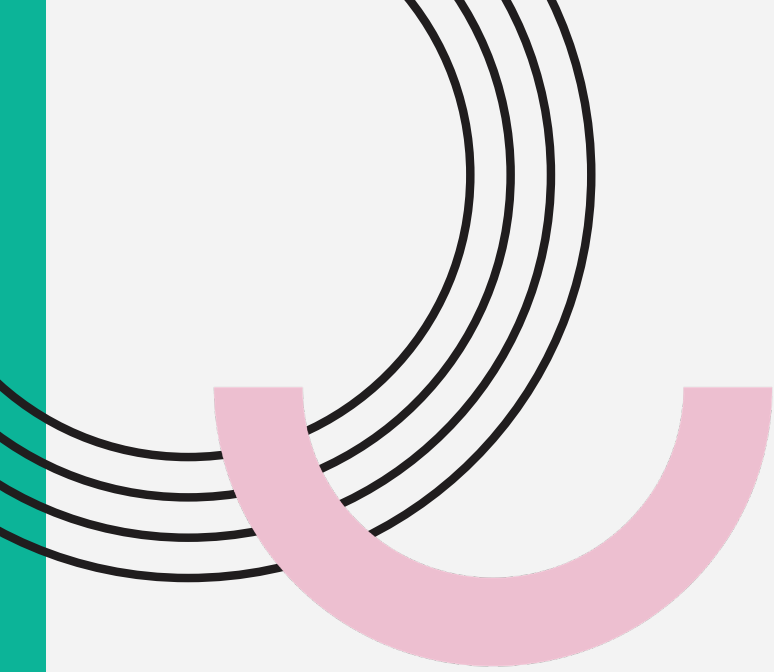
FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES:

A PRACTICUM OF MEASURES THAT WORK



SKOPJE, SEPTEMBER
2026



FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES: A PRACTICUM OF MEASURES THAT WORK

Expanding Choices through Family-Friendly Policies

UNFPA

International Partnerships Austria

KONEKT

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Impressum

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This publication was prepared by Association Konekt, as part of the regional project Expanding Choices: Gender-Responsive Family Policies for the Private Sector in the Western Balkans - Phase 2, funded by International Partnerships Austria.

About this Publication

This publication is designed as a practical resource for employers interested in introducing, strengthening or expanding family-friendly workplace practices.

At its core are the examples from the 7 champion companies from North Macedonia enrolled in the project, selected to demonstrate different approaches to supporting employees and their families. Rather than presenting the practices only as case studies, the publication translates their experience into practical guidance that other employers can adapt to their own organizational context.

The publication combines expert knowledge and relevant family-friendly workplace frameworks and resources with primary information collected directly from the participating companies through structured interviews. The company examples were used to understand how individual practices operate in real workplace settings, while the implementation steps, practical tips, potential benefits and indicators for measuring success were further developed to make the practices transferable and useful to other employers.

The publication does not propose a one-size-fits-all model. Organizations differ in size, industry, workforce structure and operational requirements. The examples and recommendations should therefore be considered as practical options that can be adapted to organizational needs, employee needs, available resources and the applicable legal framework.

About the Project

This publication has been developed within the regional project *Expanding Choices: Gender-Responsive Family Policies for the Private Sector in the Western Balkans* – Phase 2, supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by Association Konekt and UNFPA. The project promotes workplace policies and practices that enable employees to better balance their work, family and care-giving responsibilities. By working with employers and showcasing practical solutions, it aims to encourage more organizations to introduce family-friendly approaches adapted to their workforce, operational context and employees' diverse life circumstances. At the same time, the program highlights the business value of family-friendly workplaces – from improved employee wellbeing and engagement to stronger retention, productivity and organizational performance. UNFPA's Family-Friendly Workplace Model provides companies with the knowledge, evidence and tools needed to establish and implement long-term gender-responsive family policies and initiatives. The publication with the Family-Friendly Workplace Model is available at the following <<link>>

About UNFPA

UNFPA works with governments and partners to promote universal access to quality and integrated sexual and reproductive health services, strengthen health systems, train health workers, educate midwives and improve access to the full range of reproductive health, as well as working to prevent and respond to gender-based violence through its activities with policymakers, justice systems, health systems and humanitarian partners. UNFPA also works on population dynamics, human capital and sustainable development, and on creating population policies. UNFPA North Macedonia has supported the Government in the fields of reproductive health, population and development and gender-based violence. The new country program is fully aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), 2021-2025. The United Nations

is committed to collectively supporting its vision for the country – for the people of North Macedonia to achieve, by 2030, equality and prosperity in all opportunities for equitable growth; for gender equality and human rights to be respected; and for communities to work together peacefully.

About Konekt

Konekt is a civil society organization working to advance responsible business practices, philanthropy and cooperation between the private sector and communities in North Macedonia. Within the Family-Friendly Workplaces Program, Konekt works with companies to promote practical approaches that strengthen employee support and contribute to more inclusive and responsible workplaces. Part of the champion companies enrolled in the in the Program are members of the Responsible Business Club which represents the nation's brain trust of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) best practices.





1. INTRODUCTION

People do not leave their family responsibilities at the company entrance. Every working day, employees make dozens of decisions that balance work, care, parenting, care-giving and personal commitments. The organizations that recognize this reality build workplaces where people can perform at their best because they feel supported both as professionals and as individuals.
Family-friendly workplace policies and practices are no longer seen as "nice-to-have" employee benefits. Across the world, these policies are increasingly recognized as smart business practices that benefit both employees and businesses.
The good news is that becoming a family-friendly employer does not necessarily require large investments or complex programs. Often, meaningful change starts with one well-designed policy, implemented consistently and communicated effectively.
This Practicum brings together practical examples from companies in North Macedonia that have successfully introduced family-friendly workplace practices. Their experience demonstrates that supporting employees and their families is not only the right thing to do - it is also a sound investment in organizational performance and long-term business success.

What are family-friendly workplace policies?

