans have already been implemented. A stereotype that family workers are more suitable for promotion ("the presence of children makes people more responsible") also "works". A "premium" for male workers with children and female workers with senior aged children is a sign of the traditional nature of gender relations.

*"They try not to hire women with children, of young age especially... Moreover, they try not to hire young girls without a family, without children, for certain key positions. Because they understand very well that in the near future they might marry and give birth to a child... An elderly woman who has already grown up and has work experience is preferable to a young girl who can give birth to a child. ... They try not to appoint non-family people... without children to key positions. "An executive must be reliable. He must be responsible for someone other than himself." So a family man, with a child that is not a very small, is the best worker for a modern employer"* (F, 46, S).

It is not possible to create conditions for the family-work balance without equalizing the participation of women and men in the "economy of care", providing paternity (not transferable to other family members) leave [Kalabikhina, 2008]. But the subject of parental leave for men, the involvement of men in the "economy of care" is still contradicted by our nation. The majority of informants are aware that by law fathers too may take parental leave, but the attitude to such practices remains, in most cases, sceptical, both on the part of the employer and on the part of employees themselves. *"There have been situations where my husband took... sick leave for child care. "His boss reprimand him for taking sick leave not for himself, but specifically for child care"* (F, 40, S). *"I think it's quite normal. It's just that for Russia it is not really peculiar... Traditionally in Russia, the man is the main breadwinner in the family"* (F, 29, I). There are, however, examples of positive attitudes: *"I have a man in the project, and he says that on certain days he sits with the child, or he has to go to hospital with the child. I do, of course, let him go, the main thing is for his tasks to be closed"* (F, 32, I).

Our results mostly matched the results of a quantitative study on the execution of rights of Muscovites. Let's give quantitative assessments of the possibilities of women and men combining family and professional responsibilities in Moscow [Report of the Commissioner ..., 2013]. Maintaining the family-work balance is primarily a women's problem: 10% of women (1% of men) fail to reconcile professional and family responsibilities, 33% of women (21% of men) hardly manage, for 43% of women (22% of men) it is a severe difficulty. Families are trying to adjust to the new attitudes and preferences of women and men with

regard to the harmonization of family and professional life, although the main burden of household chores rests with women. 89.2% of working mothers and 8% of fathers wanted to use child care leave for under a year and a half. However, 17% of the women did not venture asking for it (“I won’t be granted it”, “I would have lost my job”, “this is not accepted”), and 5.4% of women were denied leave. The men explained why they did not ask for leave, although they wanted to receive it, as follows: “It’s useless, they will not grant it anyway”-4.4%, “otherwise I’d lose my job”-7.7%, “It’s not accepted”-13.2%. All men who applied for leave were granted it.

In addition to men’s participation in the “caring economy” for the family-work balance, affordable childcare facilities and a friendly climate in the labour market for workers with family responsibilities are very important.

The organization of childcare in Moscow is still deficient, especially with regard to the possibilities for children of nursery age to attend pre-school institutions [report by the Commissioner ..., 2013]. Currently, two thirds of the interviewed parents take children in kindergarten. Of the women whose children attend kindergarten, 82% work, among those whose child does not attend - 61%. Over half the parents interviewed, who used kindergarten services, had arranged their children for it at the age of 3, 35.8% at the age of 2. Only 1% of the parents were able to arrange their child at babyhood. It is important that mothers ‘ working schedules are more aligned with kindergarten schedules than fathers ‘ (40.9% of mothers ‘ schedules are fully compliant, for a third - partially, and for one in four they do not correspond, whereas among fathers for only 3.2% they “match”, and for 58.7% they “do not match”).

### **Gender stereotypes: the traditional and modernized family-work balance**

The study also examined the attitudes of women and men towards gender roles in the labour market and in the family, the sharing of family responsibilities between spouses; gender stereotypes.

By Lippmann’s definition, social stereotypes are the images of the world in the human mind, which save his efforts in the perception of complex social objects and protect his values, positions and rights [quote by Shatrova, 2003:124]. Gender stereotypes are culturally and socially motivated, shaped by the social roles prescribed by society for women and men [Shatrova, 2003:124].

