

WORKSHOP ENTITLED “THE EUROPEAN SCHEDULE IN SPAIN 2010: UNFINISHED BUSINESS”

Work-family reconciliation begins with the work schedule

Companies like Randstad, Vodafone, Mutua Madrileña, Procter&Gamble, and Bausch&Lomb are pushing for a European schedule, in which workers could leave work earlier while keeping the same productivity levels and goals. This was what they shared in the workshop entitled “El horario europeo en España 2010: la verdadera asignatura pendiente” (The European Schedule in Spain 2010: Unfinished Business) held at IESE Madrid on June 11th.

The Spanish clock is a bit slow: companies start work later, stop at lunchtime, and end up extending the workday until later than seven pm. This difference in schedule prompts many problems when striving to reconcile employees' work and family lives, plus it leads to productivity problems for companies, which stop working right when the rest of the continent keeps going.

Some companies have already begun to seek solutions to this problem. In the workshop entitled *The European Schedule in Spain 2010: Unfinished Business*, held on **June 11th of this year** at IESE Madrid, representatives of companies such as Randstad España (Jan Hein Bax), Bausch&Lomb (Marta Muñoz), Procter&Gamble (Pilar Pérez), Vodafone (Herminia Sanz), and Mutua Madrileña (Dulce Subirats) presented their experience in this matter. The event was chaired by the director of the ICWF (International Center of Work and Family), Nuria Chinchilla, and attended by Ignacio Buqueras President of the Spanish Commission to Rationalize Schedules, and Joseph Collin, General Manager of Reserva Self-Storage.

According to the Randstad representative, the challenge is for Spain to stop “being different” and to align itself with the rest of Europe, especially in terms of schedules and the lunchtime break – which also lead to different retail hours – along with excessively late hours at night. He remarked that this new stage requires executives to “learn to manage flexibility” and necessitates greater commitment and maturity on the part of employees, who no longer work under tight supervision.

Herminia Sanz from Vodafone used the comparison of a married couple to illustrate how this new scenario can become a win-win situation between employees and companies. “Rationality does not necessarily mean less working time or more rigid schedules. However, when companies focus on schedule flexibility as a work policy, they cannot turn this measure into cure-all,” she claimed.



Nuria Chinchilla defended the need for a “visionary political leader on work-family reconciliation policies” to ensure that, as the expert in schedule systematization, Joseph Collin, claimed, Spain is properly situated on the schedule issue, namely on Greenwich mean time.

All the attendees concluded that within the current competitive environment, what is needed are flexible companies with less control over but more commitment from employees, organizations in which the processes are clear and management is more oriented towards goals as opposed to physical presence. According to these experts, the first step towards achieving this new type of company is a push towards implementing schedules that help employees reconcile their work and family lives.