Family-friendly workplace policies and practices support employees in balancing their work with family and care-giving responsibilities across different stages of life.
In practice, organizations can provide support through time, financial assistance, services and a supportive workplace culture. These measures can be introduced individually or combined, depending on the employees' needs, the nature of work and the organization's resources.



Time – This type of support comprises measures that give employees greater flexibility or additional time to manage family and care-giving responsibilities.

Examples include flexible working hours, remote or hybrid work, flexible shift scheduling, parental and caregiver leave, additional paid family leave, and phased return-to-work arrangements.



Financial support – It comprises measures that reduce the financial burden associated with childcare, care-giving and other family needs.

Examples include childcare allowances or vouchers, employer contributions for care services, additional paid leave, health insurance, education support and other family-related financial benefits.



Services and practical support – It comprises services, facilities and other practical resources that make it easier for employees to manage work and family responsibilities.

Examples include on-site or partner childcare, school holiday programs, breastfeeding and fertility support facilities, counseling services, preventive health programs and access to external family-support services.



Supportive workplace culture –It refers to organisational practices and behaviors that create an environment where employees feel able to use family-friendly measures without any stigma, guilt or negative consequences in terms of their careers.

Examples include supportive managers, leadership role modeling, psychological safety, inclusive policies recognizing diverse family structures and life circumstances, employee support groups, gender equality measures and clear communication of available benefits.

A note on fairness and inclusion: family-friendly does not mean parents only

Although family-friendly workplace policies are often associated with parents, every employee brings a unique life situation to work. Caring for partners, ageing parents, family members with disabilities or other dependents, health conditions, personal circumstances, education, or other life events can all influence an employee's ability to balance work and personal life. A truly family-friendly workplace recognizes this diversity and aims to create an inclusive environment where different needs are acknowledged and supported in a fair and balanced way.

Business benefits of family-friendly workplaces

Family-friendly workplace policies are not only an investment in the employees and their families, but they can also help the companies address some of today's key workforce challenges.

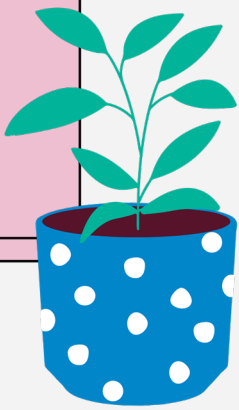
Evidence from UNFPA-supported family-friendly workplace programmes demonstrates the potential for measurable workforce and business benefits. Reported outcomes include a 33%–35% reduction in staff turnover, a 13.7% reduction in absenteeism, a 6.2% increase in job satisfaction and an 11.7% improvement in employees' self-reported health. Family-friendly practices can also strengthen gender equality and access to talent, with reported results including a 15% increase in the attraction of female talent and a 167.5% increase in the job uptake rate among women. While outcomes vary depending on the type of practice, organisational context and implementation quality, these findings demonstrate that family-friendly policies can generate tangible value for both employees and employers (more information available here.

In North Macedonia, where many employers face labor shortages and increasing difficulties in attracting and retaining younger and skilled employees, family-friendly practices can strengthen both workforce stability and business competitiveness.

Key benefits for employers include:

- Lower absenteeism, turnover and related recruitment and replacement costs
- Stronger attraction and retention of talent, particularly younger employees and employees with family and care-giving responsibilities
- Greater retention of female employees, particularly working mothers returning after maternity leave, supporting women's continued participation and career development
- Higher employee engagement, wellbeing and productivity
- A more inclusive and gender-equal workforce, supporting a more balanced sharing of work and care-giving responsibilities
- Stronger employer reputation and competitiveness in the labor market
- Greater organizational performance and innovation, supported by a more stable, engaged and diverse workforce

EVERY FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE STARTS WITH ONE DECISION: RECOGNIZING THAT SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES OUTSIDE WORK HELPS THEM PERFORM BETTER AT WORK.



2.COMPANY PRACTICES

COMPANY PRACTICE 1 - School holiday childcare program

Practice at a glance

Company	Comfy Angel, Prilep
Policy area	Services and practical support
Type of benefit	Employer-supported childcare during school holidays
Target group	Employees with eligible children*[1]
Implementation model	Two one-week camps per year, organized during winter and summer school holidays

Why does it matter?

School holidays can create significant childcare challenges for working parents, particularly for families with younger school-age children who cannot stay at home alone and are no longer covered by regular school-based care. Finding safe, reliable and quality childcare during these periods can be difficult, costly and stressful. Employer-supported holiday camps help bridge this gap by providing children with a safe and stimulating environment during most of their parents' working day.

Benefits for employees

- Provides reliable childcare during school holidays.
- Reduces the stress and the organisational burden on working parents.
- Helps employees maintain regular working hours during school breaks.
- Provides children with a safe, educational and engaging program.

1 According to the company's eligibility criteria.

Benefits for employers – contribution to HR strategic goals

- Reduces absenteeism and unplanned leaves during school holidays.
- Supports employee wellbeing and work-life balance.
- Strengthens employee engagement and loyalty.
- Supports a family-friendly workplace culture.
- Contributes to employee retention.

How it works at Comfy Angel?

At Comfy Angel in Prilep, one-week holiday camps are organized twice a year, during the winter and the summer school holidays, to support employees with young school-age children.
Children aged 6–10 participate in a full-day program, covering most of their parents' working hours. The program takes place at the company's training centre, which offers suitable indoor facilities for learning and group activities, as well as an outdoor garden area for games and recreation.
The program is delivered by an external specialized organization engaging qualified educators and professionals experienced in working with children. Activities include educational workshops, science experiments, sports and team games, outdoor scavenger hunts, creative activities, career exploration and introduction to different professions, with particular attention to challenging gender stereotypes and encouraging children to explore a wide range of future opportunities.
The company provides door-to-door transportation for participating children, together with meals, refreshments, learning materials, games and all other resources required for participation.
At the end of the camp, children receive certificates of participation and small gifts.

How is the practice implemented?

