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Combining Working and Caring:  
Employed Family Carers in  
Finland, Britain and Taiwan

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## Structure of the paper

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- Working carer as a term
- An ignored policy issue
- Working and caring in Finland and Britain
- What kind of support is needed?
- International WoCaWo Project
- Combining caring and working



## Working carer as a term

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- A person simultaneously participating in paid employment and giving care to an older or disabled family member /close person
- Brings a need to balance two different spheres of life (employment and family) and two different roles (worker and carer roles)



## An ignored policy issue

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- Reconciliation of employment and care for children has been a major social policy issue in many countries for decades
- Reconciliation of employment and care for older (or disabled) people has mostly been an ignored social policy issue in practically all countries until very recently
  - ✦ However, ageing workforce and increasing number of frail older people are making the issue more and more topical



## Working and caring in Finland

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- According to general national surveys, 12-20 % of working adults provide help for older or disabled close persons weekly (20-25 % monthly)
- Most usual among 45-64-year-old workers
- Gender differences (Kauppinen 2006)
  - ✦ Men help in giving rides, renovation, gardening and household work and financially (4.1 h/week)
  - ✦ Women help in giving rides, household work and personal care (6.7 h/week)
  - ✦ Most usual among 45-64 year-olds, in particular women aged 55-64



## Working and caring in Finland

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- Research on working carers limited in all Nordic countries
- Some interviews have been made that show a variety of situations
- Care arrangements during working hours vary from non-care to daily use of formal services (e.g., of a dementia care unit)
- Attitudes of managers and fellow workers to the situation of working carers vary from rejection and indifference to giving support
- Some working carers do not wish to tell about their situation at work
- Most can leave their workplace in urgent situations
- Most can change their work shift or have unpaid leave if that is needed



## Working and caring in Finland

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- Life situations of working carers vary
  - ✦ Individual welfare problems: lack of sleep and rest
  - ✦ Feelings of anxiety and worry at work, feelings of insufficiency at work as well as home
  - ✦ Many carers want to continue at work: necessity of income
  - ✦ Brings variety to life, gives feeling of independence
  - ✦ Carers wish more flexible work arrangements, information on welfare services, home help, respite care, appreciation from the society



## Working and caring in Britain

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- "It is difficult to work. Do not have the flexibility to work late etc."
- "Some carers cannot work even when they want to, as this can compromise Carer's Allowance."  
(National Carers' Strategy 2008)



## Working and caring in Britain (Census 2001/Buckner & Yeandle 2006)

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- 2.5 million people in England and Wales combine unpaid caring for a partner, relative or friend who is ill, frail or has a disability with paid work (about 2/3 of all carers)
- 1.5 million carers work *full-time*, and of those, 58% of these working carers are men, a quarter care 20+ per week, 140,000 for 50+ h per week,
- 662,000 are employed *part-time*, 89% of these working carers are women
- 380,000 carers are *self-employed*



## Working and caring in Britain (Census 2001/Buckner & Yeandle 2006)

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- Working carers are found in all industries and in jobs at all levels – caring can happen to anyone.
- However, men and women who care for 20+ hours a week are much less likely to be in higher level jobs.
- Working carers pay a heavy penalty in terms of their own health: those with heavy caring responsibilities are two to three times more likely than workers without caring responsibilities to be in poor health.



## Working and caring in Britain (Carers, Employment and Services 2008)

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- Work and Families Act 2006: flexible working
- 46% of full-time employees, and 62% of part-time employees felt they did not have adequate services to enable them to work
- Very few were getting carers' breaks or respite services, and a large minority felt poorly informed about available support
- Many stressed that they were keen to continue in work – yet more than a third had considered giving up because of their caring role
- The respondents who had already given up work to care were among the most deprived and dissatisfied in the study



## What kind of support is needed? (Recommendations of the CES study)

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- Support for carers' health
- Support for carers' economic and financial security
- Support for carers' social inclusion and equal rights



## What kind of support is needed?

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### From employers:

- ✦ "Creating a culture that supports carers in and into work."
- ✦ Flexibility of working hours and conditions
- ✦ Support of managers and colleagues
- ✦ Supporting carers in the workplace brings clear business benefits (less recruitment needs due to high staff retention, more efficient and productive working, more loyalty to the employer)



## What kind of support is needed?

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### From social policies:

- ✦ Social (and health) care services focusing more on the situation of carers of working age (home care services, respite care etc.)
- ✦ Temporary carer breaks/leaves from work
- ✦ "Almost all carers want the same thing: sensitive, tailored support, designed with their own personal and working life, family circumstances, values and beliefs in mind." (CES 2008)



## The International WoCaWo Project

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Working Carers and Caring Workers:  
making paid employment and care  
responsibilities compatible? (WoCaWo)

■ Timetable: 2008-2011

■ Funding sources

- ✦ Finland: Academy of Finland
- ✦ Taiwan: National Science Council
- ✦ UK: Carers UK
- ✦ Sweden: Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research



## The International WoCaWo Project

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■ Collaborating research teams

- ✦ University of Jyväskylä (Teppo Kröger, Anu Leinonen, Outi Jolanki)
- ✦ Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (Antti Teittinen, Sonja Miettinen)
- ✦ Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Kaisa Kauppinen)
- ✦ National Yang-Ming University (Yueh-Ching Chou & team)
- ✦ University of Leeds (Sue Yeandle)
- ✦ University of Stockholm (Marta Szebehely, Petra Ulmanen)





## The International WoCaWo Project

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### ✦ Research topics

- ✦ Difficulties and functioning strategies of working carers of older and disabled people
- ✦ The effects of welfare state and labour market structures and normative cultural assumptions on life situations of working carers
- ✦ Self-perceptions and 'reconciliation identities' of working carers



## The International WoCaWo Project

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### ✦ Groups of working carers

- ✦ Carers of older people
- ✦ Carers of people with ID
- ✦ Carers from ethnic minorities

### ✦ Data to be used

- ✦ Existing survey data
- ✦ Interviews of carers



## Combining caring and working

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- ✚ “Caring should not end a carer’s career, damage their education, put their ability to acquire skills and training at risk, or force them to give up work.”  
(CES 2008)



## Combining caring and working

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- ✚ “Employers need to be made aware that carers are very committed people who take work seriously – otherwise they would not take their responsibilities as carers seriously.”  
(National Carers’ Strategy 2008)

