



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
FOR HOME ECONOMICS

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## Press Release

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### The International Day of Families 2012: “Ensuring Work Family Balance”

Each year the International Day of Families is celebrated on 15<sup>th</sup> of May. The International Day provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families and to increase the knowledge of the social, economic and demographic processes affecting families. The theme for 2012 has been chosen is:

#### “Ensuring Work Family Balance”

Several socio-economic and demographic trends lead to significant changes in family and work life. Due to several developments, i.e., new life styles and job requirements, the household size has decreased in the last decade of years while the geographical distance between family members increased.

The trend on the labour market in the last years has heightened work load, especially for women. Increased number of women in paid work, increased working hours and weekend work as well as job insecurity lead to pressure from an increasingly competitive work environment. Heightened work-load and worries about job security can lead to stress and health problems with emotional “spill-over” into the home. To care for younger children and other vulnerable family members is getting more and more problematic. Combining the weakening of traditional extended family networks and the fluctuating trends on the labour markets, result in the necessity for employees to try to “juggle” work with family responsibilities which often ends with conflicting priorities.

Work-family balance policies aim to support working parents in being productive individuals while ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of their children and other family members. Most important to ensuring work-family balance is parental leave, flexible working arrangements and high quality childcare services.

#### Home Economics and Work Family Balance

In Home Economics the family is seen as the constitutional, social unit of the household, society and economy. The functions of family are multifaceted. To fulfil their wide range of challenges family members must be empowered inside the family and from their social and political surroundings.



To contribute to family, economics and society in a fulfilling and sustainable manner, a family member must be physically and emotionally well-balanced. Studies in the field of Home Economics have included work-family balance since the first half of the preceding century through the studies of Time Use, Gender Equity, Family in Development and Family in Transition.

In a very early phase (from the 1950s to 1960s) Home Economists researched on the time use of housewives and later on the time use of dual-career women. Home Economists started to support families through analyses of time use of family members and guidance in this area of everyday life. In the 1970s to 1980s the focus was on inequality in time use between the husband and wife in the home from the viewpoint of gender equality. In addition, the paid work and unpaid work of men and women in connection with the UN gender statistics campaign and the time use of individuals of the husband and wife in the family, community and volunteer activities from the viewpoint of work-family balance was reviewed.

The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) is an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) having consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF) and with the Council of Europe.

The Home Economists associated with IFHE focus on the fundamental needs and practical concerns of managing everyday life resources. IFHE is also concerned with the issues impacting individuals' and families' well-being at the societal and global levels in an ever changing and ever challenging environment. The ultimate goal of the Federation is the improvement of the quality of everyday life for individuals, families and households.

**The IFHE strongly advocates that members:**

- Support families to fulfil their tasks adequately and realise sustainable lifestyles through education and empowerment in Home Economics, i.e. time use, resource management, financial literacy, child care and consumerism.
- Recognise the high pressure on families to arrange family-life and work-life and set adequate frameworks to support the work-family balance as work flexibility, family leave for male and female workers and adequate child care opportunities.
- Develop and include family focused policies in every area of society and economy for a sustainable use of the potentials and resources of every family member.