Step 1. Develop an internal procedure

Develop a clear internal procedure defining the target group, age criteria, number of available places, registration process, responsibilities, safety requirements and required parental consent.

Step 2. Plan the program

Define the duration, daily schedule, program objectives, activities, logistics and budget. The program should combine educational,

creative, recreational and social activities appropriate to the children's age.

Step 3. Select a safe and suitable venue

The program may be organized at the employer's premises where safe and appropriate facilities are available. If the company does not have suitable premises, it may rent an external venue or establish cooperation with a specialized childcare, educational or recreational institution.

Step 4. Engage qualified providers

Select an external provider, a specialized organization or a team of qualified educators with demonstrated experience in designing and delivering programs for children.

Step 5. Publish the call

Publish an internal call twice a year, before the winter and summer school holidays. Clearly communicate the eligibility criteria, program dates, available places, registration deadline and participation conditions.

Step 6. Employee application and parental consent

Employees submit an application stating the child's name and age. Parents also provide written consent for participation, transportation where applicable, photography, video recording and publication of program-related materials.

Step 7. Organize logistics and program delivery

Arrange transportation, meals, refreshments, learning materials, supervision, emergency contacts and safety procedures.

Step 8. Complete and evaluate the program

Provide the children with certificates of participation and small recognition gifts. Collect feedback from the parents, children and program providers and use it to improve future camps.



Tips for successful implementation

- Plan the camps according to the official school holiday calendar.
- Clearly define the eligibility criteria and registration process.
- Ensure equal access by applying the same criteria to all employees, regardless of position, seniority or organizational unit.
- Engage qualified educators and organizations specialized in working with children.
- Safety is the ultimate priority! Select a safe, accessible and child-friendly venue. If suitable company premises are not available, rent an appropriate venue or partner with a specialized institution.
- Plan for inclusion from the outset. Consider how children with disabilities, developmental differences or other specific support needs can participate meaningfully in the program, and adapt the activities and provide supervision or professional support where needed.
- Combine educational, creative, sports and recreational activities.
- Include activities that promote inclusion, equal opportunities and the overcoming of gender stereotypes.
- Define clear procedures for parental consent, child safety, transportation and emergency situations.
- Communicate the program through all internal communication channels.
- Collect feedback from both parents and children after each camp.

How to measure the success?

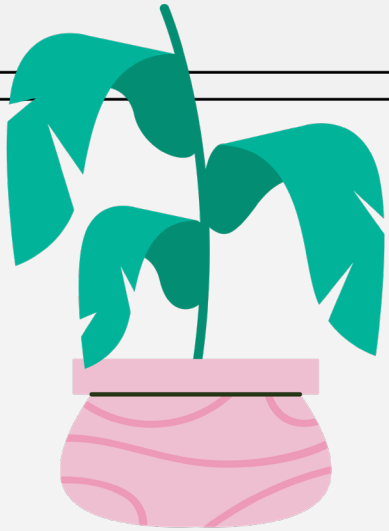
Consider monitoring:

- Childcare-related leave or absence during school holidays among program participants compared with non-participants.
- Number and percentage of eligible employees using the program
- Number of participating children as a percentage of all eligible children.
- Attendance rate throughout the camp.

- Parent satisfaction with the organization, safety and program content.
- Children's satisfaction with the activities.
- Repeat participation in future camps.
- Cost of the program per participating child.
- Reasons for low participation, where applicable.

STATEMENT BY COMFY ANGEL

"We see the greatest success and value of organizing this camp in the children's smiles and satisfaction. For us as a company, the most important outcome is the joy the children experience through socializing, making new friends, and creating wonderful memories. When employees see their children happy, fulfilled, and surrounded by friends during the break, it generates positive energy and adds to the overall satisfaction of the entire team."



COMPANY PRACTICE 2 - Gradual return to work after parental leave

Practice at a glance

Company	Vitaminka AD Prilep
Policy area	Time
Type of benefit	Gradual return to work with reduced working hours and full pay
Target group	Employees returning from maternity leave
Implementation model	50% working time with full salary and benefits for three months after returning from maternity leave

Why does it matter?

Returning to work after maternity leave can be challenging as many mothers continue breastfeeding while adapting to work routines and childcare responsibilities. In North Macedonia, legislation provides breastfeeding mothers with 1.5 hours of paid daily leave during the first three months after returning to work. While this is an important entitlement, for some mothers it may not provide sufficient time to balance breastfeeding, childcare and work. By extending this support, employers can ease the transition back to work, promote employee wellbeing and strengthen long-term retention.

Benefits for employees

- Reduces stress during the transition back to work.
- Provides more time to balance work, childcare and breastfeeding.
- Supports employee wellbeing and work-life balance.
- Ensures maintaining a full salary and employment benefits during the transition period.

Benefits for employers – contribution to HR strategic goals

- Improves retention of experienced employees after maternity leave.
- Reduces absenteeism and unplanned leaves during the transition back to work.
- Strengthens employee engagement, loyalty and trust.
- Supports gender equality and equal career opportunities.
- Reinforces the employer brand as a family-friendly employer.

How it works at Vitaminka AD?

Following maternity leave, employees first use any remaining annual leave entitlement. The three-month gradual return-to-work period begins once the employee resumes work after completing her annual leave.

During this period, mothers work 50% of their regular working hours (4 hours a day) while receiving 100% of their salary, together with all statutory contributions and the full range of employment-related benefits, including performance bonuses and other incentives, as if they were working full-time.

The four daily working hours are arranged flexibly within the employee's regular working schedule through agreement between the employee and her manager, taking into account both operational requirements and the employee's individual needs.

How is the practice implemented?

Step 1. Develop the program

Develop a written policy defining the eligibility criteria, duration of the program, level of reduced working time, compensation arrangements and manager responsibilities. Design the program in line with organizational needs and available resources, ensuring it provides support beyond the statutory minimum.

Step 2. Communicate the program

Clearly explain the available support, eligibility criteria, application process and how individual working arrangements will be agreed.