The persistence of stereotypes in society about the gender roles of women and men, primarily the perception of the secondary vocational role of women, of their “monopoly” on family responsibilities, of the roles of breadwinners and homemakers. These stereotypes do not correspond to the way of life of the modern Russian society. 27% of all family cells are single-parent families [Census of Population, 2010]. The employment rate of women with children

under 18 at the age of 20–49 years is 76% (equal to the level of employment of women with no under-age children at that age – 76.4%). The employment rate of women in working age is 72% in Russia and 80.3% in Moscow [Women and Men of Russia, 2014]. The traditional role stereotypes are outdated, but women and men – employees and employers – continue to reproduce them. This increases the risk of discrimination of workers with family responsibilities, especially women with children.

Most of our female informants favoured equality in the family, a more harmonious division of responsibilities between the spouses, but at the same time only two informants (a male and a female) of the 61 respondents did not agree with any of the proposed stereotyped allegations of the professional and family roles of women and men. The rest supported no less than half the stereotypes. There were situations where the informants expressed traditional stereotypical judgments in the interview process, and at the end of the interview did not agree with stereotypical utterances. Thus, we have seen a conflict between the consent of informants to stereotypical allegations and value judgments on specific cases, as well as the conflicting combination of various attitudes and stereotypes among informants.

Gender stereotypes of our informants included the division of occupations and activities into “female” and “male”, into women’s and men’s career, into gender roles in the labour market and in the household. The stereotypes reflected existing segregation both in the horizontal (“male” and “female” professions, industries, activities) and in the vertical section (male dominance in executive positions).

Typical responses of female informants on “women’s” occupations and activities: “*related to routine, monotony requiring perseverance and accuracy*”, “*consultant, cashier, salesperson, store manager*”, “*pedagogy and pediatrics*”, “*psychology*”, “*secretary*”, “*accountant*”, “*nurse*”, “*dentist*”, “*therapist*”, “*hairdresser*”, “*lawyer*”, “*journalist*”. Typical responses of male informants respondents on “women’s” occupations and activities: “*related to motherhood*”, “*financial professions*”, “*work in healthcare and culture*”, “*working with staff*”, “*kindergarten teacher*”, “*social worker*”, “*telephone operator*”, “*secretary*”, “*seamstress*”. Typical responses of female informants on “men’s” occupations and activities: “*related to creativity, to responsibility, with decision-making*”, “*engineering, physics, mathematics*”, “*miner*”, “*musician, poet, fashion designer, artist*”, “*businessman*”, “*porter, driver, worker*”, “*doctor*”, “*surgeon*”, “*CFO*”, “*analyst*”. Typical responses of male informants on “men’s” occupations and activities: “*related to hard physical labour*”, “*tie layer*”, “*defender*”, “*creator*”.

Stereotypes about the relatively weak career opportunities of women were also present in most of the informants’ responses: “*Russia has a men’s society. Men are always given priority over women... Consider the board of directors of any company*” (F, 46, S). “*Being successful is harder for a woman than for a man*”

(F, 21, F). *“A female executive is still perceived unnatural in our society”* (F, 51, I). *“Women will more often accept lower wages than men”* (F, 28, S).

The following factors, according to our study, affect the working career of women with children: their own stereotypes and perceptions of the family-work balance in life, ambition in work; the relationship of relatives, of the spouse to her role in the family and at work; support by grandparents or means for babysitting services; employer attitude (and stereotypes); characteristics of the industry and profession. It is noticeable that the stereotypes of workers and employers have a significant place in women’s careers. Russian researchers [Roschin 2005; Gender and the Economy, 2002] came to this conclusion before.

At the end of the interview, the informants were offered a list of stereotypes about men and women with whom they had to agree or disagree. The most popular stereotypes of women were the stereotypes that *“women’s occupations are related to their natural destiny”* and *“domestic work is a women’s matter, a woman is a homemaker”* (two thirds of the informants). Most popular stereotypes of men are stereotypes about the increased responsibility and mobility of men at work, as well as their role as breadwinners: *“A man must work, not be at home with children”*, *“men seek to be superiors”* (three quarters of the informants). The smallest consent was given to the following allegations: *“women are the worst workers”*; *“women are less responsible”*; and also *“a man with the baby stroller looks bizarre”*, *“a man with a saucepan and rag is a rag himself”* (the last allegation was met with consent behalf only 4 informants of 61, three of them men).

Altogether, informants agreed with proposed male stereotyping 1.4 times more often than to allegations of women. Either stereotypical allegations of men are most common, or the proposed male allegations were less often of a negative spirit (and this affected the frequency of acceptance of “good” stereotypes. The rate of acceptance of stereotypes is roughly the same among women and men.

