

E-MAIL CONTRIBUTIONS**European bureaucracy has to wake up to flexibility****MARGIT BURMEISTER**

While not all women have a scientist husband, a significant number of those in the US who are successfully managing a career and motherhood do scientists are more likely to be flexible in taking turns with child care, and in recognizing the need to go beyond a 40 hour week at times. For Europe to catch up a few things can be done to help in this situation:

Many universities in the US have special funds so that if one of a couple is being recruited, there is help for the other. For example, if a woman is the person initially identified, they circulate her husband's CV to relevant departments at the same university. If a department shows interest, but will only have an opening a year or two later, there are bridging funds. There is also some flexibility in timing - while the husband is looking for a job, for example.

In addition, many US universities allow extension of the tenure clock for child bearing - some also allow this for men. In Europe, women and their husbands should be allowed to extend time-limited positions to allow more flexibility in job searches after a successful 5 year period.

In contrast, in Germany and, I believe, in many other European countries, in some places there are rules against husband and wives being in the same department or even the same university, and I have not seen much evidence of negotiations for couples. Often, for group leader positions which are the equivalent of assistant professor in the US, acceptance needs to be made within a few weeks of an offer being made - no time to negotiate or even job-search for a partner.

As a consequence, in Germany I have seen two options for dual career couples: one partner, usually the woman, accepts a lower, non-independent position either in her husband's lab or a different lab nearby; or they end up in different places commuting over hundreds of miles on a weekend relationship which won't allow them to raise kids. There are only very few lucky exceptions. It is clear that European bureaucracy has to wake up to more flexibility here.

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