Step 3. Agree on an individual return-to-work arrangement

Before the employee returns to work, the manager and employee

jointly agree on the temporary working arrangement. Define how the reduced working hours will be distributed throughout the working day or week, balancing the operational requirements with the employee's individual needs.

Step 4. Implement and maintain communication

Maintain regular communication throughout the transition period to ensure that both operational and employee needs are met. Where necessary, adjust the agreed working arrangement by mutual agreement.

Step 5. Monitor utilization and evaluate the program

Maintain records on program utilization, monitor participation and collect feedback from both employees and managers. Analyze indicators such as uptake, return-to-work rates, absenteeism and employee retention after maternity leave, and use the findings to continuously improve the program.

Tips for successful implementation

- Ensure equal access to the program for all employees returning from maternity leave, regardless of position, seniority or organizational unit.
- Inform the employees and their managers about the program before they return from maternity leave to allow sufficient time for planning the transition.
- Allow flexibility in scheduling the additional reduced working hours according to the operational and individual needs. While arrangements may vary across industries and workplaces, the employer's additional support should be provided through a genuine reduction in daily working time and it should not be accumulated or redistributed across other working days. Regardless of the arrangement, employees should not work more than 6.5 hours on any working day.
- Support employees and managers through gradual reintegration into the workplace. Maintain regular communication and provide meaningful tasks aligned with the employee's temporary working hours.
- Avoid assumptions amongst managers and employees that returning mothers are less committed or less capable of contributing.
- Consider complementing the program with additional return-

to-work support, such as programs for employees on leave, mentoring, career counseling, coaching or regular check-in meetings, to help employees rebuild confidence, reconnect with the team and continue their professional development.
- Regularly review program utilization, employee feedback and organisational data to continuously improve the program and ensure it continues to meet both employee and business needs.

How to measure the success?

Consider monitoring:

- Number and percentage of employees participating in the program
- Retention rate of employees 12 months after returning from maternity leave.
- Absenteeism and unplanned leaves during the transition period.
- Employee/team productivity after returning to work (e.g. achievement of agreed objectives, performance ratings or manager assessment).
- Employee satisfaction with the return-to-work program.
- Employee perceptions of organizational support during the transition back to work (measured through employee surveys).
- Manager feedback on the implementation of the program.



COMPANY PRACTICE 3 - Supporting children`s development through extracurricular activities

Practice at a glance

Company	Alkaloid AD Skopje
Policy area	Financial support
Type of benefit	Financial support for development activities for the employees' children
Target group	Employees with eligible children*[2]
Implementation model	Annual call for monthly reimbursement based on proof of participation

Why does it matter?

Extracurricular activities play an important role in children's learning, health, confidence and social development. However, providing these opportunities requires families to invest both financial resources and considerable time in planning and organizing activities alongside work and other responsibilities.

Employer support can ease part of this burden by making extracurricular activities more affordable and accessible. This helps parents meet their children's developmental needs without placing additional pressure on the family budget and it supports a better balance between work and family responsibilities. At the same time, it signals that the organization recognizes employees not only as workers, but also in their roles and responsibilities outside the workplace.

Benefits for employees

- Supports children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- Reduces the financial cost of extracurricular activities.
- Encourages equal access to organized educational, cultural and sports programs.
- Helps employees better balance work and family responsibilities.

2 According to the company's eligibility criteria.

Benefits for employers – contribution to HR strategic goals

- Strengthens employee satisfaction, engagement and loyalty.
- Supports a family-friendly workplace culture.
- Enhances employer reputation and attractiveness.
- Contributes to employee retention.

How it works at Alkaloid AD?

At Alkaloid AD Skopje, this initiative is implemented through the "Benefit for Employees' Children" program.
The company provides a fixed monthly allowance to support extracurricular activities for each eligible child between the ages of 5 and 18, or until the completion of secondary education.

The benefit may be used for a wide range of organized activities, including sports and recreational programs, foreign language courses, music and performing arts, dance programs, coding and robotics clubs, STEM programs, educational academies and other organized extracurricular activities that contribute to children's development.

The allowance is provided regardless of the actual cost of the activity, provided that the employee meets the eligibility criteria and submits the required documentation.

How is the practice implemented?

Step 1. Develop an internal procedure

Develop a clear internal procedure defining the eligibility criteria, supported activities, required documentation, implementation process and responsibilities.

Step 2. Publish an annual call

At the beginning of each school year, publish an internal call inviting eligible employees to apply. The announcement should clearly explain the eligibility criteria, application process, required documentation and reimbursement rules.

Step 3. Employee application

Employees submit an application indicating the eligible child and the selected extracurricular activity, together with proof of enrolment in the program.

Step 4. Verify eligibility and reimburse the benefit

Each month, employees submit proof of payment for the selected activity. A designated internal committee reviews the documentation and verifies that all eligibility requirements have been met before approving the reimbursement. The allowance is paid as a salary supplement only for the months in which the child actively participates in the program.

Step 5. Confirm the completion

At the end of the program or school year, the employee submits a certificate or confirmation demonstrating that the child attended or successfully completed the activity.

Tips for successful implementation

- Give the program a simple and recognizable name to increase visibility and employee awareness.
- Conduct a financial assessment before introducing the program. Determine the number of potentially eligible children, estimate how this number may change over time and allocate an appropriate annual budget.
- Clearly define which activities are eligible for reimbursement.
- Communicate the program regularly through all internal communication channels, not only during the annual application period.
- Keep the application and verification process simple and transparent. Clearly communicate the required documentation, deadlines and payment process, and designate a responsible person or a small team to administer and verify applications.
- Ensure equal access to the benefit by applying the same eligibility criteria to all employees, regardless of position, seniority or organizational unit.
- Establish a consistent monthly verification process to ensure fairness and accountability.
- Share positive employee stories and examples to encourage greater use of the benefit.