Note, informants almost unanimously refuted the remark that women were the worst workers, however one third of the respondents said that it was *“better to hire a man”*. This attitude (like all other stereotypes about occupations, career opportunities and the quality of women and men at work) is based on people’s perceptions of the main gender roles of “breadwinner” and “housewife”, and about rigid specialization in marriage, which is not actually supported in Russian families, which are mostly double career (both parents work).

It is important to note that women and men often do not themselves understand what discrimination in employment is. Most informants at the beginning of the interview argued that there was no discrimination in Moscow (and even less in their workplace). However, half of the interviews described cases of discrimination. Even by telling the personal histories of illegal dismissal, informants may not have been aware of the discriminatory nature of the events: *“It was more convenient (to the employer)”* (F, 40, S). Often, at the end of the

interview, informants revised their evaluations of the stories told, assessing them as discriminatory cases.

Women and men take the recruitment process, which includes issues of family, children and reproductive plans largely easy, assessing issues such as “normal”, “standard”, “reasonable”: *“I think it’s a normal issue, because especially a girl, woman, plans her family, and a maternity leave is possible. And it’s a problem for the employer. ... So such things are significant. I think they should be set”* (F, 52, F). *“Asking such questions is a violation... But that’s life”* (F, 42, F).

The bias against women with children forced them not to be completely honest in interviews, not to tell the truth, which is due to the fear of denial of employment: *“(I had to) fib that she had a grandmother who would babysit”* (F, 35, F). *“If you want to be accepted at a company, you have to say - I want to work, I’m not getting married for the next three years, I’m not having babies, and you’ll get a wonderful specialist with a great return and a desire to work”* (F, 35, I). *“In employment you’re always asked about the current condition, whether there are children, or whether there are any family plans. I have to answer, no, no, no, no, no, my priority is my career, implementation, and exaggerate a little”* (F, 28, S). *“The Woman (got employed), without saying she was pregnant, she was afraid she would not be accepted”* (F, 33, S).

In July 2013<sup>1</sup>, a law was passed prohibiting employers from specifying in employment advertisements restrictions on the basis of gender, age and marital status. This drastically reduced the proportion of discriminatory advertisements. For instance, at the end of 2013, in comparison with 2007, the number of advertisements with sex-related restrictions dropped from 35% to 3% in Moscow and from 17% to 9% in Kemerovo [Discrimination in employment announcements..., 2014]. However, in actual recruitment practice, direct (an openly negative attitude of employers towards employees with family responsibilities) and indirect discrimination (denial in employment of workers with family duties on other grounds) will remain so long as such workers are perceived by employers as ineffective, loaded with family responsibilities. Which our later interviews confirm.

In general, our hypothesis about the emergence in the young educated environment of the relatively modernized metropolitan city of well-founded denials of gender stereotypes about the roles and qualities of men and women in the workplace has found little confirmation because sensitively a smaller part of the informants formulated a strong rejection of gender stereotypes and a trajectory of forming the modernized family-work balance. Only a couple of female informants spoke about the shift in gender relations: *“More young men want*

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Law No. 162-FZ of 02.07.2013 "On Amendments to the Law of the Russian Federation" On Employment in the Russian Federation "and Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation"

*to stay home with their children, in the kitchen, not to be responsible for making money for the family” (f, 27, f).* The belief that gender is irrelevant in job recognition is much more important than professional competence, and that the presence of young children cannot be a barrier to career promotion for a highly professional worker, was expressed mainly by women in the field of information technology, less often in the realm of finance. Although education was recognized as the best area for women’s family and work, the representatives of this area have understood such a combination in the Russian traditional style of “*working id necessary, but half-heartedly, it is important that the work does not interfere with your affairs, the family is the priority*”. Some representatives of other areas, when speaking of the combination of family and professional responsibilities, expressed confidence in the possibility of a full professional career combined with motherhood. This is a modernized approach to the family-work balance, based on the experience of the younger generation and their colleagues.

Despite persistent stereotypes about gender roles in the family and at work, quantitative research has recorded changes in the preferences of women and men with regard to professional employment: women are becoming more career-oriented and men are less inclined to professional achievement (it is not clear whether a declining interest of men in professional achievement will turn into increasing their participation in domestic work). A study of the views of Muscovites via questionnaire [The Report of the Commissioner..., 2013] demonstrated that the proportion of women who preferred to be housewives declined (from 33 to 20 %) compared to the early 1990s, and the proportion of aspiring full-time workers increased (from 8 to 25%). At the same time the level of labour and attainable motivation for men is rather low: 22% of men want to work part-time, 22% say that the profession is not at all of importance to them, for 14% it is “not too important” (the latter figures for women are lower).