How to measure the success?
Consider monitoring:

- Number and percentage of employees using the benefit.
- Number of children supported as % of all eligible children.
- Distribution of supported activities by type and age.
- Annual utilization of the allocated budget.
- Employee satisfaction with the benefit.
- Reasons for low uptake, where applicable.

STATEMENT BY ALKALOID



"The "Benefit for Employees' Children" programme was introduced as part of Alkaloid AD Skopje's broader strategy for supporting employees and their families. By providing financial support for children's educational, sports, cultural and recreational activities, the programme demonstrates that the company cares not only about employees' professional wellbeing, but also about the wellbeing and development of their families. This contributes to greater satisfaction and motivation, a positive working environment and a stronger sense of belonging. The programme's growing uptake confirms its recognised value: the number of participating children increased from 547 in 2021 to 885 in 2025—an increase of 61.8%. By directly supporting employees' families, the programme helps strengthen trust and long-term loyalty, improve employee retention and promote workforce stability. It also reinforces Alkaloid AD Skopje's position as a family-friendly and socially responsible employer, enhancing the company's attractiveness to both current and prospective employees."

COMPANY PRACTICE 4 - Enhanced preventive health program

Practice at a glance

Company	Textile Solutions
Policy area	Services and practical support
Type of benefit	Employer-funded enhanced preventive health screening
Target group	All employees
Implementation model	Phased integration into mandatory occupational health examination cycles

Why does it matter?

In North Macedonia, employers are legally required to provide periodic occupational health examinations. While these examinations focus primarily on employees' fitness for work and occupational health requirements, many employers also provide private health insurance, which typically supports diagnosis and treatment rather than preventive screening.

As a result, preventive examinations often remain a financial and time burden for the employees, reducing their participation in preventive healthcare despite its proven benefits. By expanding mandatory occupational health examinations with additional preventive health services, employers can make prevention more accessible, encourage employees to take greater ownership of their health and foster a stronger culture of prevention across the organization.

Benefits for employees

- Earlier detection of health conditions and improved treatment outcomes.
- Easier access to preventive healthcare without additional costs or time away from work.
- Increased awareness of reproductive, cardiovascular and general health.
- Greater confidence and motivation to take care of personal wellbeing.
- Better health outcomes for employees and their families.

Benefits for employers – contribution to HR strategic goals

- Encourages a workplace culture focused on prevention and healthy lifestyles.
- Reduces long-term sick leaves and health-related productivity loss.
- Strengthens employee trust and demonstrates organizational care.
- Reinforces the employer brand as a responsible and people-centered employer.
- Contributes to long-term workforce sustainability and business performance.

How it works at Textile Solutions?

Textile Solutions has expanded its mandatory occupational health examinations by introducing additional preventive health services beyond the legal requirements. Rather than introducing all services at once, the company is gradually expanding the program across successive examination cycles.

The program started with breast ultrasound examinations for women and prostate examinations for men. Future examination cycles will include additional preventive services such as gynecological examinations and Pap smears, thyroid ultrasound, internal medicine examinations, cardiovascular risk assessments, diabetes screening, laboratory analyses, vitamin deficiency testing, and other preventive examinations identified as relevant for the workforce.

Whenever feasible, examinations are organized at the workplace to improve accessibility and encourage participation. All additional preventive examinations are voluntary and fully funded by the employer.



How is the practice implemented?

Step 1. Analyze the workforce profile

Analyze the workforce profile, including age structure, gender distribution and occupational risks, to determine which preventive health initiatives would be most relevant for employees.

Step 2. Design the program with healthcare professionals

Develop the program in cooperation with occupational safety and health professionals and the licensed healthcare provider responsible for conducting the company's mandatory occupational health examinations. Define the preventive examinations to be introduced, the implementation timeline and the target groups.

Step 3. Organize the examinations

Whenever possible, organize preventive examinations at the workplace to make participation easier for employees. Where this is not feasible, arrange examinations at an appropriate healthcare facility.

Step 4. Inform and engage employees

Communicate the purpose and the benefits of the program before each examination cycle. Consider inviting healthcare professionals to deliver short educational sessions on the importance of preventive health screening, healthy lifestyles and early detection to increase awareness and encourage participation. Explain that participation is voluntary, fully funded by the employer, and that all medical information remains confidential.

Step 5. Deliver and evaluate the program

Conduct the examinations according to the agreed schedule, monitor participation and collect employee feedback. Review the program regularly together with healthcare professionals and gradually expand the range of preventive examinations based on workforce needs and organizational priorities.

Tips for successful implementation

- Integrate preventive examinations into the regular occupational health examination cycle whenever possible. This reduces organizational effort, minimizes disruption to work and makes participation easier for employees.
- Start with one or two priority preventive examinations and

gradually expand the program over successive examination cycles.
- Select preventive examinations based on the workforce profile, occupational risks and expert medical recommendations to ensure that the program addresses the most relevant health priorities.
- Whenever feasible, organize examinations at the workplace to reduce time barriers and encourage higher participation. For example, ultrasound screening may be organized on-site for larger groups of employees where suitable premises are available (e.g. an occupational health room or another private space), provided the healthcare provider confirms that all medical and technical requirements are met.
- Complement the program with health awareness activities, such as educational sessions delivered by healthcare professionals, to promote prevention, healthy lifestyles and the importance of early detection.
- Use preventive health programs alongside private health insurance. While private health insurance primarily supports diagnosis and treatment, preventive screening focuses on early detection and complements existing health benefits.

How to measure the success?

Consider monitoring:

- Percentage of eligible employees participating in preventive health examinations.
- Participation rates by type of preventive examination and by examination cycle.
- Employee satisfaction with the program and its accessibility.
- Employee awareness of preventive health and available health benefits (measured through employee surveys).
- Trends in health-related absenteeism, sick leaves and employee wellbeing indicators (where organizational data are available).
- Year-on-year expansion of the preventive health program (e.g. number of preventive examinations introduced).

COMPANY PRACTICE 5 - Supporting fathers through extended paid paternity leave

Practice at a glance

Company	NLB Bank AD Skopje
Policy area	Time
Type of benefit	Paid leave for fathers upon the birth of a child
Target group	All employees becoming fathers
Implementation model	10 additional consecutive paid working days immediately following the statutory entitlement

Why does it matter?

The first days following the birth of a child are a critical period for both parents and the newborn. Fathers play an important role in supporting the mother's recovery, establishing early bonding with the child and sharing care-giving responsibilities from the very begin ning.

In North Macedonia, the legislation and the General Collective Agreement for the private sector provide fathers with two days of paid leave upon the birth of a child. By extending this entitlement, employers enable fathers to spend meaningful time with their families during this important life event, while promoting shared parenting, gender equality and a more family-friendly workplace culture.

Benefits for employees

- Improves the retention of employees following the birth of a child.
- Reduces absenteeism by enabling fathers to support their families during the immediate post-birth period.
- Strengthens employee loyalty and organizational commitment.
- Enhances employer attractiveness in a competitive labor market.
- Supports diversity, equity and inclusion by promoting shared parenting responsibilities.

Benefits for employers – contribution to HR strategic goals

- Improves employee retention and reduces turnover.
- Reduces unplanned absenteeism during the period following childbirth.
- Strengthens employee loyalty and long-term organizational commitment.
- Enhances employer branding and talent attraction.
- Supports gender equality and contributes to a more inclusive workplace culture.

How it works at NLB Bank?

In addition to the statutory entitlement, NLB Bank provides fathers with 10 additional consecutive paid working days following the birth of their child. During this period, employees receive their full salary together with all employment-related rights and benefits. This additional support helps fathers reduce stress, adapt to their new family responsibilities and be actively involved during the first days of their child's life.

How is the practice implemented?

Step 1. Develop an internal policy

Develop a written policy defining the duration of the additional leave, eligibility, application process, required documentation and responsibilities.

Step 2. Prepare the managers and communicate the program

Provide the managers with guidance on the purpose and implementation of the program, and communicate the benefit to all employees through appropriate internal communication channels.

Step 3. Employee application

The employee submits a request to the direct supervisor together with the other required documentation.

Step 4. Approve and organize the leave

Coordinate the employee's leave of absence with the manager to ensure business continuity while enabling the leave to be taken immediately following the statutory entitlement.

Step 5. Monitor and review the program

Maintain records on program utilization, collect employee and manager feedback, and regularly review organizational data to evaluate the program's impact and identify opportunities for improvement.

Tips for successful implementation

- Make the program available to all fathers, including through adoption, regardless of the position, organizational unit, length of service or employment status.
- Clearly communicate the program before the employees need it so that future parents are aware of the available support and understand how to apply for it.
- Keep the application process simple and minimize administrative requirements.
- Encourage senior leaders and managers to use the benefit themselves whenever eligible. When leaders openly use family-friendly benefits, they help normalize paternity leave, reduce potential stigma and create a culture where employees feel comfortable making use of the support available to them.
- Train managers to plan workloads effectively during paternity leave and to actively support employees in using the program without negative assumptions or barriers.
- Regularly review program utilization, employee feedback and organizational data, and use the findings to continuously improve the program.

How to measure the success?

Consider monitoring:

- Number and percentage of eligible employees using the program.
- Uptake rate of the additional paternity leave.
- Employee satisfaction with the program.
- Employee perceptions of organizational support for working parents (measured through employee surveys).
- Manager feedback on the implementation of the program.
- Retention of employees following the birth of a child.
- Reasons for not using the program, where applicable.

STATEMENT BY NLB



"The introduction of 10 working days of paid paternity leave has a significantly positive impact on employee satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty, as it allows employees to be present during one of the most important periods in the lives of both them and their families. According to the experiences of employees who have utilized this benefit, the measure enables greater presence and support during the initial days following a child's birth and fosters a sense that the organization recognizes and values family needs. Furthermore, such practices facilitate the balancing of professional and family responsibilities, boost employee commitment, and reaffirm NLB Bank's dedication to being an employer that genuinely supports its staff during life's most important moments. The measure's effectiveness is further evidenced by numerous positive reactions from employees, who highlight that the support received from the Bank during this time enabled them to devote themselves to their families when it mattered most."

COMPANY PRACTICE 6 - Supporting single-parent families and employees with increased care-giving responsibilities

Practice at a glance

Company	Farmahem
Policy area	Time
Type of benefit	Tailored workplace support for employees with increased care-giving responsibilities
Target group	Employees with increased care-giving responsibilities, with a particular focus on single-parent families
Implementation model	A package of additional flexibility, a paid leave and individual working arrangements tailored to the employees' family circumstances

Why does it matter?

Not all employees face the same care-giving responsibilities. Some may be raising children as single parents, while others care for children with disabilities, ageing parents, family members with disabilities or other dependent relatives. These additional responsibilities can make it more difficult to balance work and family life and they may increase stress, absenteeism and the risk of leaving the workforce.

Providing targeted workplace support helps employees manage their care-giving responsibilities while remaining productive and engaged at work. Rather than applying the same approach to everyone, organizations can provide additional flexibility where it is most needed, creating a more inclusive and family-friendly workplace.

Benefits for employees

- Improves work-life balance for employees with increased care-giving responsibilities.
- Reduces stress and helps employees respond to family emergencies.
- Provides greater flexibility in organizing the work around family responsibilities.
- Supports employee wellbeing and long-term career continuity.
- Creates a sense of fairness, inclusion and organizational support.

Benefits for employers – contribution to HR strategic goals

- Improves retention of employees with increased care-giving responsibilities.
- Reduces absenteeism and work disruptions related to family emergencies.
- Maintains employee productivity through flexible work arrangements.
- Strengthens employee engagement, loyalty and organizational commitment.
- Reinforces the employer brand as an inclusive and family-friendly employer.

How it works at Farmahem?