## **Main conclusions and discussion.**

### **Recommendations for social policy at various levels**

Discriminatory practices in relation to the parental responsibilities of employees (potential or real) have been observed in the labour market of Moscow and during the past 15 years (the stories told by the informants cover such a period). Mostly young women were discriminated at employment, as well as pregnant women, women with minor children during maternity leave and following return. During crisis, the pressure on pregnant women becomes more “argued” (the employer enforces his conditions, threatening deterioration of the position in the future as a result of the crisis (decrease in the real amount of allowance, difficulties in employment etc.)). The anti-discriminatory improvements in legislation of 2013-2014 did not resolve the discrimination of workers with family responsibilities issue.

Besides discriminatory practices against women in employment (detailed questions about real and planned family responsibilities; requests to abandon family and reproductive plans; statistical discrimination by sex) there is a set of discriminatory practices against employed women. Typical behaviour of employers in cases of discrimination of pregnant women and women with young children: “requests” to resign voluntarily; payment of “maternity” money only from the officially reported part of the salary; payment of settlement money; a contract for early withdrawal from childcare leave; creation of conditions for women to be extruded (lower wages, denial of assignment to perspective directions of work, psychological pressure, strict requirements for timely execution of formalities outside the context of the worker’s status); enterprise restructuring.

Special note is the discrimination against fathers with young children, if they exhibit parental role by employers.

The tendency of employers to discriminate employees with parental responsibilities depends on the age and presence of children (workers with small children were in the worst situation, in the best – those with elder children as compared to the childless), which underlines the traditional nature of the structure of gender relations.

Discriminatory practices are based on traditional gender stereotypes about the family and professional roles of women and men. These stereotypes lag behind the realities of the changed family structure, the traditionally high level of women’s participation in employment, and the trends in women’s absorption of new high-tech occupations with changing men’s and women’s preferences with regard to their professional career and participation in the economy of care.

Against the background of widespread gender stereotyping and the traditional Russian model of the family-work balance (*“women have to work, but work should not interfere with the family, career is not important for a woman”*) the first sprouts of a modernized family-work balance model appear (*“competencies are more important than gender, full work and childbirth are possible, for a woman family and work may be equally important”*). The “Male” part of the information technology industry is more modernized from the industries studied, although it has barriers and opportunities to combine women’s (and men’s) professional and family responsibilities. Nest is the sector of finance, the most traditionally “female” sector of services (education).

The following issue appears debatable: “Why, at this high level of employment and a solid Russian history of women entering the paid labour market in our country, are gender stereotypes most resistant?” The conflict between stereotypes and attitudes and behaviour is obvious. The view that poverty is pushing Russian women to work even when they are unwilling to work outside the household [Paye, Sinyavskaya, 2010] appears to be a simplification. The income factor cannot be deaccounted for. However, account should be taken of the diversity of family and professional responsibilities, [Isupova, 2015], based not only on

income. Women who refuse employment are a minority; most women want to combine motherhood and employment in various forms, giving priority to either family or work [Savinskaya, 2011; Isupova, 2015]. Often this desire is not directly related to the family's income, especially in rich regions, including Moscow. The emergence of paid nannies and the commercialization of grandparents' work [Isupova, 2015] is a testimony to the high value of work for women, regardless of the resulting income. The persistence of employment in the context of declining institutional support in post-soviet time required great effort, but the orientation of women with children to occupational employment (full and priority or secure for the family budget and secondary versus family responsibilities) remained. A number of factors of combining of sustainable traditional stereotypes and a high degree of women's participation in the labour market should also be named. Firstly, there is the transfer of facilities from mothers to daughters. The "*habit*" of working for Russian women has been formed by decades. This is also due to the high mortality of men during the years of war and repression in the first half of the XX century and to the state policy of "universal employment". Later in the Soviet period (from 1961 to 1991), the criminal article for parasitism formally concerned women too (except for women with small children and cases when wives supporting their husbands were unable to employ their spouses to work). Although there have been no real criminal cases for parasitism against homeless women, the stigmatization of unemployed women has been a rather strong incentive for employment. Secondly, the growth of the men's overmortality in post-soviet Russia, the high divorce rate, the emergence of unemployment and the ultra-low wages and pensions encouraged the employment strategy, as an *insurance strategy* even for married women (who may have been materially secure at the time of the decision on employment). Thirdly, the process of *modernization*, which includes not mandated but deliberate participation of women in public employment, is also underway in Russia. The values of self-development and implementation in the area of public employment are becoming increasingly strong among modern women.