Farmahem provides additional support to the employees with increased care-giving responsibilities, with a particular focus on single-parent families. Rather than relying on a single benefit, the company combines several workplace measures to help employees balance work and family responsibilities.

The support package includes two additional paid leave days per year, greater flexibility in working hours, an increased opportunity to work remotely, and additional flexibility in urgent childcare situations, allowing employees to respond to unexpected family needs without unnecessary administrative barriers.

Where appropriate, these measures may be complemented by other employee benefits available within the company, such as private health insurance, company vehicle use and other wellbeing initiatives. Individual working arrangements are agreed between

the employee, the manager and HR, taking into account both the operational requirements and the family circumstances.

How is the practice implemented?

Step 1. Develop a policy and define eligible employee groups

Develop a written policy defining the categories of employees eligible for additional support, the available support measures, the application process, the required documentation, the roles and the responsibilities. The policy should clearly specify which family situations are covered (e.g. single-parent families, employees caring for children with disabilities, ageing parents, family members with disabilities or other dependants).

Step 2. Communicate the program and invite applications

Communicate the program to all employees through appropriate internal communication channels, ensuring that eligible employees understand the available support measures, the application process and the confidentiality principles. Employees submit an application describing their care-giving responsibilities and support needs.

Step 3. Review applications and determine the support package

HR reviews each application together with the direct supervisor, taking into account the employee's circumstances, operational requirements and the principles defined in the policy. Larger organizations may establish a review committee, including employee representatives where appropriate, to support fair, transparent and consistent decision-making.

Based on the assessment, an individual support package is agreed with the employee. Depending on the employee's needs and the nature of the role, this may include additional paid leave, flexible working hours, remote work, flexibility for urgent childcare or family care situations, adapted shift arrangements (e.g. avoiding night shifts, weekend or public holiday work where operationally feasible), psychological support, and other benefits available under the organization's policies and resources.

Step 4. Implement the agreed arrangements

Implement the agreed measures and maintain regular communication between the employee, the manager and HR. Where appropriate, review the arrangements periodically and adjust them if the employee's circumstances or operational needs change.

Step 5. Monitor and continuously improve the program

Maintain records on program utilization, collect employee and manager feedback, monitor relevant HR indicators and regularly review the effectiveness of the program to identify opportunities for improvement.

Tips for successful implementation

- Communicate the purpose of the program clearly. Explain that the additional support is designed to address increased care-giving responsibilities and promote equal opportunities, rather than provide preferential treatment.
- Promote a culture that respects diverse family situations. Foster understanding, inclusion and fairness towards employees with different care-giving responsibilities.
- Ensure transparent and consistent decision-making. Apply clear criteria and document decisions to build trust and ensure fairness.
- Equip managers to implement the program effectively. Train them to handle requests consistently, maintain confidentiality and create an environment where employees feel comfortable using the available support without any fear of stigma, guilt or being perceived as receiving preferential treatment.
- Review individual support arrangements regularly. Adapt them as employees' care-giving responsibilities or organizational needs change.
- Monitor program utilization and impact. Use employee feedback and HR indicators to continuously improve the program.

How to measure the success?
Consider monitoring:

- Number and percentage of employees using the program, by type of support provided.
- Employee retention among program participants.
- Absenteeism related to care-giving responsibilities among program participants vs. non-program participants.
- Employee satisfaction with the support provided.
- Employee perceptions of organizational support and inclusion (measured through employee surveys).
- Manager feedback on the effectiveness of the individual support arrangements.
- Employee productivity and performance following the implementation of the support measures.

STATEMENT BY FARMAHEM

"Farmahem has observed positive effects from the support provided to single parents and employees with increased caregiving responsibilities, particularly through reduced absences related to family obligations and an improved balance between personal and professional life. These measures contribute to greater employee satisfaction, motivation and productivity, as well as longer-term retention within the company. At the same time, employees feel a stronger sense of loyalty, belonging and inclusion because they know that the company understands their needs and provides them with appropriate support."



3. OTHER FAMILY-FRIENDLY PRACTICES TO CONSIDER



TIME

Measures that provide employees with additional time or greater flexibility to balance work, family and care-giving responsibilities.

- Flexible start and finish times
- Hybrid and remote work
- Compressed workweek (employees work their contracted hours over fewer working days)
- Part-time work
- Job sharing (two employees share one full-time position)
- Flexible or annualized working hours (working hours are distributed flexibly over a week, month or year according to business and employee needs)
- Predictable scheduling
- Flexible scheduling for shift workers with family responsibilities
- Paid caregiver leave (leave to care for a sick, elderly or dependent family member)
- Paid absence for personal or family days (e.g. birthdays, first day of school, important family events)
- Flexible time for urgent childcare or family care situations
- Additional paid parental leave (including adoption and foster care leave)
- Extended maternity leave beyond the legal minimum
- Paid leave following pregnancy loss
- Paid leave for fertility treatment and assisted reproduction
- Paid leave for children's medical appointments
- Phased return to work after parental leave



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Measures that help employees manage the financial costs associated with childcare, family responsibilities, health, wellbeing and other care needs.

- Childcare vouchers or childcare allowance
- Scholarships for employees' children
- Wellbeing vouchers (e.g. counseling, tutoring, eldercare, wellbeing or household support services)
- Financial wellbeing and family budgeting programs



SERVICES AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT

Services, facilities and practical resources provided or facilitated by the employer to support employees and their families.

- Partnerships with childcare providers (e.g. reserved childcare places, discounted fees, employer contributions for childcare costs or other agreed benefits)
- On-site or near-site childcare facilities
- Emergency childcare support
- School holiday camps and childcare programs
- Tutoring and educational support
- Summer internships for employees' children
- Breastfeeding and fertility support facilities (private spaces for breastfeeding, expressing and storing breast milk, fertility treatment, medication administration and other reproductive health needs)
- Mental health and psychosocial support
- Individual coaching and mentoring
- Career counseling for employees
- Career guidance for employees' children
- Family wellbeing workshops
- Healthy lifestyle initiatives (e.g. healthy meals, nutrition programs and health promotion campaigns)
- Physical activity and sports programs (e.g. gym memberships, organized sports activities or wellness challenges)



SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

Measures that strengthen an inclusive and supportive organizational environment in which employees feel comfortable using family-friendly benefits and different family structures, care-giving responsibilities and life circumstances are recognized and respected.

- Leadership role modeling in using family-friendly benefits
- Manager training on family-friendly leadership
- Awareness campaigns promoting equal care-giving and a family-friendly workplace culture
- Regular employee needs assessments on family-related support
- Family-friendly workplace ambassadors or champions
- Parenting education workshops
- Parental leave keep-in-touch program (maintaining communication and engagement with employees during

extended parental leave)
- Return-to-work coaching or mentoring
- Mothers', fathers' and caregivers' support groups
- Inclusive workplace practices recognizing diverse family structures and life circumstances (e.g. single employees, single-parent families, blended families, adoptive and foster families, same-sex families, legal guardians and employees with other care-giving responsibilities).



4. FAMILY-FRIENDLY MATURITY CHECK

This quick check helps organizations reflect on how well the family-friendly principles are embedded across four key dimensions of the workplace.

Review the statements below and mark those that currently describe your organization. The dimensions are complementary rather than sequential: a mature family-friendly workplace requires progress across all four. Use the results to identify the existing strengths, gaps and priorities for further development.

Dimension	Your organization...
Leadership Commitment	☐ Senior leaders recognize family-friendly workplace policies as a strategic priority that contributes to employee wellbeing and business performance. ☐ The organization has a clear vision and commitment to becoming a family-friendly employer. ☐ Managers understand their role in supporting employees with family and care-giving responsibilities. ☐ Senior leaders and managers act as role models by openly supporting and, where relevant, using family-friendly policies themselves.
Policies and Systems	☐ The organization has written strategies, policies or guidelines on family-friendly workplace practices. ☐ Family-friendly measures are included in the HR, People or ESG Strategy and supported by an action plan. ☐ Employees have equal access to the available policies and benefits based on transparent eligibility criteria. ☐ Family-friendly programs are communicated regularly through internal communication channels.

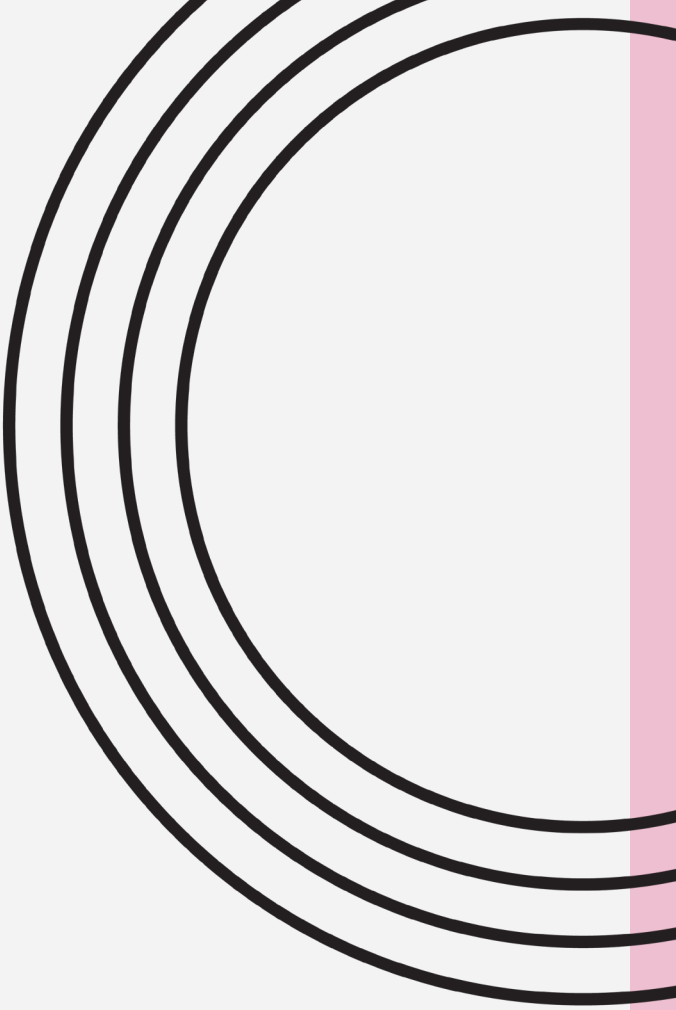
Dimension	Your organization...
Implementation and Employee Experience	☐ The organization regularly assesses employees' family and care-giving needs before introducing new initiatives. ☐ Employees understand the available policies and feel encouraged to use them without any fear of negative consequences. ☐ Managers actively promote the use of family-friendly policies and support employees in balancing work and family responsibilities. ☐ Family-friendly initiatives are regularly implemented and accessible to eligible employees.
Measurement and Continuous Improvement	☐ The organization monitors the utilization of family-friendly policies and programs. ☐ HR indicators related to family-friendly practices (e.g. utilization, employee satisfaction, absenteeism, retention or return after parental leave) are regularly monitored. ☐ Employee feedback and organizational data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of family-friendly initiatives. ☐ Policies and programs are regularly reviewed and improved based on evidence and changing employee needs.



Score	Indicative maturity	What it means
0–4	**Getting started**	Family-friendly practices are still limited or informal. Focus on establishing commitment and basic policies and support.
5–8	**Developing**	Some foundations and practices are in place, but implementation may be inconsistent or limited to selected areas.
9–12	**Established**	Family-friendly practices are broadly embedded, with supporting policies, implementation and management involvement.
13–16	**Advanced**	Family-friendly principles are systematically embedded across the organization and supported by leadership, employee experience, data and continuous improvement.

Your total score is only an indication. You should also review your results across each of the four dimensions. A strong family-friendly workplace requires a balanced approach – a high overall score should not compensate for significant gaps in any of the dimensions.





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