Why do gender stereotypes remain? Firstly, this is due to the history of women entering the labour market. In Russia, this was not a result of modernization, but rather a strategy for extensive development of the economy by employing additional labour, state pressure, which demolished traditional patterns. At a later time in Soviet times, compulsory work denied the possibility of choice. At post-soviet time, formal choice was limited to destructive social institutions and a high risk of poverty. The multi-generation double fatigue from the combination of domestic and professional work in the Soviet and post-soviet women, not thinking of the possibilities of dividing home labour with their partner must be added to this. It was not accepted. "*The dream of a housewife*," even if people have grown out of this dream, remains. Secondly, "the dream of a housewife" is fuelled by the *renaissance of patriarchal relations* and calls to return to "the traditional family", which involves specialization in the marriage of the "breadwinner" and the

“a hearth”. But in the context of Russian history and an ageing labour market, we are being asked to strengthen the traditional combination of family and work (a woman’s work is required, but work should not interfere with family, a career - it is shameful). Such artificial deterrence of the modernization process leads to conflict of attitudes and behaviour both between employers and employees. This situation does not improve the quality of life of Russians, makes it difficult to implement a policy of reconciling family and professional responsibilities, recognized as one of the most successful modern family and pronatalist policies [Thévenon, Gauthier, 2011; Goldscheider, Bernhardt, Lappegard, 2015; Arpino, Esping-Andersen, 2015].

Creating complex conditions for parents to reconcile family and professional responsibilities is one of the most important directions of state social policy of Russia and for meeting demographic challenges and employment policies in an ageing labour market. The conditions for combining professional and parental responsibilities have not yet been fully established (employers perceive workers with family responsibilities as a “burden”, men do not share family responsibilities with women, the infrastructure of childcare needs to be improved).

Another rule for the development of a policy for reconciling family and professional responsibilities in Russia should be the “nudge” to affirmative action technology. This may be conditional social transfers, conditional reduction of taxes for business or the public, indispensable fathers’ leave and others. Because of the existing duality of traditional attitudes and modernized behaviour, simply creating the conditions for a modernized approach to the family-work balance is not enough. There is a need for “nudge” technology, which is often more efficient than new administrative rules [Taler, Sunstein, 2017].

The reduction of discrimination against workers with parental responsibilities in the labour market and promotion of a policy of combination of family and professional responsibilities can be achieved in the following areas of work [Kalabikhina, 2008; The Commissioner’s report ..., 2013; Discrimination, benefits ..., 2014; Discrimination in the labour market ..., 2014]:

To the federal level:

1. Improvement of legislation (full disclosure of the concepts of “discrimination”, “direct discrimination”, “indirect discrimination”; development of diverse forms and regimes of employment; payment of maternity insurance benefits directly from the FSI of the RF) and enforcement practice. Transfer of the articles on discrimination in the labour market from the criminal to the administrative code.
2. Implementation of measures to combat undervaluing of women’s jobs (audit of charging schemes, evaluation recommendations, standardization of jobs, tripartite commissions).
3. Gender analysis of all measures of demographic, family, social and labour policy.

To the city level:

4. Inclusion in collective agreements of enterprises of issues on the creation of a friendly climate for workers with family responsibilities and older workers.
5. Expansion of the range of childcare services (flexible treatment of existing child-care facilities, introduction of a certified nannies institution, establishment of new types of child-care facilities), with a focus on unmet demand for nursery age children's services.
6. Introduction of non-transferable paternity leave for childcare, the extension of measures to create conditions for return to the labour market to fathers and on the combination of employment and motherhood.
7. Gradual mitigation of gender stereotypes (spreading successful practices to create a friendly climate for family workers, social advertisement of the father's image and successful parents' experience in issues of harmonization of family and professional life).

This list of suggestions is not finite and should be discussed by interested specialists in the development of a policy for combining professional and family responsibilities and reducing parents' discrimination in the area of employment.

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